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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for the debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 122 of the Rules of Procedure

on the 31 October 2010 attack on a church in Bagdag

Charles Tannock, Peter van Dalen, Michał Tomasz Kamiński, Tomasz Piotr Poręba, Marek Henryk Migalski, Ryszard Czarnecki, Adam Bielan, Ryszard Antoni Legutko, Konrad Szymański
on behalf of the ECR Group

European Parliament resolution on the 31 October 2010 attack on a church in Bagdag

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolution on the situation in Iraq,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on the right of refugees to international protection,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions adopted on 16 November 2009 on freedom of religion or belief in which it underlines the strategic importance of this freedom and of countering religious intolerance,
 - having regard to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) and to the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees,
 - having regard to the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief,
 - having regard to the statements by the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on Iraq, in particular the one of 1 November 2010 following the attack against worshipers at Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad, Iraq,
 - having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. Whereas on 31 October 2010 around a dozen extremists, armed and wearing suicide vests, stormed the Our Lady of Deliverance Church in Karrada, Bagdad, after attacking the Baghdad Stock Market in the central part of the Iraqi capital earlier in the day,
- B. Whereas the extremists took about 120 churchgoers hostage, immediately killing a number of people,
- C. Whereas security officers stormed the church around 9pm to bring to an end the roughly four-hour standoff,
- D. Whereas in the following fight 56 hostages including the priests Wassim Sabih and Thaer Saad Abdal and a number of police officers and extremists were killed and at least 67 people wounded by gunfire and explosions of suicide vests,
- E. Whereas immediately following the attack, the Al Qaeda affiliated terrorist organization 'Islamic State of Iraq' claimed responsibility for the attack through a statement posted on a radical Islamic website,

- F. Whereas in statements on militant websites in the weeks following the attack, the 'Islamic State of Iraq' called for the continual bloodshed of Christians in the Middle East,
- G. Whereas this bloody attack is not an isolated event but rather the worst incident so far in an intensifying series of attacks specifically targeting Assyrians (Chaldeans, Syriacs and other Christian minorities) in Iraq, illustrated by the murder of the high ranking Chaldean Catholic archbishop Paulus Faraj Raho of Mosul in March 2008 and more recently the spate of bombings of Christian houses on 10 November 2010, as a result of which 5 people died,
- H. Whereas the UN High Commission for Refugees estimated last year that since the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, up to 500,000 Christians had left the country, a number which translates to about half the Christian population leaving within the short time span of six years,
- I. Whereas many of the remaining Iraqi Assyrians (Chaldeans, Syriacs and other Christian minorities) are now Internally Displaced People, having had to flee extremist violence aimed at them,
- J. Whereas the Assyrians (Chaldeans, Syriacs and other Christian minorities) constitute an ancient and indigenous people who are very vulnerable as a result of persecution and forced emigration, and whereas there is a danger of their culture becoming extinct,
- K. Whereas according to research by German NGO The Society for Threatened Peoples (STP), more than three-quarters of the original 400,000 Christians of Baghdad have fled the city since 2003 and many of those who remain avoid attending mass or sending their children to Christian schools¹,
- L. Whereas according to the World Refugee Survey 2008 by the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, in that year Syria hosted some 1.3 million Iraqi refugees, of whom about 20 percent were Christians² and the US State Department's International Religious Freedom Report 2008 states that 16 percent of registered Iraqi refugees in Jordan were Christians³,
- M. Whereas Iraq is a State in transition in which violent extremists from various sides constantly try to destabilize the country with threats and attacks,
- N. Whereas other minorities are also disproportionately targeted by these extremists and the overall security situation in the country seems to be getting worse again,
- O. Whereas on 26 October 2010 Tariq Aziz, former Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq was sentenced to death by the Iraqi High Tribunal, an act which has sparked much Iraqi and international criticism, including by the European Union,
- P. Whereas on 11 November 2011 a political deal has been reached by the State of Law Coalition, led by Iraqi Prime Minister in Office Nouri Al-Maliki and the Iraqi National Movement, led by former Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, to form a coalition

government, but this deal has immediately been undermined by further political tensions,

1. Condemns the attacks of 31 October 2010 and the abuse of religion by those who committed these acts, in that spirit condemns vigorously the declarations by Al Qaeda and its affiliates to continue to cause mayhem in order to destabilize Iraq;
2. Expresses its sympathy and solidarity with the victims and their relatives;
3. Urges the Government of Iraq to protect Assyrians (Chaldeans, Syriacs and other Christian minorities), who have been in these lands for almost 2000 years, and their properties, especially in the Bagdad and Mosul areas;
4. Recognizes the contribution of the regional Kurdish government in assisting Assyrian (Chaldean, Syriac and other Christian minorities) communities that are internally displaced;
5. Calls on local, regional and religious authorities in Iraq to take immediate steps to improve security for all the refugees and internally displaced persons in Iraq and end discriminatory practices;
6. Calls for the establishment of a special autonomous region in the Nineveh province which has sizeable Assyrian, Syriac and Chaldean communities, as made possible by article 125 of the Iraqi Constitution and welcomes President Jalal Talabani's support for this concept in a recent French television interview;
7. Urges the Government of Iraq and the Kurdish Regional Government to enable legally the change of religious affiliation on identity papers for all religions or remove the notion of religious affiliation on identity papers altogether;
8. Welcomes the declaration by Iraqi President Jalal Talibani on 17 November 2010 that he would not sign the execution order of former Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz; and urges the Iraqi authorities to grant Tariq Aziz a fair trial and his rights as a prisoner according to international standards;
9. Instructs the EU and its Member States to support the young Iraqi democracy, *inter alia* by more actively seeking to establish ties between European and Iraqi politicians and by supporting and funding moderate forces in the country;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council and the Government and Parliament of Iraq.

¹ <http://www.gfbv.de/pressemit.php?id=1916&stayInsideTree=1&backlink=land.php?id=91>

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http://www.refugees.org/countryreports.aspx?__VIEWSTATE=dDwtOTMxNDcwOTk7O2w8Q291bnRyeUREOkdvQnV0dG9uOz4%2BUwqzZxiYLI0SfZCZue2XtA0UFEQ%3D&cid=2172&subm=&ssm=&map=&searchtext=

³ <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108483.htm>