

WRITTEN QUESTION P-5973/08
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to the Commission

Subject: Restoration of the post of human rights officer at the Commission delegation in La Paz (Bolivia)

The social situation in Bolivia has given the Union repeated cause for concern thanks to the high poverty levels there. For this reason, the EU is today, under its development cooperation policy, the biggest donor to Bolivia. The projects developed there have proved successful and have been welcomed by the beneficiaries and the public.

Today, there is an alarming increase in manifestations of racism, not only against those without the means to defend themselves but also against persons exercising democratic mandates in elected posts. There have been incidents of violence against public institutions and, in particular, against human rights activists and members of the indigenous communities. There have been attacks on EU-funded projects in Santa Cruz, and library books have been burnt in the street.

Measures must be taken against the resurgence of fascism, wherever in the world and for whatever reason it happens. In these conditions, the Union's role as mediator and observer of social, political and economic developments in Bolivia becomes of increasing importance. Despite all this, the Commission has decided to eliminate two posts at the Union's delegation in La Paz. As a result, the delegation now has no human rights officer, at a time when that function is needed more than ever. It is not desirable to economise on the defence of values and principles, and there may be unforeseen fallout from this.

On the assumption that this decision arose from an unintentional error:

1. Can the Commission state its position on the matter?
2. Will the Commission take swift action to remedy this state of affairs by posting more staff to this delegation, so as to enable the EU institutions to be permanently and accurately informed regarding the human rights situation in Bolivia and to take decisions based on the actual conditions in the country?