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Press release | 22.05.2012

Dialogue for peace in northern Mali

Press release from François Alfonsi

Corsican MEP **François Alfonsi** has welcomed an initial dialogue between Malian officials and representatives of the Touareg movement at the European Parliament.

On the 22 May during a conference at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, the Corsican MEP invited representatives of the Touareg movement in order to better understand their situation and their claims in the Azawad region of north Mali.

The Touareg delegation was made up of Mr Hamma Ag Mahmoud, former Touareg minister in the Malian government, Mrs Zakiyatou Oualett Halatine, former Touraeg minister in the Malian government and former UN official, as well as two spokespeople of MNLA (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad), Mr Mossa Ag Attaher and Mr Mossa Ag Assarid.

Representatives of the Malian government, as well as MPs from the Malian national assembly also took part in the conference and had an exchange of views with the Touareg.

Following these discussions, **M. Alfonsi** commented:

"I am pleased that the European Parliament has been able to open a dialogue between the parties involved in this conflict and I hope that will contribute to a quick and peaceful solution.

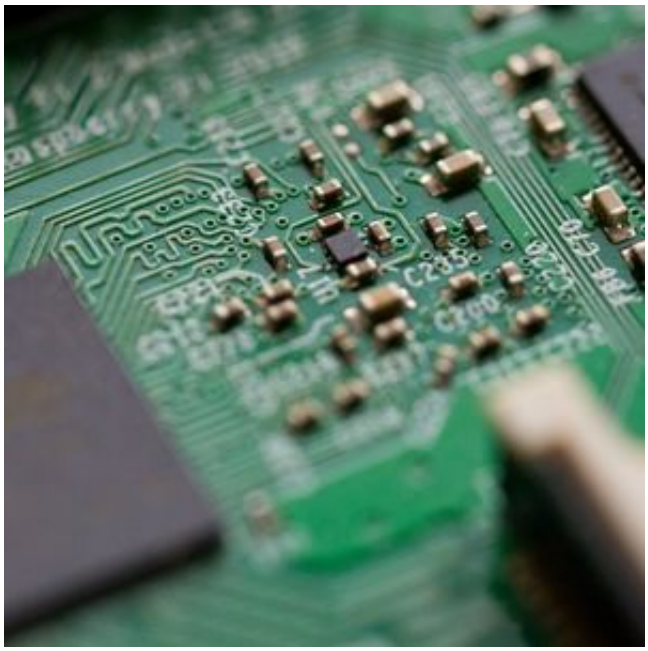
"The very fact that an exchange of views has taken place is an encouraging sign. Now, the European Union must do all it can to ensure that dialogue continues.

"Europe should respect Azawad's right to self-determination. For more than sixty years, the Touareg people have been victims of marginalisation and discrimination. It's quite legitimate that they should now be claiming their fundamental rights of freedom and recognition of their culture and territory."

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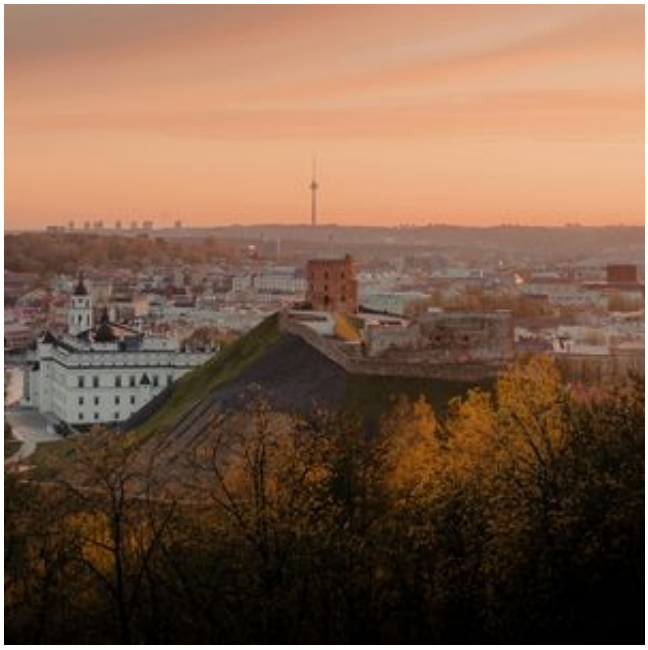
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