

Thursday, 16 March 2006 - Strasbourg

Impunity in Africa and in particular the case of Hissène Habré (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes (PSE), author . - (PT) Mr President, we in Europe are dismayed that survivors of the genocide orchestrated by Slobodan Milosevic could not see him convicted in the Hague.

In Africa, the victims of governments that violate human rights and of war criminals have the right to justice and are seeking justice. Their names are: Hissène Habré, Charles Taylor, Mengistu Haile Mariam and Robert Mugabe.

A few days ago in the Committee on Human Rights, we heard a lawyer from Chad underline this in relation to the dictator Hissène Habré, who has lived in exile in Senegal for a number of years. The lawyer advocated his extradition to Belgium, where a court is seeking him at the request of the victims. She also explained that extradition is needed because in the context of the African Union, there are unfortunately no mechanisms yet in place, nor is there the political will, to try this criminal, who was responsible for the political assassinations of over 40 000 of his compatriots and the detention and torture of many more. She went on to say that the Senegalese authorities referring the matter to the African Union was intended not to facilitate justice and to preserve African dignity, but to block justice and to cause further offence to the victims seeking to bring Hissène Habré to justice.

Mr President, Commissioner, I was recently in Senegal, where I spoke to human rights activists, members of the Senegalese Parliament and journalists. All confirmed the same impression, unfortunately: The EU has responsibilities in Africa and this is why we have adopted this resolution today. Hopefully, as a result, Portuguese politicians will use their influence and seek an end to impunity for all of these criminals in Africa.