

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party
for the South East of England

Commissioner Barrot
DG Justice, Freedom and Security
The European Commission
200 Rue de la Loi
B1049 Brussels
Belgium

August 6th 2008

Dear Commissioner,

I have corresponded previously with your predecessor about the UK's failure to uphold the right to protest and the right to freedom of assembly. Whilst I recognise that the principles of the Charter of Human Rights only apply to member states when they are implementing Community Law, I believe it is crucial that the EU accords similar levels of scrutiny with regards human rights in existing member states as it does those applying to join the EU.

In the UK currently, protesters are holding a week long camp close to the site of a proposed new coal fired power station. The camp has stated that its aims are peaceful although some illegal action may be taken in an attempt to close down the power station. Throughout the week, there is a programme of educational workshops designed to raise awareness of climate change and possible solutions.

The local police authority in Medway, Kent, in partnership with London Metropolitan Police, appear to have adopted an approach designed to shut down the camp in its entirety, rather focussing exclusively on specific illegal activity. So, they have been searching everyone, including MPs and MEPs just walking on the road leading to the camp. They have confiscated items as varied as marker pens, board games, soap, banners and costumes. Moreover, they have refused to allow items into the camp that are essential for it to meet health and safety standards, including a disabled access ramp and water pipes, as well as renewable power equipment.

Policing of demonstrations and protests is always necessary. However, more than 20 people were injured on site earlier this week when riot police stormed the site with sniffer dogs. Some police have been not been wearing their identification numbers. One MP, simply standing speaking with some protesters, was knocked to the ground by police and narrowly avoided being sprayed with CS spray. This is a serious and escalating situation caused, at least in part, by a disproportionate police response and an apparent determination to close down the climate camp. Surely, the EU has a role to play in ensuring that a blanket approach to policing legitimate dissent does not prevent the freedom to protest from being upheld?

I trust you will give this your immediate attention and stress to the UK government that the EU will not tolerate human rights being breached in any member state.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.