

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1839/03
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to the Commission

Subject: EU relations with Syria and association agreement

Given that the EU is Syria's most important trading partner and that EU-Syria negotiations on the conclusion of an association agreement, most recently in March 2003, are making further headway, how does the Commission view the possible successful conclusion of such an agreement in view of Syria's provision of infrastructure support for the PFLP-GC, PFLP, Hamas and Islamic Jihad organisations? Is the Commission's policy to be taken as a statement opposing the European Council's list of terrorist organisations, which includes the organisations referred to? During the negotiations, has Syria's support for those organisations and for Hizbollah in Lebanon been raised? Given the Syrian President's restatement, as recently as this month, of continued support for Hizbollah, does the Commission view continued support and encouragement of organisations whose policy is to murder Israeli civilians as a reason for the conclusion of an association agreement not to go ahead? Is the Commission considering inducing Syria to end its support for those organisations? How does the Commission view the continued deployment of Syrian troops in Lebanon and their support for Hizbollah, which is continuing to mount attacks on Israeli territory, though the UN has officially established that, in withdrawing its troops from southern Lebanon in May 2000, Israel has made its contribution towards complying with UN Resolution 425? Against the backdrop of international efforts to renew peace negotiations between Syria and Israel, does the Commission think it helpful for the Syrian President to announce, as he did on 27 March 2003 in the Lebanese newspaper 'Al-Safir', that Israel would never be recognised as a state and would constitute a threat to Syria for as long as it existed and that, as he said in May 2001, the Jews were to blame for Jesus' crucifixion? How does the Commission view the continued circulation of inflammatory anti-Semitic material by members of the Syrian Government, e.g. by Mustafa Tlass, Minister of Defence and Deputy Prime Minister for many years, whose book 'The Matzah of Zion' containing the claim that Jews bake matzah from Christians' blood, is now in its eighth print run?