Resolution on freedom of the press in Algeria

2005/2573(RSP) - 09/06/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on freedom of the press in Algeria.

The resolution had been tabled by the PES, Greens/ALE, EPP-ED, ALDE, UEN and GUE/NGL groups.

Parliament welcomes the ratification by the Algerian Parliament of the Association Agreement of 21 April 2002 and hopes that, as soon as it enters into force, it will be possible to reinitiate political dialogue with Algeria through the Association Council. It stresses **the importance of Euro-Mediterranean neighbourhood policy** and its action plans seeking to strengthen democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and, especially, freedom of the press, of which particular account must be taken when such action plans are being drawn up.

Parliament considers that the provisions of the Algerian penal code of May 2001 imposing prison sentences for defamation of the President, Parliament or "any other public or constituent body" are obstructing the work of journalists in Algeria. It urges the Algerian authorities to implement the necessary legislative measures to ensure the greatest respect for fundamental rights and, in particular, full respect for the freedom of the press and the effective decriminalisation of infringements of the press laws.

Parliament notes that numerous legal proceedings for violation of press laws have been initiated against journalists working for privately owned French language newspapers. It calls on the Algerian authorities to release the journalists sentenced to imprisonment for libel, to end this judicial persecution of the Algerian private media for their opinions and to halt the legal proceedings initiated against the Algerian private media.

It notes that the state of emergency decreed on 9 February 1992 and all resulting decrees and legal texts are still in force, and states that the **lifting of the state of emergency** would help to promote the rule of law. It is for this reason that the United Kingdom Presidency is requested to convene the EU-Algeria Association Council so as to reinitiate political dialogue with Algeria and to include on the agenda of the meeting the question of the freedom of the press.

In addition, Parliament asks that the question of freedom of the press be raised at the next meeting of the Interparliamentary Delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries, and hopes that, as soon as it enters into force, it will be possible to reinitiate political dialogue with Algeria through the Association Council.

Lastly, the resolution calls on the Commission to continue to **promote programmes, by way of the EIDHR**, that seek to strengthen the independent media in Algeria and the development of pluralist information channels.