WRITTEN QUESTION E-1196/00
by William Newton Dunn (ELDR) to the Commission
(12 April 2000)

Subject: Religious persecution in India

Attacks are being reported in several states of India on Christian communities in the shape of murder, gang-rapes, beatings, threats, and destruction and desecration of churches. Meanwhile legislative initiatives have been undertaken in a number of Indian states which seek to restrict religious freedom. In Orissa state, for example, the state government passed an order at the end of 1999 prohibiting conversion without the prior permission of the local police and the district magistrate. In Gujarat state, a freedom of religion bill was introduced last year which established stiff penalties for the crime of converting individuals from one religion to another. Although the bill was shelved this February, it is thought likely that attempts might be made to revive it at a later date. Christians there believe that the bill is open to subjective interpretation and may be used to halt their humanitarian efforts amongst the poor as well as curtailing any public expression of their faith.

In the light of these events, does the Commission intend to address the question of religious tolerance and freedom at the upcoming EU-India summit?

Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission
(16 May 2000)

The Commission shares the concern expressed by the Honourable Member and would like to emphasise that the Commission Delegation in New Delhi continues to monitor closely and report on the situation regarding the situation of religious minorities in India, including the Christian community. It does so in close consultation with the Community missions in New Delhi.

Ever since the surge in 1998 in the number of attacks on Christian families and facilities, ambassadors have consistently expressed their concern in this regard to the Indian government.

The Government of India has since set up a National Commission for Minorities. This is charged in particular with the protection of religious minorities in India, and following-up complaints received. Although the National Commission for Minorities has no judicial powers, it is hoped that it will continue to exert a restraining influence on extremist groups and thus contribute to upholding the principle of secular government and free religious practice enshrined in the Indian constitution.

Regarding the reported legislative initiatives by a number of Indian states, the Commission will request its delegation in New Delhi to work closely with its colleagues from Community sister missions, with a view to analysing the factual background and implications of any discriminatory legislative measures taken that may affect the freedom of faith of Christian and other religious groups in India. Based on their findings the Commission will consult its partners and decide on the extent, form and appropriate forum of possible representation to be made to the Indian authorities.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1203/00
by Bart Staes (Verts/ALE) to the Council
(13 April 2000)

Subject: Use of German shell bodies in a chemical attack carried out by the Turkish army

In reply to Written Question E-2386/99 (1), the Council says that the sources referred to by the Honourable Member have not been brought to the attention of the Council.
However, the information sources on:
- German help in building a chemical weapons laboratory in Turkey,
- the use of chemical weapons by the Turkish army against the Kurdish PKK movement, and
- the German provenance (Buck and Depyfag) of chemical shell bodies used by the Turkish army
were mentioned in the introduction to the question

The sources are:
- the German Ministry of Defence,
- the ‘Kennzeichen D’ programme on the ZDF television channel and
- research carried out by the University of Munich.

Furthermore, Points 3 and 5 of Written Question E-2386/99 literally stated that the Council had been
made aware or had been informed of the facts (i.e. construction of a laboratory for chemical weapons and
the use of chemical weapons).

Will the Council now seek information from the University of Munich on the German provenance (Buck
and Depyfag) of the shell bodies used by the Turkish army in a chemical attack on the Kurdish PKK
movement on 11 May 1999?

If not, why does the Council refuse to seek information on the German provenance (Buck and Depyfag) of
the shell bodies used by the Turkish army in a chemical attack on the Kurdish PKK movement on 11 May
1999, given that it is a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)?

If so, will the Council convey to the German and Turkish governments its displeasure at this violation of
the CWC?


WRITTEN QUESTION E-1204/00
by Bart Staes (Verts/ALE) to the Council
(13 April 2000)

Subject: Use of German shell bodies in a chemical attack carried out by the Turkish army

In reply to Written Question E-2386/99 (1), the Council says that ‘the sources referred to by the
Honourable Member have not been brought to the attention of the Council’.

However, the information sources on:
- German help in building a chemical weapons laboratory in Turkey,
- the use of chemical weapons by the Turkish army against the Kurdish PKK movement, and
- the German provenance (Buck and Depyfag) of chemical shell bodies used by the Turkish army
were mentioned in the introduction to the question

The sources are:
- the German Ministry of Defence,
- the ‘Kennzeichen D’ programme on the ZDF television channel and
- research carried out by the University of Munich.

Furthermore, Points 3 and 5 of Written Question E-2386/99 literally stated that the Council had been
made aware or had been informed of the facts (i.e. construction of a laboratory for chemical weapons and
the use of chemical weapons).