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Plenary sitting

12.1.2015

B8-0024/2015

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Egypt
(2014/3017(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

B8-0024/2015

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Egypt
(2014/3017(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Egypt,
 - having regard to Article 19 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, a binding treaty that Egypt ratified in 1982,
 - having regard to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950,
 - having regard to the European Neighbourhood Policy progress report on Egypt of 27 March 2014,
 - having regard to the new Egyptian Constitution, adopted by referendum on 15 January 2014,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Egypt has gone through several difficult political challenges since the 2011 revolution and is in need of support and assistance from the international community to address its economic, political and security challenges;
- B. whereas the Egyptian Constitution adopted in 2014 is an important step in the democratic process; whereas the Constitution enshrines fundamental rights and freedoms, including the freedoms of expression and assembly;
- C. whereas since the revolution of January 2011 that toppled Hosni Mubarak, Egyptian judges have frequently imposed harsh and controversial punishments on political dissidents;
- D. whereas on 2 December 2014 the Gizeh Criminal Court issued preliminary death sentences on 188 defendants for a violent attack on a police station in Kerdesa on 14 August 2013,
- E. whereas on 29 November 2014 an Egyptian court in Cairo dismissed charges against former President Mubarak related to the killing of 239 demonstrators by police in the 2011 uprising, in a retrial; whereas the first trial in 2012 resulted in a life sentence; whereas the former President will still serve three years in prison in a separate corruption case;
- F. whereas some 1 200 death sentences were handed down in mass trials in March and April 2014 against Muslim Brotherhood members and alleged supporters of ousted President Morsi, on charges ranging from threatening public order to sabotage to involvement in the killing of police officers; whereas on 2 October 2014 the Egyptian

judge involved in the handing out of death sentences in the Minya cases was removed from the criminal judiciary;

- G. whereas the majority of these death sentences, but not all, have been commuted to life imprisonment;
- H. whereas a number of journalists were prosecuted in 2014 on charges related to threatening national unity and social peace, spreading false news reports and collaborating with the Muslim Brotherhood; whereas the Court of Cassation in Cairo has ruled on procedural failings in the trial of, and ordered a retrial for, three Al-Jazeera journalists who had been given prison sentences ranging from seven to ten years;
- I. whereas on 24 October 2014 terrorists attacked military checkpoints on the Sinai peninsula, killing 31 members of the Egyptian security forces, and whereas Egypt faces a genuine threat of terrorism and violent extremism; whereas a state of emergency has been declared in the northern part of the Sinai peninsula following the October 2014 terrorist attack; whereas acts of terror are taking place in this region almost on a daily basis;
- J. whereas the 2014 presidential elections in Egypt took place in a context where room for freedom of expression had been severely restricted, and all forms of dissent and criticism, including those of human rights organisations, had been stifled;
- K. whereas parliamentary elections have been officially announced for 21 March and 25 April 2015;
- L. whereas there is extreme polarisation of the Egyptian media into pro- and anti-Morsi factions, which is reinforcing the polarisation of Egyptian society;
- M. whereas new proposed legislation would further restrict the work of domestic and foreign NGOs, who are notably concerned by a new draft law aiming to stop money and material from reaching terrorists and other armed groups but which could prevent the NGOs from receiving foreign funds, on which many of them depend;
- N. whereas the Egyptian authorities have tightened the noose on freedom of expression and assembly under repressive legislation introduced, making it easier for the government to silence its critics and crack down on protests;
- O. whereas at least 16 000 individuals, including 1 000 protesters, have been detained since January 2014, and many of those detained were rounded up solely for exercising their rights to free assembly, association, and expression, or for their alleged affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood;
- P. whereas on 3 January 2015 Islamist militants in Libya abducted 20 Egyptian Christians in the area of Sirte; whereas this follows the killing of an Egyptian Coptic couple from Sirte and the abduction and subsequent killing of their 18-year-old daughter during the last days of 2014;
- Q. whereas the Egyptian authorities have referred hundreds of civilians to military courts

on the basis of a decree of 27 October 2014 by President Al-Sisi that was applied retroactively by civil prosecutors;

