

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0099/04

by Pietro-Paolo Mennea (NI), Marco Cappato (NI), Benedetto Della Vedova (NI), Lucio Manisco (GUE/NGL), Mario Borghezio (NI), Roberto Bigliardo (UEN), Luisa Morgantini (GUE/NGL), Carlo Fatuzzo (PPE-DE), Giovanni Fava (PSE), Marco Pannella (NI), Generoso Andria (PPE-DE), Vitaliano Gemelli (PPE-DE), Gianfranco Dell'Alba (NI), Sebastiano Musumeci (UEN), Pasqualina Napoletano (PSE), Amalia Sartori (PPE-DE), Giovanni Pittella (PSE), Mariotto Segni (UEN), Luigi Cocilovo (PPE-DE), Walter Veltroni (PSE), Giorgio Ruffolo (PSE), Raffaele Costa (PPE-DE), Luigi Cesaro (PPE-DE), Paolo Pastorelli (PPE-DE), Adriana Poli Bortone (UEN), Fiorella Ghilardotti (PSE), Giovanni Procacci (ELDR), Claudio Martelli (ELDR), Mauro Nobilia (UEN), Antonio Mussa (UEN), Renato Brunetta (PPE-DE) and Olivier Dupuis (NI)  
to the Commission

Subject: Burma

According to press reports, the ruling military junta in Burma (now called Myanmar), which is headed by General Khin Nyunt, has sentenced to death Zaw Thet Htway, aged 37, the editor of the sports magazine First Eleven.

Zaw Thet Htway is alleged to have conspired, along with colleagues, to assassinate the leaders who are oppressing that country through their dictatorial regime. No official warrant was issued for the journalists' arrest and their trial was conducted without the assistance of any lawyers not subject to pressure or external influence and without international observers, who could have guaranteed if not a fair trial then at least one that reflected the fundamental principles of justice. Zaw Thet Htway and the eight other defendants were sentenced to death and confined to a special prison.

All these people have done is to voice a critical opinion of the regime led by General Khin Nyunt by denouncing the misdeeds, abuses and harassment which the people of Burma have been suffering for too long now. The members of this dictatorship have, in fact, over the years, spirited away international donations to the value of several million dollars which were actually intended for the world of sport, to construct and renovate facilities, purchase sports equipment and clothing, and promote football throughout the country.

The military government, on the other hand, has gone so far as to appropriate funds earmarked for sport, without the merest fraction of the money received being allocated to the ends for which it was intended, in order to maintain the current system, which is corrupt, repressive and flies in the face of the most fundamental democratic principles.

In practice, a criticism and negative opinion of this corrupt system has been transformed into an 'illegal' conspiracy against the state, and therefore one punishable by death.

Will the Commission use the powers conferred upon it to intervene to ensure the suspension and revocation of this death sentence, thereby saving the lives of the nine accused, and to safeguard the most fundamental principles of civilisation and democracy that should be applied to all citizens of a democratic nation, in line with the dictates of the European Union?