

(2001/C 350 E/093)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1170/01**by Antonio Tajani (PPE-DE) to the Commission***(19 April 2001)*

Subject: World-wide genocide of Christians

The United Nations and several human rights organisations have recently sounded the alarm over the increase in persecutions of Christians world-wide: in 2000, 165 000 were killed and 200 million persecuted.

Europe, which still bears unhealed scars from the shame of the Holocaust, has a duty to take action to guarantee the right to freedom of religion.

What initiatives does the Commission intend to take to safeguard and guarantee freedom of religion – to which everyone has a right – in Europe and the rest of the world?

How does the Commission plan to act to stem these cases of intolerance and religious discrimination and to protect laymen and missionaries at work, as they daily put their lives at risk?

Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission*(20 June 2001)*

The Union condemns all forms of discrimination and intolerance based on religion or belief, a point which it underlined at the 57th United Nations (UN) Commission on Human Rights in Geneva this year. This stance was reflected, *inter alia*, in the support offered by Member States for the resolution introduced by Ireland on the Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance and in the Union Statement on Civil and Political Rights which condemned all forms of discrimination and intolerance based on religion or belief. The Union also calls on all Governments to ensure that their domestic legal systems provide effective guarantees for the exercise of the freedom of religion and belief to all without any discrimination. It supports the continuing efforts of the Special Rapporteur to examine incidents in all countries that are incompatible with the relevant international standards, in particular the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief.

The Commission, which played an active role in Geneva, fully supports the importance attached to freedom of religion. Activities to promote and defend this freedom in third countries are eligible for support under the European initiative for Democracy and Human Rights.

Article 10 of the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights also emphasises the importance of freedom of religion.

The European Union raises and will continue to raise religious freedom in its various dialogues with third countries where this is appropriate.

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WRITTEN QUESTION E-1178/01**by Helmuth Markov (GUE/NGL) to the Commission***(19 April 2001)*

Subject: Scrutiny for compatibility with competition law of the merger between the IVG and Hochtief Consortia for the construction of the Berlin Brandenburg International Airport (BBI)

On 5 February 2001, the European Commission authorised Hochtief and IVG, which had previously been competitors, to submit a joint tender for the construction of the planned Berlin Brandenburg International Airport (BBI). In the opinion, reported in the media, of the Directorate-General for Competition, the