- R. whereas the EU's level of engagement with Egypt should be incentive-based, in line with the 'more for more' principle of the European Neighbourhood Policy, and should depend on progress in reform of democratic institutions, the rule of law and human rights;
1. Underlines the importance that the EU attaches to its cooperation with Egypt as an important neighbour and partner; stresses the important role of Egypt for stability in the region; stresses its solidarity with the Egyptian people and that it commits to its continued support to Egypt in the process of strengthening its democratic institutions, respecting and defending human rights and promoting social justice and security;
 2. Strongly condemns the recent terrorist attacks on the Sinai Peninsula and all other acts of terrorism against Egypt; underlines that the EU and the international community must stand firmly and cooperate with Egypt in its fight against terrorism;
 3. Highlights the importance of Egypt as an international actor and hopes that it will continue to play an active role in the launch of genuine peace negotiations that will put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict; trusts, furthermore, in Egypt's constructive contribution to the search for stability in the Mediterranean region, currently notably in Libya and in the Middle East, which are currently facing great challenges and open confrontations; reiterates the willingness of the EU to work with Egypt as a partner in the region to address these serious threats;
 4. Welcomes and encourages steps taken by the Egyptian Government in support of respect of the rights and freedoms of religious communities; recalls the provision included in Article 235 of the Egyptian Constitution, which stipulates that the newly elected parliament, during its first legislative term, must issue a law to regulate the construction and renovation of churches in a manner that guarantees the freedom of religious practices for Christians;
 5. Reminds the Egyptian Government that the long-term success of Egypt and its people depends on the protection of universal human rights and on the establishment and anchorage of democratic and transparent institutions also engaged in protecting citizens' fundamental rights; calls, therefore, on the Egyptian authorities to fully implement the principles of the International Conventions;
 6. Reiterates, in line with the findings of the EU Election Observation Mission to the presidential elections of 2014, that the elections fell short of applicable international standards and did not fully respect the fundamental rights set out in the newly adopted Constitution, as there were, notably, limits to freedom of expression and assembly and insufficient regulation of campaign financing, the right to stand and the right to vote;
 7. Calls on the Egyptian Government to address the shortcomings in the presidential elections in the preparations for the parliamentary elections announced for 21 March and 25 April 2015;

8. Expresses its serious concern about the mass trials by Egyptian courts and the large number of death sentences handed down by them; calls on the Egyptian judicial authorities to uphold and respect the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Egypt is a party, and notably Article 14 thereof on the right to a fair and timely trial based on clear charges and ensuring the respect of the defendants' rights;
9. Reiterates the EU's opposition to the use of capital punishment and has made its abolition a human rights policy priority;
10. Notes the retrial of three Al-Jazeera journalists but remains concerned about the increasingly severe clampdown on the media and on political opposition in Egypt; urges the Egyptian authorities to promptly release all journalists imprisoned for carrying out legitimate news reporting activities in exercise of their fundamental human rights, as well as other persons detained solely for having exercised their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly;
11. Underlines the vital role played by the media and civil society in the democratic process; calls on the Government of Egypt to ensure that legislation on associations and linked to freedom of expression, assembly and belief is fully compatible with international standards and international humanitarian law; underlines that only a pluralistic and inclusive society can ensure long-term stability and security in Egypt;
12. Urges the Egyptian authorities to take concrete steps to ensure that the provisions of the new Constitution on fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression and assembly, are fully implemented, showing that they respect human rights and the rule of law, starting with the immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience;
13. Reminds the Egyptian authorities of their national and international legal obligations, and calls upon them to prioritise the protection and promotion of human rights and to ensure accountability for violations of human rights, including through the independent and impartial administration of justice;
14. 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 and the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Egyptian Government, the Egyptian Parliament, the UN Secretary-General and the UN Human Rights Council.