



Plenary sitting

9.6.2015

B8-0576/2015

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 Syria, the situation in Palmyra and the case of Mazen Darwish
(2015/2732(RSP))

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on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

European Parliament resolution on Syria, the situation in Palmyra and the case of Mazen Darwish (2015/2732(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Syria and the ISIS offensive, and in particular those of the 30 of April 2015, the 12 of February 2015 and the 18 of September 2014;
- having regard to the Venice Charter of 1964 for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, which gives an international framework for the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings,
- having regard to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court adopted on 17 July 1998, and, in particular, to Article 8(2)(b)(ix), which recognises the act of ‘intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not military objectives’ as a war crime,
- having regard to the relevant UN Security Council resolutions,
- having regard to the Charter of the United Nations,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- having regard to the Geneva Conventions on refugees,
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas after four years of a conflict of extreme violence and brutality between the government and opposition groups in Syria over 200 000 people have died and 12.2 million people need humanitarian assistance; whereas 7.6 million people, half of them children, are internally displaced and 3.980 000 million have fled to neighbouring countries, notably Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt;

B. whereas US airstrikes against IS began in Syria on 22 September 2014, supported by the forces of Arab League countries; whereas the US-led air strikes against IS and fighting between government and opposition groups have also resulted in large numbers of death and displacements;

C. whereas a UN commission of inquiry investigating alleged human rights violations in Syria since March 2011 has evidence that those on both sides of the conflict have committed war crimes, including murder, torture, rape and enforced disappearances; whereas both parties has been also accused of using civilian suffering, such as blocking access to food, water and health services, as a method of war;

D. whereas on 29 June 2014 IS proclaimed a ‘caliphate’ or ‘Islamic State’ in the territories under its control in Iraq and Syria; whereas its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, has been declared caliph; whereas after a new offensive in April-May 2015 IS grabbed Ramadi on May 17 and Palmyra on May 21 controlling now 50% of Syrian territory ; whereas the transnational character of the so-called Islamic State, with significant financial resources, and around 200 000 fighters according to some sources, poses a threat to the wider region; whereas thousands of foreigners, including EU citizens, are estimated to be fighting with these armed groups; whereas the upsurge of IS has aggravated the humanitarian crisis, notably with a massive displacement of civilians;

E. Whereas while taking Palmyra on May 21, IS has executed more than 200 persons (including 70 civilians) before destroying the city jail;

F. whereas numerous archaeological, religious and cultural sites in Syria, Iraq and Tunisia have recently been subject to targeted destruction perpetrated by groups of extremists linked particularly to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS/Da’esh) and whereas these systematic attacks against cultural heritage were described by UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova as ‘cultural cleansing’;

G. Whereas IS announced that they will preserve the Palmyra site whose first remains date from the third millennium BC but that they will destroy the “idolatrous” statues;

H. whereas IS is currently the terrorist group with the greatest economic resources, having secured significant income sources by taking over important oilfields in Syria, by looting banks and businesses on territories it controls, by selling antiquities, from ransoms for kidnappings and from funds placed in operational safe havens by donors, particularly from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and the UAE; whereas IS has looted much US military equipment from the Iraq military and can easily buy high-quality weapons on international arms markets;

I. whereas Mazen Darwish, Hani Al-Zaitani and Hussain Ghrer, respectively President and members of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), are arbitrarily detained since February 2012 with 11 other activists, for “promotion of terrorists activities”;

J. whereas on the 1 of June 2015, prison authorities failed to present Mazen Darwish, Hussein Ghrer and Hani al-Zaitani before the Damascus Anti-Terrorism court for a verdict hearing scheduled for that day; whereas the trial, which has already been rescheduled 24 times since February 2013, was therefore suspended until 22 July 2015.

K. Whereas on May 3, 2015, Mazen Darwish was awarded the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize “in recognition of the work that he has carried out in Syria for more than ten years at great personal sacrifice, enduring a travel ban, harassment, as well as repeated detention and torture”.

