

Thursday, 15 December 2005 - Strasbourg

Ethiopia and new border conflicts

Ana Maria Gomes (PSE), author . - Mr President, as head of the European Union Election Observation Mission in Ethiopia, I helped to persuade Ethiopian opposition leaders not to boycott the May elections, assuring them that the world and the European Union in particular were watching. They felt that the electoral process had been set up by the regime not to achieve democracy but to fool the international community. Despite being elected by the Ethiopian people, they are now in jail. They have been on hunger strike since 28 November, face a possible death penalty, and yet are neglected by European leaders. This is in spite of the fact that, in early September, I warned European governments, the Commission, the US Government and the UN Secretary-General that the regime might be planning the selective repression of Ethiopian opposition leaders.

How could European governments fail so miserably those who trusted the European Union, those who fought and continue to fight for democracy in Ethiopia? How could European and American leaders fail so miserably the Ethiopian people and such an important country: the second most populous in Africa and the headquarters of the African Union? What message are they sending to all Africans? How can the UN Secretary-General and the Security Council continue to turn a blind eye to massive human rights violations inside Ethiopia, forgetting how this could lead to another devastating war with neighbouring Eritrea? How can Mr Blair, the British Prime Minister and President-in-Office of the European Council, continue to allow in his Commission for Africa Mr Meles Zenawi, who is keeping imprisoned and threatening with the death penalty the elected opposition leaders, journalists, human rights and development campaigners and even the Ethiopian representatives of the Global Call to Action against Poverty?

This is the third resolution since July in which the European Parliament, across all political groups, has expressed its deep concern about the situation in Ethiopia. How can European leaders fail to act upon repeated appeals from this Parliament when the lives of Ethiopian prisoners are at stake?

(Applause)