



Plenary sitting

B8-0324/2016

2.3.2016

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 Eritrea
(2016/2568(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Eritrea
(2016/2568(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its debate of 27 May 2015 on EU development aid to Eritrea in the light of documented human rights abuses,
- having regard to the statement made by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, Sheila B. Keetharuth, on 28 October 2015, during the 70th session of the UN General Assembly,
- having regard to the report of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea of 4 June 2015,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1907 (2009), which imposed an arms embargo on Eritrea and travel bans on its leaders, and decided to freeze the assets of some of the country's political and military officials after accusing the Eritrean Government of aiding Al-Shabaab in Somalia and of reportedly refusing to withdraw troops from its disputed border with Djibouti,
- having regard to the UN Security Council Resolution 2023 (2011), which reinforced sanctions against Eritrea,
- having regard to the UN Security Council Resolution 2244 (2015), which extended the arms embargoes imposed on Somalia and Eritrea,
- having regard to Council Decision 2010/127/CFSP of 1 March 2010 concerning restrictive measures against Eritrea¹, amended by Council Decision 2010/414/CFSP of 26 July 2010² and further amended by Council Decision 2012/632/CFSP of 15 October 2012³,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EU) No 667/2010 of 26 July 2010 concerning certain restrictive measures in respect of Eritrea⁴,
- having regard to the statement issued by the EEAS Spokesperson on 18 September 2014 on political prisoners in Eritrea,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions on migration of 18 February 2016,
- having regard to the Valetta Summit conclusions of 12 November 2015,
- having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

¹ OJ L 51, 2.3.2010, p. 19.

² OJ L 195, 27.7.2010, p. 74.

³ OJ L 282, 16.10.2012, p. 46.

⁴ OJ L 195, 27.7.2010, p. 16.

- A. whereas the European Union is founded on a strong commitment to promoting and protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law worldwide, and whereas those principles are embedded in the EU founding treaties;
- B. whereas the Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union stipulates that the Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law;
- C. whereas according to the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea there are three key areas of concern, namely: the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to adequate housing; smuggling and trafficking; and the increasing number of unaccompanied minors who form part of the more than 5 000 people fleeing the country on a monthly basis;
- D. whereas the main reason for fleeing remains national service, which in effect amounts to forced labour; whereas this includes disproportionate punishments for insignificant mistakes and the fear of being trapped in national service for decades; whereas the government uses the pretext of defending the integrity of the State and ensuring national self-sufficiency;
- E. whereas threats to the right to adequate housing posed by forced evictions have grown in Eritrea since the beginning of 2015; whereas approximately 800 houses have been demolished in Asmara and in several other villages in the vicinity of Asmara, as well as in other towns, such as Adi Keyh; whereas about 3 000 people have been made homeless as a result of the forced evictions and demolitions;
- F. whereas on 26 June 2015 hundreds of Eritrean refugees demonstrated in front of the African Union headquarters, demanding that the regional organisation push for democratic reforms in their home country; whereas protesters accused long-time Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki of being a dictator and urged the African Union to take action;
- G. whereas according to the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations are being committed by the Government of Eritrea and there is no accountability for them; whereas the enjoyment of rights and freedoms is severely curtailed in an overall context of a total lack of rule of law; whereas, moreover, the violations committed in the areas of extrajudicial executions, torture (including sexual torture), national service and forced labour may constitute crimes against humanity;
- H. whereas, according to the report entitled 'Human Smuggling and Trafficking on the Horn of Africa-Central Mediterranean Route' by the Security Sector Program (ISSP) of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Nairobi-based SAHAN Foundation, Eritrean diplomats and prominent nationals of the Red Sea state are massively involved in human trafficking and smuggling activities in the Horn of Africa region;

