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New directive risks undermining the very freedoms it aims to protect

Terrorism

The European Parliament has today (16 Feb) adopted the new EU directive intended to support the fight against terrorism. Despite welcoming elements of the directive, the Greens/EFA Group voted against, citing a range of concerns regarding the definition of terrorist offences and the risks posed to fundamental freedoms.

In particular, the definition of "terrorist offenses" is far too broad, including actions which cause "major economic loss". The criminal offense of "public provocation" is also too vague, and would be open to interpretations by Member States that would seriously threaten freedom of expression.

Greens/EFA Justice and home affairs spokesperson, **Jan Philipp Albrecht** commented:

"Despite good progress in the harmonization of criminal offenses, improved information exchange and greater protection for victims, the problems with this directive are far too serious for us to give our support."

"What the directive defines as terrorism could be used by governments to criminalise political actions or protest. We risk a situation in which climate campaigners, or civil rights activists, could find themselves charged with terrorist offenses if their actions cause economic damage. Likewise, the new criminal offense of public provocation could undermine freedom of expression."

Greens/EFA member of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs committee **Eva Joly** added:

"We are deeply sceptical about the move to criminalise travel for the purposes of terrorism, including within the European Union. Suspects can already be arrested on the grounds of suspicion alone, making this new measure largely redundant. But while the added value of this new provision has not been demonstrated, there is a real risk of it being abused and misused in a discriminatory manner."

"It appears that, for the sake of being seen to be tough on terror, the very freedoms that terrorists want to undermine will end up diminished. Rather than creating lists of new and unclear offences, we should establish mandatory and automatic exchange of information between Member States and ensure closer cross-border cooperation in investigating known suspects."

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