
EU PARLIAMENT DEMANDS SAUDI LOBBY TRANSPARENCY

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15.02.2019

EU Observer (14 February 2018)

The European Parliament on Thursday (14 February) demanded the EU institutions "look into the lack of listings of Saudi Arabia within the EU transparency register."

The latest blow to the Riyadh regime comes amid a brewing scandal after having paid the College of Europe, which is not listed in the register, to set up private meetings with MEPs to discuss EU-Saudi relations.

The Strasbourg plenary on Thursday demanded that the European Commission and the European Parliament probe the lack of transparency surrounding Saudi Arabia's ties to the EU.

Those demands are primarily tied to other revelations by Corporate Europe Observatory, a pro-transparency NGO, of a Brussels-based lobby firm that had been working on the behalf of the Saudis.

Thursday's call was also part of a much bigger resolution condemning gender-based violence in Saudi Arabia as well as their brutal treatment and torture of human rights defenders.

Aside from calling out the Saudi's over the abuse, the parliament has demanded Riyadh immediately release detained women's rights defenders and all human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists and other prisoners of conscience.

Voted through by 517 in favour, 10 against, and 70 abstentions, the latest resolution against the Saudis comes at a tricky time.

College of Europe

Next week, seven Saudi ambassadors to EU states along with other high-ranking government officials are visiting the EU institutions in a visit set up by the Bruges-based College of Europe.

Although not drawing any profit, the College of Europe earlier this week told EUobserver that the Saudi's are paying them to cover its costs for organising the Saudi visit.

Those meetings will be not held in public and will span a wide range of policy issues, including topics on human rights and trade. The College of Europe counts current EU officials and MEPs as graduates.

The European Commission had also earlier this week placed Saudi Arabia on an EU black list for money laundering.

"Europe cannot be a laundromat for dirty money that sponsors crime and terrorism," Vera Jourova, the EU commissioner for justice, told reporters following the release of the updated black list.

Kaynak/Source: