

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0138/07
by Duarte Freitas (PPE-DE)
to the Council

Subject: Breach of the principle of reciprocity of treatment of EU citizens by the overseas territory of Bermuda

The territory of Bermuda benefits from a special relationship with one of the EU Member States and is considered an associated territory under the Treaty of Rome (Article 182 and Annex II, EC Treaty).

This association must be in conformity with the values and objectives of the preamble to the EC Treaty, which include the free movement of persons and respect for human rights.

In 2001, the UK government adopted the British Overseas Territories Bill (Bill 40 of 2001-2002), conferring UK citizenship on all citizens of the country's dependent territories (among them Bermuda), and thus giving them the right of residence and the right to work in any territory of the UK, as well as the right to obtain a British passport. The latter allows them, among other things, to reside and work in the EU, without restrictions of any kind.

A law is in force in Bermuda obliging all foreign workers to leave the territory on the expiry of a six-year contract of work: their residence visas are not renewed beyond that date.

Immigrants whose visas have expired are treated as fugitives by the Bermudan authorities, and a reward of EUR 750 is offered to anyone supplying information about such persons with a view to their expulsion.

Can the Council state:

1. whether it believes this unacceptable practice of persecution should not be the subject of a warning from the Community authorities to this associated territory;
2. to what extent the principle of reciprocity of treatment should be applied by the Bermudan authorities to EU citizens, in view of the territory's close links with a Member State and the fact that by virtue of those links Bermuda enjoys rights that are inherent to the status of an EU Member State, while not respecting the related obligations or, indeed, the Union's set of basic principles (which include, among many others, the principles of equality, the *acquis communautaire*, and reciprocity)?