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PRESS RELEASE

Javier Solana: "*no information*" on CIA renditions or detention centres

"Professionally, in the role I have now, I have no competence to question EU Member States" on allegations of illegal CIA flights and detention centres operating in Europe, Javier Solana told the temporary Committee investigating these claims. Some MEPs criticised the Foreign and Security Policy High Representative, saying he was ***"washing his hands of responsibility"***.

"Our stance against torture and other cruel treatment is clear. It is always wrong and illegal. There are no ifs or buts", Mr Solana said. With respect to secret detention centres, he added: *"if these exist or have existed in Europe or elsewhere, they would violate international human rights and humanitarian law"*.

Rapporteur Claudio FAVA (PES, IT) said the committee was investigating *"tolerance, complicity or cooperation"* on the part of Member States in extraordinary renditions. He asked Mr Solana if he had any knowledge of whether the practice was still going on. *"I have no information whatsoever that tells me with certainty that any of the accusations, allegations, rumours... are true"*, answered the High Representative. *"I don't have the competence [...] to ask the countries to how they have handled these questions and they don't have the obligation to answer me"*.

Some MEPs were dissatisfied with this reply. Sarah LUDFORD (ALDE, UK) asked: *"How are you making sure that the treaties are being complied with?"*, saying he had a duty to act. Jose Ignacio Salafranca (EPP-ED, ES) asked whether the treaties should be changed to give the EU greater authority on these issues. Mr Solana said he *"cannot go beyond the remit given by the Treaties."*

Sophia in't VELD (ALDE, NL) asked for a *"watertight guarantee"* that the EU's Situation Centre has not been using information obtained under torture, directly or indirectly. Mr Solana said *"I have the certainty that the twenty-five members of the EU comply with all the conventions on human rights law to which they are party. If you have information to the contrary, I would like to know it"*.

Stavros LAMBRINIDIS (PES, EL) asked whether any EU-US agreement allowed for extraordinary renditions from EU airports. No such agreement exists, said Mr Solana, but he could not exclude bilateral agreements with individual Member States.

Alvaro Gil Robles: don't sacrifice human rights to fight terrorism

MEPs also heard from Alvaro Gil Robles, the former Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights. He was firmly against measures taken by some countries to fight terrorism by sacrificing human rights standards, he said. *"We need to say this publicly: there are situations where human rights have been violated by certain members of the Council of Europe – Chechnya is just one example. We also have what we call 'black holes' in European countries like Moldova and Georgia, where human rights do not apply"*.

Asked by Barbara Kudrycka (EPP-ED, PL) whether any EU Member State's anti-terrorism legislation violated human rights, Mr Gil Robles said he could give at least one positive answer: the United Kingdom. He had sent the UK government his opinion that a draft law would violate the European Convention on Human Rights and luckily the House of Lords amended the text.

Questions for NATO Secretary General

Mr Gil Robles said he had had the opportunity to visit "*a well known detention centre in Kosovo where the KFOR [NATO forces in the territory] sent its detainees, in the grounds of an American military base*". This was taken up in a parallel meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, where Ana Maria Gomes (PES, PT) asked NATO Secretary General Jaap De Hoop Scheffer if he could furnish any information about the fate of these prisoners. The Secretary General strongly rejected these charges, which he called "*very serious*," and said "*I cannot accept these allegations*." He said that there have been no KFOR detainees since 2004, and that NATO always respected human rights. In response to Jan Marinus Wiersma (PES, NL), Mr De Hoop Scheffer said that he had no information on alleged CIA flights or alleged extraordinary renditions, and that he has no plans to appear before the EP's temporary committee.

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