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Plenary sitting

25.11.2014

B8-0295/2014

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

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

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on Iraq: kidnapping and mistreatment of women
(2014/2971(RSP))

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B8-0295/2014

European Parliament resolution on Iraq: kidnapping and mistreatment of women (2014/2971(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on human rights and democracy in Iraq
- having regard to its resolution of 18 September 2014 on the situation in Iraq and Syria, and the ISIS offensive including the persecution of minorities
- having regard to the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which was opened for signature on 11 May 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey
- having regard to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- having regard to the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- having regard to UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security, of 31 October 2000
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 May 2014 on the 2013 Report on the Implementation of the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015
- having regard to the objectives of the European Commission-UN Women joint initiative Spring Forward for Women, launched on 17 October 2014
- having regard to the comments of the United Nations envoy for Iraq, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, to the UN Security Council on 18 November 2014
- having regard to the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on gender equality
- having regard to the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council meeting of 20 October 2014 on the situation in Iraq
- having regard to UN Human Rights Council resolution S-22 of 1 September 2014 on the human rights situation in Iraq in light of abuses committed by the Islamic State and associated groups
- having regard to the Human Rights Watch report "Iraq: Forced Marriage, Conversion for Yezidis" of 12 October 2014
- having regard to the "Common Declaration of the Turkmen, Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian and Ezidi Kurdic people of Iraq" as signed in the European Parliament on 19 November 2014

- having regard to Rule 123 of its Rules of Procedure

A. whereas the overall human rights situation in Iraq has deteriorated in recent months as so-called Islamic State (IS) insurgents escalate their attacks in the western and northern parts of the country; whereas over the last three months large numbers of women and children have been killed or abducted by IS; whereas Amnesty International has reported that many of the abducted women and girls have been subjected to rape or sexual abuse, forced to marry fighters, or sold into sexual slavery; whereas some women have been sold as slaves for as little as US\$25

B. whereas women across Iraq are at risk from violence, honour killings, forced marriage, discrimination, false imprisonment, detention without charge or trial, and enslavement

C. whereas around one in five Iraqi women aged between 15 and 49 are reported to have suffered physical violence at the hands of their husbands; whereas a 2010 report to the Kurdistan Regional Government on Female Genital Mutilation suggested the practice may affect as many as 41 per cent of women in the region

D. whereas the emergence of IS has condemned thousands of women and girls in Iraq to gross human rights violations or death

E. whereas thousands of women and girls in Iraq have been kidnapped by IS fighters and reportedly forced into marriage or sold as sex slaves; whereas their exact fate is uncertain

F. whereas increased insecurity has forced large numbers of Iraqis to flee from their homes, with the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) now estimated to be more than 1.8 million

G. whereas hundreds of Yazidi women from northern Iraq have been captured during the rapid advance of IS in Iraq this year; whereas dozens of women have escaped IS forces and are now in hiding; whereas interviews with women who escaped reveal that IS corralled women into halls and other detention centres and gradually sold them off to fighters as the spoils of war

H. whereas while the vast majority of IS prisoners are Yazidi, the group has also targeted other minority ethnic and religious groups in Iraq, including Christians and Turkmen; whereas in recent weeks IS militants have reportedly killed more than 150 men, women and children belonging to the Sunni Al Bu Nimr tribe in the latest of a series of mass public killings

I. whereas, according to the Human Rights Watch report No One Is Safe: Abuses of Women in Iraq's Criminal Justice System, of February 2014 women's rights have suffered dramatically in Iraq since the Gulf War of 1991

J. whereas in 2013 at least 129 prisoners, including three women, were executed in Iraq; whereas in September 2013 at least 18 women were reported to be on death row in a prison in the al-Kadhemiya district of Baghdad

K. whereas on 6 February 2014 the Government of Iraq launched its National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2014-2018), concerning women, peace and security

L. whereas the global campaign of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence was marked enthusiastically across Iraq in November 2013 with a number of events hosted by the international community, the Iraqi Government, and others, demonstrating public support for change; whereas a draft personal status law, which would have reduced women's rights, lowering the age of marriage and changing custody and inheritance rights, was rejected by the Iraqi parliament

M. whereas a UK-funded Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) project in Basra has achieved considerable success, and could be rolled out in the north of Iraq; whereas engagement with women in Iraq is a key priority for Member States, including in efforts to improve women's access to employment and the political process, and to combat the effects of sexual violence

N. whereas Iraq is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women; whereas the protection and empowerment of women was identified as a priority in the then Government of Iraq's National Development Plan (2010-2014) and the Development Assistance Framework (2011-2014) by the United Nations

1. Welcomes the creation of a new unity government in Iraq and offers its support in helping it build a fairer, more inclusive society, including one which protects and promotes the rights of women

2. Regrets that years of dictatorship, sanctions, and conflict have led to a significant deterioration in the lives of Iraqi women

3. Notes that while women make up around two thirds of the Iraqi population, Iraq remains a male-dominated society; further regrets that while the Iraqi Constitution states that a quarter of the government must be made up of women, those women who hold positions in the government still have little to no power

4. Condemns without reservation the killings, kidnapping, rape, sexual violence, and torture committed by IS fighters in Iraq and believes such actions may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity

5. Expresses growing concern about the deteriorating human rights situation in Iraq and violations of international humanitarian law, not least in the context of Islamic State insurgency; further condemns the reported and widespread abuses against women in Iraq, including by IS fighters, but also more widely including in the Iraqi criminal justice system

6. Is deeply concerned at the terrorist acts against women and girls committed by the so-called Islamic State and associated groups, including against members of ethnic and religious minorities including Christians and Yazidis

7. Stresses the importance of taking appropriate steps to ensure the safety of women and girls in Iraq, as well as members of religious and ethnic minority groups; supports politically the self-defence of minorities where this is necessary in order to ensure their safety; further calls on the international community to assist the Government of Iraq in safeguarding all those fleeing terrorism or acts of violence
8. Calls on the Government of Iraq and all relevant international actors to investigate alleged abuses against women in detention and to prosecute those found responsible
9. Calls on the Government of Iraq to fulfill its obligations under the terms of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women to which it is a party
10. Condemns without reservation the use of forced religious conversions, forced marriage, and gender-based violence by IS fighters against women and girls in Iraq; further condemns the sexual enslavement of minority women in Iraq
11. Praises those Member States who sent vital humanitarian aid to the thousands of Yazidi refugees who fled IS fighters and were trapped on Mount Sinjar
12. Calls on the Government of Iraq to take immediate and meaningful legal measures to boost women's aspirations, to ensure equality with men, and to tackle violence against women; regrets that the Iraqi penal code continues to offer reduced sentences for so-called honour killings and to allow husbands to discipline their wives
13. Believes in the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction; calls on the Government of Iraq to ensure the equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security
14. Calls on the Government of Iraq and all international actors to protect women and girls in Iraq from all forms of gender-based violence, including as a result of the current IS insurgency
15. Recognises that the overwhelming majority of victims of stalking, sexual harassment, sexual violence and rape, physical, sexual and psychological abuse, forced marriage, and forced sterilisation are women; further condemns such practices as a tool used by men to sustain male power and control; believes that weak legal, judicial, and social structures, and entrenched cultural behaviour exacerbate such practices
16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the EEAS, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.