

Dear Colleague,

ahead of the forthcoming Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy, we are writing to you in our capacity as Chairpersons of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committees of the Italian Parliament in relation to the case of the two non-commissioned officers of the Italian Navy Infantry, First Class Captain Massimiliano Latorre and Second Captain Salvatore Girone, who have been detained in India for two years now.

The case has come to the attention of Europe and the international community because the two Italian marines have been accused of the death of two Indian citizens following an incident that occurred at sea in February 2012 in international waters, off the coast of India, during a counter-piracy surveillance mission for the security of trade in compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions on the fight against piracy.

As you might be aware, on 10th February 2014 the Indian prosecuting authority, after two years' silence, formally asked the Supreme Court for the two Italian officers to be tried under India's anti-terrorism and anti-piracy legislation.

It is clear that Italy deems the situation to be absolutely unacceptable.

As already emphasised by Italy's President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, during his recent visit to the European Parliament, this is a case of common interest for Europe as a whole, as the two marines were on board an Italian ship while on duty during an official international counter-piracy operation, supported by the European Union and by individual Member States.

In relation to this case, the European Union has spoken with one voice as the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso stated that "any decision on the case may have an overall European Union-India relations and will be assessed carefully".

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, also expressed the serious concerns of the European Union on the case, which risks having a negative impact on the efforts made by the EU and at a global level in the fight against piracy.

The Italian Parliament as a whole is following the developments of the case very closely and with great concern, also in light of the serious repercussions that this deplorable precedent might have on the certainty of international law and the effectiveness of the action undertaken for peace and security within the framework of

international missions, to which Italy has been contributing with strong determination.

Against this backdrop, a delegation of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committees of the Italian Parliament representing all political forces visited Delhi in late January, where it held meetings with diplomatic representatives of a number of European countries, together with the Head of the EU Delegation, and reaffirmed our willingness to open up a new channel for dialogue through parliamentary diplomacy so as to help accelerate a positive solution of the dispute.

Following the January visit, also looking ahead to the Conference of Speakers and Presidents of EU Parliaments, the President of Italy's Chamber of Deputies, Laura Boldrini, addressed an appeal to the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, in order to draw the attention of the Members of the European Parliament to the case, and to get support for the Italian request for the application of international law and for a prompt solution.

At this stage, Italy has requested that the case be dealt with in compliance with international law without further delay and that the two marines be granted all safeguards under the rule of law, including the possibility to return immediately to their home country, taking into consideration that they have been deprived of their personal liberty for two years without any official charges.

We would be very grateful if you could bring this case to the attention of the members of your Committee, also with a view to adopting any possible initiative that you might deem useful for its equitable solution.

Yours Very Truly

Sen. Pierferdinando Casini
Chairman, Foreign Affairs Committee
of the Senate, IPU Honorary President

Hon. Fabrizio Cicchitto
Chairman, Foreign Affairs Committee
of the Chamber of Deputies

Sen. Nicola Latorre
Chairman, Defence Committee of the
Senate

Hon. Elio Vito
Chairman, Defence Committee of the
Chamber of Deputies