

Wednesday, 15 February 2006 - Strasbourg

Right to freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes (PSE). - (PT) I voted in favour of this resolution because I defend freedom of speech as a European and universal value and because I condemn violence as an expression of indignation, regardless of its target, and that includes European interests and embassies.

I also voted in favour because the second paragraph of the resolution condemns incitement to religious hatred and the dissemination of racist and xenophobic attitudes.

That being said, I feel that the resolution as a whole is unbalanced, because it focuses primarily on freedom of expression and not on the islamophobic intentions behind the cartoons published by an extreme right-wing, racist and xenophobic newspaper in Denmark.

If it is to promote freedom of expression and the most basic human rights, Parliament must categorically distance itself from islamophobia and must condemn any attempts to correlate Islam and its believers with terrorism.

My vote for this resolution was also an expression of my solidarity with the people of Denmark. I do not, however, approve of the complacent, arrogant attitude of the Fogh Rassmussen Government, which I hold jointly responsible for the fact that extremist reactionary forces, both in the West and in the Islamic world, have made capital from the incident by invoking the 'clash of civilisations'.