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Tunisia

European Parliament resolution on Tunisia

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement between the European Union and Tunisia¹, and in particular Article 2 thereof,
 - having regard to the 2002, 2003 and 2004 reports on human development in the Arab world drawn up by the United Nations Development Programme,
 - 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 resolution of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly adopted in Cairo on 15 March 2005,
 - having regard to the statement made by the President of Parliament on 7 September 2005 on the decision to stay the Congress of the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH),
 - having regard to the statement of 13 September 2005 by the Presidency of the European Union on the obstacles placed in the path of the activities of the LTDH,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the primary aim of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership is to create an area of peace and stability founded on the principles of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy,
- B. whereas the EU's neighbourhood policy is based on a mutually recognised commitment to shared values, such as democracy, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights,
- C. pointing out, in that connection, that Tunisia and the EU have jointly drawn up an action plan which requires, as a priority, the strengthening of reforms to safeguard democracy and the rule of law and, in particular, the promotion of freedom of expression, freedom of opinion, freedom of association and the freedom to hold meetings,
- D. whereas its delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries recently visited Tunis with

¹ OJ L 97, 30.3.1998, p. 2.

the aim of strengthening parliamentary relations between Tunisia and the European Union,

- E. whereas Tunisia is certainly one of the region's most advanced countries in the area of economic, social and health policies and one which, moreover, recognised at a very early stage the principle of equality between men and women and the secular nature of the State,
- F. being deeply concerned at the decision taken on 5 September 2005 to stay the Congress of the LTDH, which was due to take place from 9 to 11 September 2005 in Tunis,
- G. having regard to the leading role which Tunisia, the first Mediterranean country to have signed an association agreement with the European Union, plays in the Euro-Mediterranean integration process,
- H. having regard to the recommendations made by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression,
 1. Welcomes the significant economic and social progress made in Tunisia, including in the areas of education and training, health and social security, and expresses its hope that this progress will be accompanied by similar advances in the areas of the strengthening of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, in particular freedom of expression and association, and judicial independence, which form part of the Barcelona Process *acquis*;
 2. Hopes that the political dialogue conducted between the EU and Tunisia in the context of their association agreement will continue to play a key role in promoting and improving human rights;
 3. Expresses its concern at the case of Maître Mohammed Abbou and calls for his immediate release;
 4. Calls on the Tunisian authorities to provide all the requisite explanations concerning the case of the Zarsis Internet-users;
 5. Calls on the Tunisian authorities to allow the LTDH, the Union of Tunisian Journalists and the Association of Tunisian Magistrates to carry on their activities freely and to hold their congresses;
 6. Expresses its concern at the lack of progress towards the release of Community funds intended to provide financial support for the projects undertaken by the LTDH and the IMED (the Mediterranean Institute) and AFTURD (the Association of Tunisian Women for Research and Development) project on positive action for women's rights of citizenship and equal opportunities in the Maghreb, the project undertaken by Santé Sud¹ and the modernisation plan for the Tunisian justice system;
 7. Calls on the Tunisian Government to take immediate action to release the Community funds intended for the above-mentioned projects and rapidly to reach agreement on the modernisation plan for the justice system;
 8. Calls on the Council and Commission to work to improve the management of projects under the MEDA programme and the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights and

¹ Medical and Social International Solidarity Network: www.santesud.org

urges the Commission to determine the measures to be taken if no progress is made towards the release of blocked funds;

9. Urges the Council and Commission to step up their political dialogue with Tunisia, which is based on mutual understanding and respect and has the aim of encouraging democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and good governance, by calling for the EU-Tunisia Human Rights Subcommittee, provided for in the Association Agreement, to be made fully operational in order to discuss the overall human rights situation and, in particular, individual cases of abuse;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Tunisian Government and Parliament.