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EUROPEAN DEMOCRATIC LAWYERS

PRESS STATEMENT

The EDL has come to know with dismay that the Italian military intelligence (*Servizio di Informazioni Militare Italiano, SISMI*) has spied and created records on around 200 European judges.

As results from newspaper articles and from a resolution passed on July 4th 2007, by the Italian High Council of the Judiciary (*Consiglio Superiore della Magistratura*), the Association MEDEL (*Magistrats européens pour la démocratie et les libertés*) and many of the judges and prosecutors who take part in its activity, have been the object of an intelligence and espionage operation on part of the Italian Intelligence and Military Security Service (SISMI) from 2001 to 2006. This intelligence operation included the monitoring of their activities, movements and mail exchanges and was based solely on the presumption that the professional activities of these magistrates as well as their positions in political and cultural debates were politically motivated. This operation aimed at intimidating the magistrates or damaging their reputation.

Every attack on the independence of the magistrates is an attack on the freedom of the defence. The EDL's commitment to the protection of fundamental rights includes the right to a fair trial which depends on the presence of an independent judge.

In this case not only individual judges were spied on -and this is bad enough- but a whole association was controlled and the email exchange of their members monitored. This constitutes an unprecedented attack to the freedom of association and demonstrates that no physical person or association can be certain that their activity and their commitment are not the object of illegal interference.

The EDL expresses its total solidarity with the MEDEL and with the individual magistrates that have suffered this inadmissible attack to the fundamental principle of independence of the magistrates. The EDL asks that light may shed to ascertain all responsibility and confirms its commitment to the protection of the fundamental rights of the citizens against any attempt to diminish democratic guarantees.

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AED (Avvocati Europei Democratici)

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