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PRESS RELEASE

CIA activities in Europe: Member States to bear the burden of proof, say MEPs

The committee investigating the detention and transfer of prisoners by the CIA in Europe held a press conference to follow up the committee's adoption of an interim report yesterday. The Chairman and the rapporteur welcomed the text, announcing that the EP's priority during the next months will be to clarify the degree of involvement of different Member States in the CIA activities which have been proved in Europe.

"I would like to stress that this is only the first provisional report by the committee", said Chairman Carlos Coelho (EPP-ED, PT). "Our next six months of work will be devoted to analysing the responsibility of Member States in cases of extraordinary renditions in Europe which we have proved so far, following more than 50 hours of hearings and having listened to more than 70 people".

Mr. Coelho underlined the following conclusions from the report:

- We are convinced that Member States have the obligation to ensure that human rights are respected on their territory; it is their responsibility to prove that there are no violations and to monitor their airspace and airports;
- It is a fact that the CIA carried illegal activities in Europe. At the same time, *"it is implausible"* that the Member States were not aware of some of such activities.
- Our committee condemns torture in any case, independently of the circumstances.

1080 documented CIA stopovers

The rapporteur Claudio Fava (PSE, IT) celebrated the results of the yesterday's vote, during which his report was approved with some modifications by 25 members in favour, 14 against and 7 abstentions. He said the text is the result of *"a broad consensus in Parliament"* on the existence of illegal CIA activities in Europe. Mr Fava also presented the press with a 70-page document, in which he traced up to 1080 CIA operated flights which touched down in European airports between 2001 and 2005.

"Some people complained that this committee has not produced new facts (valid material): we had more than 50 hours of hearings and gave the victims their first opportunity to be heard. Calling their extraordinary renditions 'alleged' detentions would be an affront for these victims", he added, and stressed that "it is a fact that the principle of non-refoulement has been repeatedly violated". Mr. Fava concluded: "Given the routes taken by many flights and some of [their destinations] (Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Uzbekistan, Guantanamo), it is only logical to assume that extraordinary renditions happened on more than one occasion".

Cooperation with national governments

Asked about the concrete steps to be taken by the Committee in the following semester, Mr. Fava said he will ask heads of the political groups represented in the temporary committee to send a delegation to Poland and Romania to investigate the alleged existence of detention centres. He will also propose to organise a hearing with representatives from the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy and Germany.

Answering questions from journalists on the level of cooperation with national authorities so far, Mr. Coelho concluded that "*the worst example so far*" is that of the Spanish secret services, who didn't even reply to his formal letter (sent two months ago) inviting its director to participate in a hearing.

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