



Plenary sitting

7.7.2015

B8-0711/2015

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 situation of two Christian pastors in Sudan
(2015/2766(RSP))

Cristian Dan Preda, László Tókéš, Andrzej Grzyb, Lara Comi, Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, Jiří Pospíšil, Jarosław Wałęsa, Claude Rolin, Patricija Šulin, Anna Záborská, Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, Thomas Mann, Marijana Petir, Bogdan Brunon Wentă, Tomáš Zdechovský, Michaela Šojdrová, Michèle Alliot-Marie, Davor Ivo Stier, Eduard Kukan, Dubravka Šuica, György Hölvényi, Andrej Plenković, Barbara Kudrycka, Lorenzo Cesa, József Nagy, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, Csaba Sógor, Pavel Svoboda, Luděk Niedermayer, Jaromír Štětina, Therese Comodini Cachia, Maurice Ponga, Joachim Zeller, Stanislav Polčák, Tunne Kelam, Giovanni La Via, Roberta Metsola, Elisabetta Gardini
on behalf of the PPE Group

B8-0711/2015

**European Parliament resolution on situation of two Christian pastors in Sudan
(2015/2766(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Sudan,
- having regard to Rule 135(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas threats against Church leaders, intimidation of Christian communities, and destruction of church property has continued at an accelerated pace in Sudan after the secession of Southern Sudan in 2011,
- B. whereas the Republic of Sudan charges people who change their religion for apostasy, which is subject to death penalty,
- C. whereas in 2013 the Sudanese Government began its campaign against the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church,
- D. whereas on 14 December, 2014 the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) detained Pastor Michael Yat in Khartoum, at the end of a church service where he had preached a message of support for the congregation; whereas Pastor Yat is an ordained minister in the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SSPEC),
- E. whereas on 11 January, 2015, the NISS in Khartoum detained a second South Sudanese pastor from the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church named Pastor Peter Yen Reith; whereas he was detained following a prayer meeting in Khartoum,
- F. whereas both pastors were detained incommunicado by the NISS until 1 March 2015; whereas on that date, they were referred to the Prosecutor for State Security,
- G. whereas Pastor Yat and Pastor Reith were charged with many offences including undermining the constitutional system (Article 50) and espionage (53) which carry the death penalty, and blasphemy (125) which may be punishable by whipping,
- H. whereas on 2 July 2015 the pastors were questioned by the judge; whereas the judge ruled that the pastors would be charged with all the charges listed against them and that the case would proceed,
- I. whereas the pastors are not allowed access to their legal counsel,
- J. whereas the defense for the pastors will be presented on 14 July,
- K. whereas on 1 July the Sudanese authorities came to destroy part of the Bahri Evangelical Church complex; whereas the church lawyer, who is also the lawyer to the two pastors, and Pastor Hafez of the Bahri Evangelical Church complained that the government

employee was destroying the wrong part of the compound; whereas they were both arrested for obstructing a public servant in the exercise of his duties; whereas the government official continued to destroy the wrong part of the complex,

- L. whereas Pastor Hafez was made to walk to the police station in handcuffs for the purpose of humiliation; whereas during his detention, Pastor Hafez was hit on the side of his head with a gun; whereas on his release he needed to attend the hospital,
- M. whereas 12 young Christian girls from the Nuba Mountains were arrested on 25 June on leaving a Baptist Church and were accused of being dressed indecently; whereas two girls were released without charge on the following day and the other 10 were released on bail,
- N. whereas the Christian girls will have to appear before a court, being charged under article 152 of the penal code which reads: "Whoever does in a public place an indecent act or an act contrary to public morals or wears an obscene outfit or contrary to public morals or causing an annoyance to public feelings shall be punished with flogging which may not exceed forty lashes or with fine or with both."
- O. whereas freedom of religion or belief is a universal human right that needs to be protected everywhere and for everyone; whereas Sudan has ratified the relevant UN and African Union conventions and thereby has an international obligation to defend and promote freedom of religion or belief, which notably includes the right to adopt, change or abandon one's religion or belief of one's own free will,
- P. whereas the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, ratified by the Republic of Sudan, includes the right to life and the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment, but whereas the death penalty, flogging, amputation and other corporal punishments are still being carried out in the country for a number of criminal sentences,
- Q. whereas the Republic of Sudan is bound by the human rights clause of the Cotonou Agreement and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - 1. Condemns the unjustified detention of Pastor Yat and Pastor Reith; calls on the Government of Sudan to cease the prosecution and release Pastor Yat and Pastor Reith;
 - 2. Calls on the Government of Sudan to allow Pastor Yat and Pastor Reith access to their legal counsel; calls on the Government of Sudan to allow all defendants the right to legal counsel;
 - 3. Deplores the violence against Pastor Hafez during his detention; urges the Sudanese authorities to investigate the matter and act to punish the perpetrators;
 - 4. Condemns the arrests of the 12 Christian girls; calls on the Government of Sudan to cease proceedings against the 10 girls who have yet to be cleared of wrongdoing; calls on the Government of Sudan to allow citizens to dress according to the customs of their own religions;
 - 5. Condemns the harassment of Christians and interference in church affairs; urges the Government of Sudan to desist from such activity;

6. Reaffirms that freedom of religion, conscience or belief is a universal human right that needs to be protected everywhere and for everyone; strongly condemns all forms of violence and intimidation that impair the right to have or not to have, or to adopt, a religion of one's choice, including the use of threats, physical force or penal sanctions to compel believers or non-believers to renounce their religion or to convert;
7. Recalls that Sudan has ratified the relevant UN and African Union conventions and thus has an international obligation to defend and promote freedom of religion or belief, which includes the right to adopt, change or abandon one's religion or belief of one's own free will;
8. Demands that the Sudanese Government – in line with universal human rights – repeal any legal provisions that penalise or discriminate against individuals for their religious beliefs or for changing their religion or beliefs or for inducing others to change their religion or beliefs, especially when cases of apostasy, heterodoxy or conversion are punishable by death;
9. Stresses that such laws are inconsistent with Sudan's 2005 Interim Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and urges Sudan to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Aiming at the Abolition of the Death Penalty;
10. Calls on Sudan to issue an immediate moratorium on all executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty and all forms of corporal punishment;
11. Notes with concern that impunity for serious human rights violations remains a widespread and serious problem in Sudan, as in the case of the Darfur conflict, where the authorities have not prosecuted the vast majority of serious crimes committed, including crimes of sexual violence; calls on the Sudanese Government to investigate and prosecute those responsible for human rights abuses, including killings, torture and ill-treatment of detainees, and rape and other sexual violence;
12. Calls on the Government of Sudan to undertake, with the support of the international community, urgent legal reform in order to protect fundamental human rights and freedoms, ensure the protection of every individual's human rights and address, in particular, discrimination against women, religious minorities and disadvantaged groups;
13. Calls on the EU to play a leadership role in highlighting and condemning the serious and widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the country, as well as providing all necessary support for relevant reforms to the legal systems in Sudan;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Member States, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Government of Sudan, the African Union, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the Pan-African Parliament.