L. Whereas the 3 activists were last seen on May 3, 2015; whereas on May 10, 2015, prison authorities stated that the three defenders were not within the premises of the prison, as they had been summoned for interrogation outside of the prison;

1. Is extremely concerned at the deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in Syria as a result of the occupation of significant parts of the territory by IS;
2. Condemns in the strongest possible terms the systematic violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law resulting from the terrorist acts perpetrated by the so-called Islamic State against the Iraqi and Syrian peoples and states, which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity; extends its deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims; calls for the immediate, safe and unconditional release of all those held hostage by this terrorist group; vehemently condemns the brutal attacks on archaeological, religious and cultural sites in Syria and Iraq perpetrated by groups linked to ISIS/Da'esh
3. Stresses the fact that the conflict has been exacerbated by the arms trade and the supply of weapons; strongly condemn the role that the various Western interventions of recent years have played in fostering the radicalisation of individuals, especially in the Middle East and the southern neighbourhood countries; stresses that such policies are promoting, not countering, terrorism and therefore should be abandoned;
4. Strongly condemns the direct or non-direct support (financial, arms, training, etc.) that the US, the EU, NATO and the monarchies of the Gulf region have been providing to the terrorist groups that are destroying cultural sites in Syria and killed thousands of peoples; calls in particular on the Member States themselves and Western countries to stop financing any militia and, in particular, to stop buying oil coming from oilfields controlled by IS and transported by truck through Turkey; believes that mechanisms are required to stop the financing of terrorism through offshore entities involving states and financial institutions, as well as to stop arms trafficking and the buying and selling of energy resources and raw materials benefiting terrorist groups;
5. Stresses that the fight against terrorism shouldn't be a pretext to restrain Human Rights and that international humanitarian law must be respected;
6. Is therefore particularly preoccupied by the situation of freedom of expression and about the repression against human Rights defenders in Syria in particular the reiterated policy of arbitrary detention and forced disappearance of the Syrian regime;
7. Calls the Syrian authorities to immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of Mazen Darwish, Hani Al-Zaitani and Hussain Ghreer and put an end to the practice of enforced disappearance; calls for the release of all peaceful activists in Syria,
8. Is convince that the crisis in Syria could be solve only by a peaceful process which can only be implemented by broad consensus in the framework of the UN General Assembly;
9. Stresses that terrorism can only be eradicated by addressing its roots: misery and incapacity of the society to answer to the need of peoples; believes that full respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states such as Syria, as well as respect for the multicultural character of and democratic principles in their societies, constitute the only guarantee of avoiding the spillover of IS and further suffering to the populations

10. expresses serious concern at the severe lack of funding for the UN Appeals 2014, which has led to the temporary suspension of World Food Programme assistance to Syrian refugees; urges the international community, therefore, to step up its funding and assistance in response to the forthcoming appeals;
11. Encourages the Council, the Commission and the High Representative to make all necessary financial and human resources available to assist the refugees; emphasises the need to strengthen international cooperation in order to provide humanitarian assistance and aid to all people displaced by the IS offensive so as to ensure that basic needs are met and alleviate the suffering caused by this violence;
12. Calls for the EU to ensure greater international support for the increased numbers of refugees who risk their lives in open vessels to flee to Europe, and calls for them to be granted asylum and given support; calls for the immediate issuing of humanitarian visas at EU embassies and consular office for asylum-seekers as well as the introduction of a mandatory resettlement programmes at EU level instead of the weak voluntary resettlement programme proposed by the Council; notes the Commission's proposal to increase sharing of reception of asylum -seekers and refugees between Member States, including through relocation programs; condemns the vagueness of the commitment to increase emergency aid to frontline Member States and consider options for organising emergency relocation between all Member States on a voluntary basis; and urgently calls the Commission and Member states to present a more ambitious and concrete proposal in this regard, providing in detail for which purpose the emergency aid is given; Calls for Members states to participate in both relocation and resettlement programs; notes the Commission's proposal regarding the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive (Directive 2001/55 / EC) in light of the mass influx of refugees for Syrians and Eritreans ;
13. Calls on the European Union to take the necessary steps, in collaboration with UNESCO and the International Criminal Court, to extend the international law category of crimes against humanity in order to encompass acts which wilfully damage or destroy the cultural heritage of mankind on a large scale;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European Council, the President of the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the presidents of the parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean, and the League of Arab States.