

(98/C 158/215)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3602/97**by Sérgio Ribeiro (GUE/NGL) to the Council***(7 November 1997)**Subject:* East Timor refugees in the Austrian embassy in Jakarta

Since the middle of September 1997 a group of East Timorese, including a family of four, have been seeking refuge in the Austrian embassy in Jakarta. The Portuguese government would seem to have expressed its willingness to receive them in Portugal, as they ask, but the Indonesian authorities have refused them exit visas. This is on the grounds that they are suspected of actions relating to which twelve other Timorese have already been imprisoned and, apparently – as is the usual practice of the Indonesian police, confirmed by a number of reports- tortured. The refugees in the Austrian embassy are trying to protect themselves against such imprisonment and torture. The Austrian government appears to be under pressure from the Indonesian authorities, and, in view of the reception accorded to the recent inter-Timorese meeting, there is reason to fear that, the meeting being over, this pressure will be stepped up.

Can the Council state whether, given that both the Austrian and the Portuguese government are represented on it, it could not extend its support to the Austrian government in its justified resistance to pressure and make every effort to ensure that the Indonesian government allows the refugees to leave the Austrian embassy and enter Portugal?

Answer*(12 February 1998)*

The Council follows closely and with concern the situation in East-Timor. It is preoccupied with the situation of those who have entered the Austrian Embassy and have asked to be transferred to Portugal.

The European Union takes every opportunity to make its position regarding East-Timor known to the Indonesian government. It continues to support actions and measures aimed towards the solution of the East-Timor issue. Only if such a solution can be found will incidents with people seeking refuge in foreign embassies in Jakarta be avoided. The Union has also, specifically, expressed to the Indonesian government concerns with regard to the situation of the East-Timorese who are still in the Austrian Embassy in Jakarta.

It is the wish of the Union that a way for a speedy solution will be found.

(98/C 158/216)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3612/97**by María Izquierdo Rojo (PSE) to the Council***(7 November 1997)**Subject:* European cultural capitals

On Tuesday 28 October 1997 the press in Granada published a report to the effect that the Spanish Government will submit applications from four Spanish cities for selection as cultural capitals of Europe, saying 'this government decision has been adopted after the meeting on 23 October between the Minister for Education and Culture, Esperanza Aguirre, and the Luxembourg Minister for Culture, Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, as President-in-Office of the Council of Ministers for Culture and the Media of the European Union. The position of the European Commission regarding the criteria to be used to select the European cities of culture was also taken into account'.

In the interests of the need for transparency and information and the participation of the European Institutions, can the Council supply accurate and comprehensive information on the subject?

Answer*(26 January 1998)*

Pending the adoption and implementation of the Commission's recent proposal for a European Parliament and Council Decision establishing a Community initiative for 'The European City of Culture' event, the matter is dealt with on an intergovernmental basis, and the selection of the European City of Culture for 2001 has to follow established practice.