



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Plenary sitting

16.12.2014

B8-0385/2014

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 Mauritania, in particular the case of Biram Dah Arbeid
(2014/2999(RSP))

Josef Weidenholzer, Hugues Bayet, Enrico Gasbarra, Ana Gomes, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Alessia Maria Mosca, Miroslav Poche, Gilles Pargneaux, Nicola Caputo, Kashetu Kyenge, Liisa Jaakonsaari, Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg, Enrique Guerrero Salom, Andi Cristea, Alessandra Moretti, Goffredo Maria Bettini, Krystyna Lybacka, Marc Tarabella, Marlene Mizzi, Miriam Dalli, Doru-Claudian Frunzulică
on behalf of the S&D Group

**European Parliament resolution on Mauritania, in particular the case of Biram Dah
Arbeid
(2014/2999(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific group of States, of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000 ("the Cotonou agreement");
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 June 2012 on human rights and the security situation in the Sahel region and of 22 October 2013 on the situation of human rights in the Sahel region;
 - having regard to the European Parliament legislative resolution of 12 May 2011 on the EU-Mauritania Fisheries Partnership Agreement and of the resolution of 8 October 2013 on a draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Protocol setting out fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for a period of two years;
 - having regard to the Statement by the EU HRVP Spokesperson on the presidential elections in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania of 25 June 2014;
 - having regard to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on Mauritania, 24 July 2014
 - having regard to the Commission Communication of November 2013 on the Eradication of Female Genital Mutilation;
 - having regard to Rule 110 (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
-
- Whereas the Joint EU-Africa Strategy was adopted in December 2007 and emphasises the need to promote holistic approaches to security, encompassing conflict prevention and long-term peace-building, conflict resolution and post conflict reconstruction, linked to governance and sustainable development;
 - Whereas Mauritania is an important partner in the framework of the EU strategy for security and development in the Sahel which aims at achieving security as essential to enable economic growth and poverty reduction through closer regional cooperation, capacity building and economic development;
 - Whereas EU and Mauritania have regular political dialogue to address regional, political, economic, trade issues related to development, governance, and including human rights;
 - Whereas the European Union supported the 2013 legislative elections and the 2014 presidential elections by sending electoral experts' and technical assistance missions; Whereas Mauritania recently hold presidential elections on 21 June 2014, with Mohamed

Ould Abdel Aziz elected as President;

- Whereas the EU and Mauritania having signed the Protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for a period of two years (15781/2012) which expires on 15 of December 2014 and renewal is currently being negotiated;

- Whereas during 2007-2013, EU cooperation aid amounted 210 million euros under the 10th European Development Fund; whereas additional 156 million euros were committed for governance, infrastructures, regional integration and poverty reduction through the EU strategy for security and development in the Sahel, emergency aid and MDGs;

- Whereas the 2014-2020 National Indicative Programme (NIP) signed in Nairobi on 19 June 2014 amounts 195 million euros, in continuity with objectives set up in the previous 10th FED;

- Whereas Mauritania benefits from other EU funds, in particular the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, which aims at reinforcing the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reforms, in supporting reconciliation and extending political participation, representation and pluralism, which amounts 900.000 euros in 2013;

- Whereas although officially abolished in 1981 and criminalized in 2007, the practice of slavery persists in Mauritania; whereas according to the Global Slavery Index 2014, Mauritania is the biggest offender, with the highest proportion of its population enslaved up to 4 per cent,

- Whereas slaves are mostly drawn from the Haratin community, which comprises between 40-60% of the Mauritanian population; whereas the Haratin, even those not in slavery, are systematically denied access to higher-status work or prominent positions in public life;

- Whereas women are disproportionally affected by slavery, especially Haratin women who face in addition female genital mutilation, forced marriage, sexual abuse, rape and sexual exploitation;

- Whereas in the last months, Mauritanian civil society has expressed its discontent over the prevailing human rights situation by organizing frequent demonstrations, rallies and public meetings in Nouakchott and nationwide ;

- Whereas at least nine people including Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid, President of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA), UN Human Rights Prize Laureate and UNPO Presidency Member; Djiby Sow, President of the NGO Kawtal and Brahim Bilal Ramdhane, Vice President of the IRA, were arrested on 11 November and are being held in different detention centers, without family visits bringing the total number of imprisoned IRA-Mauritania activists to 17;

- Whereas all of those arrested represent non-governmental human rights organizations that actively campaign against slavery in Mauritania;

