

Thursday, 26 October 2006 - Strasbourg

Uzbekistan

Ana Maria Gomes, on behalf of the PSE Group . - (PT) Even in a region trampled on by autocratic dictatorships, the Andijan massacre has managed to put Karimov's Uzbekistan out on its own. The government says that 169 people died, whereas the opposition puts the figure at 745. Regardless of the numbers involved, those responsible needed to be identified and brought to justice. The EU has done this, albeit only partially and half a year late. In November, the Council adopted an arms embargo and other restrictive sanctions. A year on, and how have matters developed?

The repression has worsened, with the work of the NGOs and the journalists having been stifled. In March, the High Commissioner for Refugees was expelled from the country and, worse still, between November and July, in an act of rare hypocrisy, over 250 people were summarily convicted for causing the May massacre, in a series of grotesque, media-circus trials.

All of this demonstrates that it is not only vital that we extend the existing sanctions for a further 12 months, but also that we deepen them by freezing financial transactions and European visas for the main Tashkent torturers, and broaden them to include the ringleader, President Karimov.