

P6_TA(2006)0269

Human rights situation in Tunisia

European Parliament resolution on Tunisia

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the human rights situation in Tunisia, in particular those adopted on 29 September 2005¹ and 15 December 2005²,
- having regard to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Tunisia, of the other part³, which entered into force on 1 March 1998,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 21 May 2003 entitled ‘Reinvigorating EU actions on Human Rights and democratisation with Mediterranean partners’ (COM(2003)0294),
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 12 April 2005 entitled ‘Tenth anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: A work programme to meet the challenges of the next five years’ (COM(2005)0139),
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 12 May 2004 on the European Neighbourhood Policy (COM(2004)0373) and its EU-Tunisia Action Plan, which entered into force on 4 July 2005,
- having regard to the Council’s guidelines on the protection of human rights defenders, adopted in June 2004,
- having regard to the statements made by the President-in-Office of the Council and the Commission at the debate on human rights in Tunisia held on 13 December 2005,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 February 2006 on the human rights and democracy clause in the European Union’s agreements⁴,
- having regard to the steps taken by the Presidencies of the Council with regard to human rights in Tunisia between September 2005 and May 2006,
- having regard to Tunisia’s appointment to the presidency of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) on 1 April 2006,
- having regard to the meeting on 7 June 2006 of the Political Committee of the EMPA,
- having regard to Tunisia’s election to the United Nations Human Rights Council and its commitments in the field of human rights,

¹ *Texts Adopted*, P6_TA(2005)0368.

² *Texts Adopted*, P6_TA(2005)0525.

³ OJ L 97, 30.3.1998, p. 2.

⁴ *Texts Adopted*, P6_TA(2006)0056.

- having regard to Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, in accordance with Article 2 of the EU-Tunisia Association Agreement and the Tunisia action plan under the European Neighbourhood Policy, human rights form an essential component of EU relations with Tunisia,
- B. whereas, under the action plan, Tunisia has committed itself to promoting democracy and respect for fundamental freedoms in accordance with international standards and whereas meeting these commitments is essential to the development of relations between the European Union and Tunisia,
- C. recalling the three requests made by the Commission to the Tunisian authorities, which included the immediate release of European funding allocated to projects for civil society, implementation of the programme for reform of the judicial system and the creation of a subcommittee on human rights,
- D. noting, in this context, that the only result achieved by the Commission was the conclusion of a convention on financing the reform of the justice system,
- E. whereas the law creating a Higher Institute for Lawyers, envisaged in that convention, was adopted by the Tunisian Parliament at the beginning of May 2006 without the outcome of the consultations with the Lawyers' Association having been taken into account, and noting that the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers has still not received an invitation from the Tunisian Government,
- F. expressing concern at the ban imposed on the Congress of the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH), which was to have been held on 27 and 28 May 2006, and at the use of force and acts of violence against defenders of human rights and international observers,
- G. pointing out that the LTDH is the first Arab and African human rights league and is one of the pillars of independent civil society in Tunisia,
- H. whereas the human rights situation in Tunisia still gives cause for concern and whereas the approaches made thus far by the Council and the Commission have clearly demonstrated their limitations,
- I. whereas Tunisia has held the presidency of the EMPA since 1 April 2006, which constitutes a major responsibility for the country as regards promoting democracy and human rights in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership,
- J. recalling the role played by Tunisia in the development of a Euro-Mediterranean area of peace, prosperity and democracy,
 1. Points out that Tunisia and the European Union have been linked since 1998 by a Euro-Mediterranean association agreement, Article 2 of which contains a human rights clause constituting an essential element of that agreement;
 2. Regrets the fact that the situation as regards freedoms and human rights in Tunisia is still a cause for concern and calls on the Tunisian authorities to fulfil their international commitments;
 3. Expects the Tunisian authorities to provide explanations for the ban on the Congress of

the LTDH and for any acts of violence against defenders of human rights and Tunisian judges;

4. Calls on the Presidency-in-Office of the Council to make a public statement on the ban on holding the LTDH congress and on the violence against Tunisian human rights defenders, lawyers and judges;
5. Reiterates its request to the Council and the Commission to organise a meeting of the Association Council in order to discuss the human rights situation in Tunisia;
6. Calls on the Council and the Commission, in this context, to take swiftly all necessary steps vis-à-vis the Tunisian authorities to ensure that European funding allocated to civil society projects is unblocked and that Mr Mohammed Abbou is released; calls for the activities of human rights defenders to be fully guaranteed, in accordance with the relevant EU guidelines;
7. Calls on the Commission to do everything possible to ensure that the project for the support of reform of the justice system guarantees the independence of the judiciary and freedom of action for judges; in parallel with this, calls on the Tunisian authorities to agree to a visit by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers;
8. Takes the view that the implementation of the current reforms must be regarded as a priority in the partnership between the EU and Tunisia and must constitute a fundamental element of the harmonious development of relations between the EU and Tunisia;
9. Calls for the work of the EMPA to be facilitated by better cooperation between the Tunisian Presidency in terms of respecting human rights, and expects to see significant improvements in this area, particularly with a view to the EMPA's forthcoming plenary session;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Tunisian government and parliament, and the Bureau of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly.