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New attacks on freedom of expression in Turkey

Written question no 531 to the Committee of Ministers
presented by Mr Salles

Five months after the murder in Turkey of the journalist of Armenian origin, Mr Hrant Dink, his son, Mr Arat Dink, now editor-in-chief of the weekly, Agos, and Serkis Seropyan, Aydin Engin and Karin Karakashli, all journalists at Agos, have been charged with "insulting Turkish identity" under Article 301 of the Penal Code. When they appeared in court on 14 June 2007, the Istanbul Prosecutor called for sentences ranging from six months' to three years' imprisonment.

These developments have come about although the murder of Hrant Dink has still not been fully cleared up and proceedings have even been brought against one of the Dink family's lawyers, Mr Erdal Dogal.

Naturally, this state of affairs gives us great cause for concern insofar as these attacks on freedom of expression are continuing and are an obstacle to the development of democracy in the country.

It also has to be said that stating that the Armenian genocide took place continues to be regarded as a criminal offence.

Moreover, in spite of the repeated calls from European institutions and from human rights organisations, Article 301 of the Penal Code remains in force as the legal provision on the basis of which these attacks on freedom of expression are carried out.

In the light of the above,

Mr Rudy Salles is disappointed that, over a year after he tabled a written question on the subject, Turkey remains in breach of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and its commitments as a Council of Europe member state.

To ask the Committee of Ministers whether it can make sure that the Turkish authorities take all the necessary steps to ensure that freedom of expression is exercised in full, in particular by abolishing Article 301 of the Penal Code, and whether it can also ask the Commissioner for Human Rights to make representations to that effect.

Signed:

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