



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Olli Rehn
Member of the Commission

20 JUL. 2005

Brussels,
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Dear Dr. Lucas,

Thank you for your letter of 9 June concerning the detention of Mr. Mehmet Tarhan. Please accept my apologies for the delayed reply.

According to information available to the Commission, Mr Mehmet Tarhan who presents himself as a conscientious objector was arrested in Izmir on 8 April on the charges of "disobeying orders". He was then transferred to his military unit in Tokat to be forced to do compulsory military service. He was subsequently taken to Sivas to await trial. He was charged with "insubordination in front of his unit" in accordance with Article 88 of the Turkish Military Penal Code. Following the hearing of 9 June Mr Tarhan was released from prison and his trial was adjourned to a later date.

As already reported by the Council of Europe, the Commission notes that Turkey does not recognise the right of conscientious objection, a right listed under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Similarly, Turkey does not have an alternative service of a clearly civilian nature that should be neither deterrent nor punitive in character.

As regards ill-treatment and other human rights abuses, Turkey has repeatedly indicated its intention to pursue a zero-tolerance policy vis-à-vis the responsible persons. The European Commission expects Turkey to stick to its commitment to comply with the Copenhagen political criteria in general and in particular as regards any individual case which might occur. In this context, the Commission has repeatedly mentioned to the Turkish authorities the need to pursue vigorous efforts in view of eradicating remaining instances of ill-treatment and to take any appropriate measures to fight against impunity.

The Commission will continue to monitor closely the situation with regard to human rights including the fight against ill-treatment in Turkey in the context of its monitoring of the Copenhagen political criteria and where necessary raise the cases directly with the Turkish authorities.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Caroline Lucas
MEP for the South East of England
European Parliament
rue Wiertz,
1047 Bruxelles