



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Member of the European Parliament

PRESS RELEASE, September 29 2010

MEP Ana Gomes asks President Zuma of South Africa to help release Ethiopian Birtukan Mideksa

(Brussels) **MEP Ana GOMES (S&D, PT)** asked **President Jacob Zuma of South Africa today, during a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, to help liberate Birtukan Mideksa**, a young woman leader of a main opposition party in her country, Ethiopia, who has been jailed for life and whom Amnesty International considers to be a "prisoner of conscience".

The South African Head of State admitted to not knowing the case in particular, but **assured the European Parliament that "if she was jailed unfairly, South Africa would certainly be willing to use its influence" and press for her release.**

Ana Gomes asked President Zuma and South Africa to show solidarity towards Ms. Mideksa, who the people of Ethiopia consider the "Ethiopian Nelson Mandela". The Portuguese Socialist MEP evoked Nelson Mandela and his inspiring fight for freedom, stating that *"he is not just a hero of South Africans, he is a hero for Mankind"*, and recalled how world solidarity was important to return Nelson Mandela to freedom. ***"Will South Africa now show solidarity to get the release of this brave, young African woman imprisoned for life in Ethiopia, the country that hosts the headquarters of the African Union?"***, directed Ana Gomes to President Zuma.

Together with MEP Marita ULVSKOG (S&D, SE), Ana Gomes proposed **Birtukan Mideksa for the Sakharov Prize 2010**. During the last plenary session in Strasbourg, the nomination of the Ethiopian political prisoner won the endorsement of the Socialists & Democrats Group for the European Parliament's prestigious Human Rights annual award.

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