



MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Mrs Benita Ferrero-Waldner
Commissioner for External Relations
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1040 Brussels

Brussels, May 28th 2008

Dear Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner,

We are writing to you to express our serious concern about the continued broadcasting into Europe of the television station "Al-Manar" via the satellite providers Nilesat, owned by the Egyptian government, and Arabsat, majority-owned by Saudi Arabia.

Al-Manar is the Beirut-based television station owned and operated by Hezbollah. As you may be aware from past statements and reports by the European Commission but also from the global media that has exposed the content of its programmes, Al-Manar regularly and unabashedly incites anti-Western hatred and violence. Al-Manar glorifies suicide bombers and explicitly uses verses of the Quran to justify, promote and advocate violence against the "enemies of Islam".

On its website, Al-Manar's stated purpose is to wage a "psychological warfare" against its enemies. In an interview, an Al-Manar official said its programming is meant to "*help people on the way to committing what you in the West call a suicide mission.*"

Al-Manar has been found to be in breach of European audiovisual legislation (Article 3b, ex-Article 22a, of the Television Without Frontiers Directive) and all European satellite providers have stopped broadcasting Al-Manar.

Under the EU-Egypt Action Plan signed in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, Egypt commits to "*cooperate to combat [...] hate or defamatory discourse based on religion, beliefs, race or origin*" and also to implement the Euro-Mediterranean Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism, in which all parties including Egypt "*confirmed that we will prohibit and prevent the incitement of terrorist acts through the adoption of appropriate measures.*"

On 2 and 3 June, the EU-Egypt sub-committee on "Political Matters: Human Rights and Democracy" will convene for the first time. On 24 April 2008, in its reply to Oral Question H-0246/08 (see attachment), the European Commission pointed out that it "*fully shares*" concerns about Al-Manar incitement to hatred and that the sub-committee on political



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matters of the European Neighbourhood Policy is the "appropriate mechanism for raising issues related to the fight against racism and xenophobia".

Given the urgency of the matter, we ask you, as European Commissioner for External relations, and we call on the European Commission, to enforce the provisions of the agreements signed between the European Union and Egypt in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. In particular, we ask you to ensure that the European Commission establishes a formal dialogue with Egypt in relation to Al-Manar and clearly pointing out the radical and violent content of broadcasts of such channel.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Jana Hybášková

Zuzana Roithová

Jan Březina

Petr Duchoň

Jaroslav Zvěřina