

**Question for written answer E-007487/2013
to the Commission
Rule 117
Ioannis A. Tsoukalas (PPE)**

Subject: Restrictions on use of social media in Turkey

The recent protests in Turkey, in which hundreds of thousands of citizens protested about the increasing authoritarianism of the government, were followed by an unsettling statement by Mr Güler, the Turkish Minister, who claimed: 'We have a study on those who provoke the public via manipulations with false news and lead them to actions that would threaten the security of life and property by using Twitter, Facebook or other tools of social media'. It should be noted that during the protests more than 25 people were detained on suspicion of stirring up insurrection on social media.

A few months ago, a renowned Turkish musician was given a suspended prison sentence for posting tweets deemed blasphemous by a Turkish court (some of which were verses by the eleventh-century Persian philosopher Omar Khayyam).

In 2012, Turkey was ranked 148th out of 169 countries in the Annual Worldwide Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders. Following the recent protests, we are witnessing an attempt to restrict the free use of social media, which according to the Turkish Prime Minister is 'a troublemaker in societies because of the lies they spread around that can lead to violent acts from innocent people'.

In view of this:

1. How does the Commission respond to these statements by the Turkish government?
2. Is the Commission aware of any new restrictions imposed by the Turkish government on freedom of speech across all uses of social media?
3. Does the Commission believe that these prohibitions contradict the accession criteria regarding citizens' right to freedom of expression and media pluralism?
4. What steps does the Commission intend to take in order to protect civil rights and freedom of expression in Turkey?