- I. whereas Reporters without Borders ranked Eritrea the worst country in the world for press freedom in 2015, below North Korea;
 - J. whereas Human Rights Watch stresses that there is no freedom of religion in Eritrea; whereas the government severely harasses citizens who practice religions other than the four it recognises; whereas even in the case of recognised religions the government interferes with people's religious practice;
 - K. whereas the EU initially imposed sanctions on Eritrea in March 2010 in order to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1907 (2009), and whereas these included an arms embargo, travel restrictions and asset freezes relating to persons who constitute a threat to peace and national reconciliation;
 - L. whereas on 28 January 2016 the Eritrean Minister for National Development and the EU Head of Delegation signed the National Indicative Programme (NIP) under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) in Asmara, worth EUR 200 million for the next five years; whereas actions should focus on renewable energy, governance and public finance management in the energy sector in particular;
 - M. whereas on 13 November 2015 Parliament's Committee on Development asked the Commission and the European External Action Service to take into consideration the conclusions sent to the EDF Committee on the draft National Indicative Programme for Eritrea, which referred to the scale and seriousness of the human rights violations committed by the Eritrean regime, the lack of reliability of this regime as a development cooperation partner, the pervasive corruption and the virtually total absence of transparency in public financial management in the country, and the risk of misusing EDF funds for migration management; whereas the Committee on Development called on the EDF Committee not to adopt the NIP pending further discussion;
 - N. whereas on 19 November 2015 the EDF Committee unanimously adopted the NIP for Eritrea without any major changes to the Commission's initial proposal;
 - O. whereas governments in Europe are struggling to cope with a growing exodus of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants across the Mediterranean and along other irregular routes; whereas, according to UN estimates, 9 % of Eritrea's population of 4.5 million has already fled the country; whereas in 2015 Eritreans seeking asylum in Europe were the fourth-largest group after Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans;
- 1. Calls on the Eritrean authorities to release all political prisoners, reform and shorten national service obligations, stop all forced evictions and demolitions and expand the provision of social housing; stresses the need for Eritrea to respect and implement the right to education without coercion, the inobservance of which is causing so many young Eritreans to flee;
 - 2. Stresses that addressing the justice deficit, democratic governance and restoration of the rule of law must be prioritised by ending authoritarian rule by fear of indefinite conscription, of arbitrary and incommunicado detention, of torture and of other human rights violations;
 - 3. Expresses deep concern at the lack of freedom of expression and the continued

existence of political prisoners held in violation of the principles of the rule of law; demands the immediate release of Swedish-Eritrean journalist Dawit Isaak, who has been imprisoned under harsh conditions and without trial since September 2001; underlines in the strongest terms the urgency of the matter;

4. Recalls that freedom of religion is a fundamental right, and strongly condemns any violence or discrimination on grounds of religion;
5. Emphasises that sustainable peace, development and prosperity cannot exist without respect for human rights; urges Member States, the EU and other international donors to ensure due diligence with respect to human rights in the context of development cooperation;
6. Recalls that respect for human rights is a core value of EU foreign policy and of the EU comprehensive approach towards the Horn of Africa and should therefore feature regularly in the dialogue with Eritrea; believes, in this context, that the unconditional nature of the development aid recently agreed by the EU and Eritrea is liable to challenge the core principles of the EU approach to this volatile region in Africa;
7. Believes that the EDF Committee should have taken into consideration the Committee on Development's recommendations not to adopt the NIP and to engage in further discussion; considers that the decision to adopt the NIP for Eritrea despite Parliament's opposition demonstrates a democratic deficit and severely undermines Parliament's role in ensuring the effective implementation of EU development objectives; calls, in this connection, for Parliament to be given powers of scrutiny over the EDF through a binding interinstitutional agreement under Article 295 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union; stresses that the Committee on Development's conclusions on draft programming documents should be automatically sent by the Commission to the Permanent Representations of the Member States;
8. Stresses that democratic governance and the socioeconomic development of Eritrea are of paramount importance in eradicating poverty by increasing productivity, encouraging investments, and creating employment and business opportunities; urges the EU to ensure the conditionality of the recently agreed aid and also to ensure that the NIP supports Eritrea in operating an important shift in its energy policy in order to make energy accessible for all, especially in the rural areas which are currently still without electricity; believes, moreover, that the governance component of the NIP should strongly focus on implementing the recommendations of the UN-led Universal Periodic Review on human rights;
9. Calls for compliance with international human rights norms and standards concerning refugees; believes that Eritrean refugees fleeing human rights violations should continue to be afforded international protection;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the President and Government of Eritrea, the institutions of the African Union, the United Nations Secretary-General, the United Nations General Assembly, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the Pan-African Parliament (PAP).