

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0039/04

pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure

by Ilda Figueiredo, Francis Wurtz, Eva-Britt Svensson, Miguel Portas and Sérgio Ribeiro, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group
to the Commission

Subject: Ban on entry into Portugal of 'Women on Waves' ship

At the end of August 2004, at a time when the legal persecution of women who are obliged to seek abortions is continuing in Portugal, the Portuguese government, in a clear breach of the right to information and expression, banned a Dutch ship belonging to the organisation 'Women on Waves' from entering Portuguese waters or docking at a Portuguese port, thus impeding the holding of the debates and information sessions on sexual and reproductive rights scheduled with Portuguese and European parliamentarians and organisations.

Under existing Portuguese law there are no restrictions on organisations' right to promote actions which they believe are pro-women and are aimed at changing Portugal's present repressive legislation.

The fact that the RU-486 ('morning-after') pill is not marketed in Portugal (representing a clear case of backwardness in the public health field) does not prevent Portuguese women from being aware that it is authorised by the European Medicines Agency or that it offers a non-surgical and safe method which is available to women up to the seventh week of pregnancy in most EU Member States, including Spain, France and the UK.

In addition, Parliament, in its resolution of 3 July 2002¹, called on the Member States to end repressive practices and to promote information campaigns on sexual and reproductive rights.

Can the Commission state its view on this situation? Will it urge the Portuguese government to change its attitude, which is in breach of the right to freedom of expression and information, and lift its ban on the entry into Portugal of the Dutch ship belonging to the organisation 'Women on Waves'?

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Forwarded: 02.09.2004

Deadline for reply: 09.09.2004

¹ OJ C 271 E, 12.11.2003, p. 369