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Plenary sitting

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B8-0254/2015

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 recent attacks and abductions by Da'esh in the Middle East, notably of Assyrians
(2015/2599(RSP))

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on behalf of the ECR Group

B8-0254/2015

European Parliament resolution on recent attacks and abductions by Da'esh in the Middle East, notably of Assyrians (2015/2599(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948,
- having regard to Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) of 1950,
- having regard to Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief of 1981,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Iraq, Syria and Libya, as well as on freedom of religion or belief,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief,
- having regard to the numerous statements by EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and her predecessor on violence and persecution against Christians and other communities in the Middle East, in particular the one of 16 February 2015 on the beheading of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya,
- having regard to the Joint Communication from the Commission and the HR/VP to the European Parliament and the Council on elements for an EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat,
- having regard to the statement by the UN Security Council of 25 February 2015 condemning the abduction of more than 100 Assyrians by ISIL,
- having regard to the annual reports and interim reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief,
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights and civil liberties are fundamental principles and aims of the European Union and constitute common ground for its relations with third countries,

- B. whereas, according to international human rights law and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in particular, everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; whereas this right includes freedom to change one's religion or belief, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest one's religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching, whereas according to the UN Human Rights Committee the freedom of religion or belief protects all beliefs, including theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs,
- C. whereas the European Union has repeatedly expressed its commitment to freedom of thought, freedom of conscience and freedom of religion or belief and has stressed that governments have a duty to guarantee these freedoms all over the world,
- D. whereas ISIS/Da'esh has embarked upon a campaign to eradicate all traces of religious and faith communities other than those representing its own interpretation of Islam, by killing or expelling its adherents and destroying their holy places, historical sites and artefacts, including unique and irreplaceable heritage recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage;
- E. whereas in the areas under its control ISIS/Da'esh is extracting an unacceptable and irreparable price from millenarian civilizations; whereas notably in Iraq and Syria, but also in other parts of the wider Middle East, the situation facing Christian communities is such as to endanger their very existence, and if they were to disappear, this would entail the loss of a significant part of the religious heritage of the countries concerned;
- F. whereas ISIS/Da'esh targets Christians, Yezidis, Turkmen, Shi'ites and other ethnic and religious minorities, but whereas some of these communities were already targeted by extremists well before the advance of ISIS/Da'esh; whereas in particular Christians have been deliberately targeted by various extremist or jihadist groups for many years;
- G. whereas on 15 February 2015 ISIS/Da'esh released a video showing the beheading of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya; whereas the Copts, who were migrant workers from an impoverished part of Egypt, had been kidnapped in Sirte, Libya;
- H. whereas on 23 February 2015 an estimated 220 Assyrians were abducted by ISIS/Da'esh in and around Tell Tamer in north-east Syria; whereas during the same campaign the extremists also destroyed properties and holy places of the Christians;
- I. whereas from 1 March ISIS/Da'esh has released several dozen Assyrians, mostly infants and elderly people, following negotiations with tribal leaders, but whereas most Assyrians are still held captive and the terrorists have threatened to kill them if the coalition bombings do not stop;
- J. whereas ISIS/Da'esh continues to persecute, maim and murder, sometimes in extremely cruel and unimaginable ways, members of ethnic and religious minorities, journalists, prisoners of war, activists and others;

1. Is shocked and saddened at the brutal actions by ISIS/Da'esh extremists against the Assyrians in Syria and the Copts in Libya, and condemns them in the strongest terms; expresses its solidarity with the people, government and with the Assyrian Christian community in Syria and Coptic Christian community in Egypt;
2. Strongly condemns ISIS/Da'esh and its egregious human rights abuses that amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes according to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and which has been called genocide by some observers; is extremely concerned at this terrorist group's deliberate targeting of Christians and others as part of its attempts to exterminate any religious minorities from the areas under its control;
3. Condemns furthermore the attempts by ISIS/Da'esh to export their extremist totalitarian ideology and violence to other countries in the region and beyond;
4. Supports the military actions of the international coalition against ISIS/Da'esh in Iraq and Syria, led by the United States, and encourages the EU Member States, who have not already done so, to consider ways of contributing to this military effort including tracing and interdicting ISIS secret funds held overseas; calls upon the international coalition to do more to prevent abductions of minorities, such as the abduction of hundreds of Assyrian Christians in northern Syria;
5. Urges the EU and its Member States to take a proactive and preventive approach towards the threat of ISIS/Da'esh expansion into countries and regions beyond Iraq and Syria; in this light, is extremely concerned about the situation in Libya, not least because of its geographical proximity to the EU as well as conflict areas in Africa;
6. Urges the EU and its Member States as well as NATO partners to address the issue of certain countries' ambivalent roles in the conflict, in particular where they contributed, or still contribute, actively or passively, to the rise of ISIS/Da'esh and other extremist groups; Calls upon Turkey to play a positive role in the fight against ISIS/Da'esh and without delay allow Christian minorities fleeing from Syria to cross the border into Turkey and seek safety;
7. Encourages the cooperation with newly emerging regional and local forces, such as the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq and Kurdish groups elsewhere such as the role of YPG in the liberation of Kobane and local self-governing entities in the region which have shown more commitment to human rights and democracy than their countries' rulers; salutes in particular the courage of the Kurdish Peshmerga forces who have done so much to protect endangered minorities
8. Considers it imperative that the Council and EEAS start working with international and regional partners on a post-ISIS/Da'esh scenario, taking into account the urgent need for cultural and religious dialogue and reconciliation;
9. Urges the EU and its Member States to cooperate with international and local partners to safeguard as much Assyrian and other cultural and religious heritage as possible

from the territories occupied by ISIS/Da'esh; furthermore urges the Council to take action against the illicit trade in ancient artefacts coming from these territories;

10. Urges all UN member states to clearly speak out against the violence and in particular in favour of the rights of minorities; believes that in order to stem the suffering and the mass exodus of Christians and other indigenous populations of the region, a clear and unequivocal statement by regional political and religious leaders, in support of their continued presence and full and equal rights as citizens of their countries, is necessary;
11. Confirms its commitment to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief as a fundamental human right guaranteed by international legal instruments to which most countries in the world have committed and which are recognized as holding universal value;
12. Supports all initiatives, including in the EU, aimed at promoting dialogue and mutual respect between communities; calls on all religious authorities to promote tolerance and to take initiatives against hatred and violent and extremist radicalisation;
13. Urges the EU to further explore counter-terrorism policies other than those already in place and to continue to work with Member States to enhance policies that counter radicalisation on EU soil, the spreading of hate speech and incitement to violence online; urges, furthermore, EU Member States to work together with the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly to stop the spread of extremist and jihadist ideology worldwide;
14. 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 Government and Parliament of Syria and the Syrian National Coalition, the Government and Parliament of Iraq, the Council of Deputies in Tobruk, Libya, the League of Arab States, the UN Secretary-General and the UN Human Rights Council.