

(2002/C 205 E/034)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3408/01
by Glyn Ford (PSE) to the Commission

(5 December 2001)

Subject: Anti-semitic badges

During a holiday in Crete, one of my South-West constituents walked into a shop which had a range of anti-semitic badges on sale. An example of these was the one that my constituent bought, in order to send to my office, which said 'Chelsea Football Club: Up Chelsea, Fuck the yids'.

Is the Commission aware that such offensive badges were being sold in Crete?

If so, will the Commission make representations to the Greek Government about this issue?

Answer given by Mr Vitorino on behalf of the Commission

(8 January 2002)

Racism and xenophobia are a direct violation of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, principles upon which the Union is founded and which are common to the Member States as stated in Article 6 of the Treaty on the European Union.

The Commission has recently presented a proposal for a Framework Decision ⁽¹⁾, a legislative instrument in the field of penal law. The purpose of the Framework Decision is twofold: firstly, to ensure that the same racist and xenophobic conducts are punishable by the same penalties in all Member States and secondly, to improve and encourage judicial cooperation by removing potential obstacles.

Public insults towards individuals or groups for a racist or xenophobic purpose, as well as public dissemination of racist material by any means are included among the behaviours to be punishable as criminal offences in all Member States.

⁽¹⁾ COM(2001) 664 final.

(2002/C 205 E/035)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3412/01
by Anna Karamanou (PSE) to the Council

(13 December 2001)

Subject: The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan — refugees

Amnesty International and other non-governmental organisations have concluded that the situation of the Afghan refugees abroad and those trapped within the country, who are primarily fleeing the bombing, is bordering on a human tragedy.

What measures will the Council take to persuade those countries which support the military intervention to take greater responsibility for the care of the refugees who are leaving Afghanistan in droves? Will corridors be opened to channel humanitarian aid into Afghanistan? Will all those who reach other countries be granted refugee status, and will suitable refugee camps be set up at a safe distance from the combat zone? In addition, how does it intend to share the refugee burden between countries? Is there an integrated programme, to be operated in collaboration with the humanitarian organisations, to repatriate those refugees who wish to return once hostilities have ceased?

Reply

(13 May 2002)

1. The Council shares the Honourable MEP's concern for the situation of Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Council believes, however, that due to the rapidly developing situation on the ground, several aspects of the question have been overtaken by events. In early December, the Afghan factions concluded, under the aegis of the UN, the Petersberg agreement that put an end to years of civil war and paved the way for a lasting political solution. The US-led military action against the terrorist networks in Afghanistan has ousted the Taliban from their last strongholds around Kandahar. The new Afghan Interim Administration took up office on 22 December and an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been set up on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 1386 of 20 December 2001. Humanitarian corridors have been opened and the expatriate staff of UN agencies and NGOs have started to return to Afghanistan.
2. Consequently, the outflow of people from Afghanistan has significantly diminished and many refugees and IDPs have started to return to their home regions inside Afghanistan. This movement is likely to accelerate further once the winter is over – which will pose new challenges for the Afghan Interim Administration and the international aid community.
3. The European Community and its Member States will therefore continue to provide humanitarian assistance (more than 350 million euro committed since 11 September 2001). At the same time they liaise closely with the relevant UN agencies, NGOs and international donors on how to best help Afghanistan in the crucial fields of rehabilitation and reconstruction, including measures to facilitate the return of refugees who left under previous regimes. The Reconstruction Steering Group, co-chaired by the EU, made significant progress at its meeting on 20 and 21 December in Brussels. The integrated needs assessment mission by the World Bank and the UNDP is currently looking into the situation on the ground and will provide detailed recommendations for the various domains. On the basis of this assessment, the EU, together with the US, Japan, Arab countries and the IFIs, prepared a strategic approach to reconstruction at the Donors Conference in Tokyo on 21 and 22 January 2002. In Tokyo, the European Community and the Member States pledged to make available 550 million euro available for the reconstruction of Afghanistan for 2002 and to maintain a substantial level of assistance for the following years.
4. At the same time, the EU is aware that several countries in Afghanistan's neighbourhood – in particular Pakistan and Iran – will continue to face the problem of Afghan refugees for years to come. The EU will therefore continue to assist these countries.

(2002/C 205 E/036)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3413/01

by **Anna Karamanou (PSE)** to the Commission

(21 December 2001)

Subject: The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan – refugees

Amnesty International and other non-governmental organisations have concluded that the situation of the Afghan refugees abroad and those trapped within the country, who are primarily fleeing the bombing, is bordering on a human tragedy.

What measures will the Commission take to persuade those countries which support the military intervention to take greater responsibility for the care of the refugees who are leaving Afghanistan in droves? Will corridors be opened to channel humanitarian aid into Afghanistan? Will all those who reach other countries be granted refugee status, and will suitable refugee camps be set up at a safe distance from the combat zone?