

On one hand, these three Council legislative acts lay down the conditions for granting the various premiums for cattle, sheep and goats, as well as any supplementary aid which may be payable to livestock farmers. On the other, they define the criteria governing the eligibility of producers. The rules necessary for implementing these provisions are laid down by the Commission in accordance with the Management Committee procedure.

2. The Honourable Member is, moreover, undoubtedly aware that the Council has adopted a large body of legislation concerning livestock welfare [cf. in particular Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes⁽¹⁾]. In addition, in the specific area of export refunds, the abovementioned basic Regulation on beef and veal establishes a direct link between eligibility for such refunds and compliance with animal welfare standards.

Indeed, the last subparagraph of Article 33(9) of that Regulation stipulates that 'the payment of the refund for exports of live animals shall be subject to compliance with the provisions established in Community legislation concerning animal welfare and, in particular, the protection of animals during transport.'

3. It is not the responsibility of the Council to monitor implementation by the Member States of its own acts. This responsibility was conferred by the EC Treaty on the Commission, which is also authorised to submit to the Council and the European Parliament proposals it might deem appropriate for rectifying the alleged shortcomings to which the Honourable Member refers.

4. Furthermore, right to enter the profession falls within the competence of the Member States, which are therefore responsible for checking whether the relevant provisions laid down to this end are properly implemented and for imposing penalties should any deficiencies be detected.

Moreover, there are no statistics on livestock premiums paid in the European Union to farmers who might have mistreated their animals.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 160, 26.6.1999, p. 21.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 312, 20.11.1998, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 341, 22.12.2001, p. 3.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 160, 26.6.1999, p. 80.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 221, 8.8.1998.

(2002/C 205 E/032)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3382/01

by Cristiana Muscardini (UEN) to the Council

(7 December 2001)

Subject: Assassination of four journalists in Afghanistan

On 19 november 2001, four journalists, including the one dispatched by the Corriere della Sera newspaper, Maria Grazia Cutuli, were assassinated in Afghanistan, on the road between Jalalabad and Kabul. They were travelling in a convoy of vehicles and were in the first car – the only one to be caught in the tragic homicidal ambush and to be drawn away from the rest of the convoy. The final article written by the Italian journalist was the fruit of an investigation carried out in association with the Spanish reporter from the El Mundo newspaper concerning the discovery of phials of nerve gas in the hands of Al Q'aeda militiamen. The driver and an interpreter who were travelling with the four journalists were allowed to flee; they were able to spread the news of what had happened and ensure that the rest of the convoy turned back. This latter circumstance, together with the fact that no items were stolen, suggests that the act was not a robbery or a demonstration against foreign journalists (one of those killed was in fact an Afghan), but purely and simply an execution.

Is the Council aware of any facts other than those which were published in the media?

Does it intend to carry out an investigation using the means available to governments with a view to establishing whether or not the homicidal ambush was premeditated and ordered by someone who could have had an interest in silencing any voices capable of reporting the fact that members of Al Q'aeda had chemical weapons in their possession?

Does the Council not think that, in order to prevent chemical weapons of this type from being used (for the time being at least), the investigation should be widened to include possible links established with other terrorist groups or with governments from other countries for the purpose of manufacturing and selling such weapons?

Does the Council not think that armed escorts should be made available to journalists who provide an important (indeed essential) news-reporting service in war zones?

Reply

(13 May 2002)

1. The Council deeply regrets the assassination of four journalists in Afghanistan on 19 November and, in its conclusions of 10 December 2001, referred to the urgent need to improve media security. However, the Council has no knowledge of this incident other than what has been reported in the media.

2. Given the prevailing insecurity and the current particular political and military situation in Afghanistan, the Council can see no way in which the EU could conduct an in-depth investigation there in order to establish whether the ambush that cost the lives of the journalists was premeditated and ordered. However, the Union will endeavour to obtain more detailed information on the assassinations in cooperation with the Member States' diplomatic representations in Kabul.

3. Whether or not the new Interim Administration in Kabul will be in a position to guarantee the safety of journalists throughout the territory of Afghanistan even under military escort will become clear as the situation develops over the coming weeks. It is questionable whether permanent military protection is beneficial to press freedom.

(2002/C 205 E/033)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3397/01

by **Miquel Mayol i Raynal (Verts/ALE) to the Council**

(13 December 2001)

Subject: Gibraltar

Under the 'Brussels' process, the UK Foreign Secretary and the Spanish Foreign Minister have undertaken to reach an overall agreement on Gibraltar by next summer (2002). However, the elected representatives of the population of the territory refused to take part in these talks as they demand the prior recognition of their right to self-determination. While the joint communiqué issued after the ministerial meeting does express a wish for the voice of Gibraltar to be heard, it says nothing about the exercise of this right.

Gibraltar is now recognised as a colonial territory by the United Nations. The question was raised again on 10 October before the fourth (decolonisation) committee.

Can the European Union accept within its ranks a colonial territory in defiance of the wishes of peoples, the only legitimate holders of sovereignty?

Reply

(13 May 2002)

The Council refers the Honourable Member to its reply to Question E-3257/01 put by Nirj Deva.
