

(1999/C 96/207)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2772/98**by Johanna Maij-Weggen (PPE) to the Commission***(14 September 1998)*

Subject: Mrs Ben Salem, a prisoner of conscience in Tunisia

Amnesty International has drawn attention to the sentence handed down in Tunisia on Mrs Ben Salem, the wife of Mr M. Berek, a refugee granted asylum in the Netherlands.

Last November Mrs Ben Salem was sentenced to two years and three months imprisonment, accused of being a member of an organisation inciting hatred and violence and of illegally attempting to leave Tunisia. On appeal the sentence was extended to two years and nine months.

Amnesty International regards Mrs Ben Salem, who has never used violence or encouraged others to use violence, as a prisoner of conscience.

Is the Commission prepared to seek information about Mrs Ben Salem from the Tunisian authorities and to urge her release so that she can join her husband in the Netherlands?

Answer given by Mr Marín on behalf of the Commission*(15 October 1998)*

In its usual diplomatic contacts with the Tunisian authorities the Commission will continue to raise allegations of individual cases of human rights violations, including that brought to its attention by the Honourable Member. Such contacts are held jointly with the Member States, and governed by the Barcelona Declaration and the Association Agreement between the Community and Tunisia.

It should also be pointed out that inter-parliamentary meetings between the Parliament and the Tunisian parliament play a crucial role, in the light of growing contacts between the two on issues relating to democratisation and the promotion of human rights.

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WRITTEN QUESTION E-2782/98**by Johanna Maij-Weggen (PPE) to the Commission***(14 September 1998)*

Subject: Implementation of the European Parliament's resolution on freedom of religion and human rights in Pakistan

Can the Commission state what action has been taken to implement the resolution on the blasphemy laws in Pakistan (resolution B4-0614/98 of 18 June 1998)?

Answer given by Mr Marín on behalf of the Commission*(20 October 1998)*

The Honourable Member will be aware that the Community-Pakistan cooperation agreement mentioned in the Parliament Resolution B4-0614 of 18 June 1998 has not yet been concluded.

Nevertheless, the Commission, with the agreement of the Pakistan government, will send an expert mission to Pakistan in late 1998 to assess elements of the human rights situation in the country with a view to proposing a programme of projects in the areas of democratisation, civil society and the promotion of human rights issues.