1. Calls for the immediate release of Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeid President of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA), UN Human Rights Prize Laureate and UNPO Presidency Member; Djiby Sow, President of the NGO Kawtal and Brahim Bilal Ramdhane, Vice President of the IRA, and other persons arrested on 11 November 2014; Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to engage with the Mauritanian authorities to ensure that anti-slavery and human rights' activists will be able to continue their legitimate and peaceful activities;
2. Reaffirms that the EU firmly condemns slavery, child labour, female genital mutilation, and human rights' violations;
3. Notes with concern that slavery and slavery-related practices in Mauritania are an hereditary status based on social caste, affecting disproportionately Haratin, and especially Haratin women; Notes that Mauritania stands as one of the worst world cases with regards to slavery;
4. Welcomes that Mauritania has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 2012; Commends the adoption of legislation of 23 January 2013 criminalizing slavery and torture as crimes against humanity following the 2007 slavery abolition legislation;
5. Calls on the Mauritanian government to effectively implement exiting legislation against slavery and slavery-related practices and trafficking in persons and to pass legislation aimed at amending or repealing discriminatory legislation, including the discriminatory provisions of its penal, personal status and nationality codes ;
6. Notes that the Mauritanian authorities have recently adopted a road map in cooperation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and a plan of action against slavery, but regrets that this is lacking proper governmental, judiciary and law enforcement implementation;
7. Takes note of the setup of a special tribunal in March 2014; Notes nevertheless that only one case has been prosecuted and convicted so far ;
8. Calls the Mauritania authorities to disseminate information on slavery and ensure publication of the legislation in various languages in the Official Gazette; asks to ensure that the legislation is made an integral part of training programmes for lawyers, judges, prosecutors, police officers and other law enforcement officials, with a view to enabling them to apply the law directly;

9. Urges the Mauritanian authorities to respect the rights to freedom of assembly and association and halt the harassment, intimidation and repression of anti-slavery activists;
10. Expresses deep concerns about the prisoners' conditions, the abusive treatment in detention facilities, arbitrary arrests, and lengthy pre-trial detention;
11. Deplores the absence of democratic means of dealing with the legacy of human rights violations and the abuses perpetrated in 1990 against the black Mauritanian community, despite the promises to set up a committee of inquiry;
12. Calls the Mauritania authorities to fully dismantle the caste-based system of enslaving notably women in domestic work and to ensure that women domestic workers have access to effective complaint procedures and redress and consider ratifying the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), of the International Labour Organization;
13. Calls on the EU to provide resources to support ILO in carrying out qualitative and quantitative research in Mauritania, so as to establish a long-term strategy to abolish slavery, including victims' support and implementation of the 2007 law criminalizing slavery;
14. Urges the Mauritanian authorities to monitor the situation of girls and women in domestic work through increased inspections and impose fines on employers found at fault; Recommends to adopt strategies such as dialogues and forums held in society in general, including schools and religious establishments, and among political leaders on the elimination of stereotypes and harmful practices against women and minorities;
15. Invites Mauritania to withdraw its general reservation to the CEDAW and encourages the State party to refrain from replacing it with specific reservations to articles 13 and 16; and to establish a women's rights observatory that would contribute to monitoring the situation of women throughout the country;
16. Urges Mauritania to adopt legislation criminalizing female genital mutilation (FGM) and to address its harmful consequences for the lives of women;
17. Calls Mauritania to strengthen its adult literacy programmes, especially for non-Arab, Afro-Mauritanian men and women living in rural areas and to promote ethnic minorities' participation in the public and private sectors;
18. Reaffirm its engagement through the 2014-2020 National Indicative Programme (NIP) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights to support reinforcement of civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reforms;

19. Calls upon international companies operating in Mauritania to ensure that they do not use child or forced labor, and in respect of their corporate social responsibility policies, develop the labor market ethically; notes that the fisheries and mining sector represent key elements of the Mauritanian economy and export market, as well as the trading relationship with the EU; recalls, in this regard, the recent adoption of the EU-Mauritania Fisheries Partnership Protocol; emphasizes, therefore, the need for the EU to ensure that it in no way associates itself with slave labor in its trading relationship with Mauritania;
20. Urges the Council to continue to monitor the political situation in Mauritania in close collaboration with the AU; Notes that Mauritania is a an essential pole of stability in a region in turmoil;
21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the Member States, the Mauritanian authorities, the Economic Community of West African States, the UNSG, the Arab League and the African Union.