



Plenary sitting

B8-0260/2017

4.4.2017

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 Bangladesh, including child marriages
(2017/2648(RSP))

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on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

B8-0260/2017

**European Parliament resolution on Bangladesh, including child marriages
(2017/2648(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, in particular to its Article 19, on freedom of opinion and expression,
 - having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, ratified by Bangladesh in 2000, in particular articles 18 and 19, meaning that signatories do have the legal duty to protect the right to freedom of religion or belief, and freedom of expression of its citizens,
 - having regard to The Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and the People’s Republic of Bangladesh on Partnership and Development, in particular its Article I containing the so-called Human Rights Clause, signed on 22 May 2000 and entered into force on 1 March 2001,
 - having regard to the Sustainability Compact for Continuous Improvements in Labour Rights and Factory Safety in the Ready-Made Garment and Knitwear Industry in Bangladesh,
 - having regard to its resolution of 29 April 2015 on the second anniversary of the Rana Plaza building collapse and progress of the Bangladesh Sustainability Compact,
 - having regard to the Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Bangladesh by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child of 30 October 2015,
 - having regard to the statements made by the HR of the European Union with respect to the human rights situation in Bangladesh,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh,
 - having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, according to Unicef, Bangladesh has the second-highest rate of child marriage in the world and the highest rate in Asia; whereas fifty-two percent of girls in Bangladesh marry before age 18, and 18 percent are married before they turn 15;
- B. whereas on 24 November 2016, the Bangladesh cabinet approved draft legislation that poses grave risks to girls by creating vague exceptions to the country’s ban on child marriage, and even punishing the victims; whereas on 27 February 2017 the Bangladesh parliament approved a law that permits girls under age 18 to marry under “special circumstances,” which creates introducing a legal loophole that sets no age limit for wedlock; whereas is a setback for the fight against child marriage, and sends a message to parents across the country that the government thinks child marriage is acceptable in

at least some situations;

- C. whereas child marriage is deeply destructive to the lives of married girls and their families; whereas it pushes girls out of school, leaves them mired in poverty, heightens the risk of domestic violence, and carries grave health risks for girls and their babies due to early pregnancy;
- D. whereas human rights situation in Bangladesh is worrying and these concerns go beyond child rights but do also involve other paramount issues such as workers' rights, idea freedom and gender equality and gender identity rights;
- E. whereas trade union and workers' rights are an integral part of human rights; whereas after 4 years of Rana Plaza garment factory collapse in where 1134 people were killed and hundreds were injured the situation of garment workers in Bangladesh is still deeply worrying; Thousands of garment workers outside Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, participated in wage strikes between December 11 and 19; whereas The workers coalesced behind a demand for a monthly minimum wage increase from 5300 Takas (60 EUR) to 15000 (175 EUR) or 16,000 (180 EUR); whereas Dozens of garment workers and labor leaders are facing unfair or apparently fabricated criminal cases in Bangladesh after wage strikes;
- F. whereas on 6 August 2014 the Government of Bangladesh published its new media policy which aims curtailing critical reporting by banning speech that is "anti-state", "ridicules the national ideology" and is "inconsistent with Bangladesh's culture", and this constitutes a severe limitation of the most basic democratic rights of freedom of expression and speech; whereas this policy impose limits on media freedom, for example by banning speech that is 'anti-state', 'ridicules the national ideology' or 'is inconsistent with Bangladesh's culture' and restricting the reporting of 'anarchy, rebellion, or violence';
- G. whereas several international organisations reported the evidence of the horrific pattern of violence against people exercising their freedom of expression in Bangladesh, people who have sought to critique or express scepticism about religious viewpoints, targeted and hacked to death; whereas certain actions of the International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh have raised free expression concerns since its establishment in 2010 as a tribunal to examine war crimes committed during the independence war; whereas Bangladesh ranks 146th of 180 countries on the 2015 World Press Freedom Index; whereas the independent non-profit Freedom House judged the country's media as "partly free";
- H. whereas non-lethal violence against LGBTI people has been reported as the case of a lesbian woman reportedly arrested and allegedly raped by police while in custody;
- I. whereas such a deteriorated climate of human rights has accompanied the rise of intolerance and extremist violence in Bangladesh, even in religious terms with nationwide protests calling for the execution of atheist bloggers and the creation of an anti-blasphemy law;
- J. whereas the respect and promotion of human rights and democratic principles underpins the domestic and international policies of the parties and shall be an essential part of EU

external action; whereas the EU has a long-standing relations with Bangladesh, including through the Cooperation Agreement on partnership and development; whereas the EU as main world garment consumer has an important responsibility on improving sustainability of global garment sector supply chains; whereas current

1. Expresses deep concerns about on-going human rights violations that include reduction of child rights, restrictions to freedom of expression, freedom assembled, labor rights suppression, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and torture;
2. Deplores the step back taken by Bangladesh fight against child marriage;
3. Considers that child marriage can be effectively fight through the promotion of human rights, human dignity and social cohesion through robust public social policies which aim especially education, health and public policies to enhance gender equality and women rights;
4. Calls on relevant authorities to promote sexual education and sexual health and reproductive rights, including right to free and save abortion;
5. Reiterates its condemnation of the government of Bangladesh continuous crackdown against members of the political opposition, trade unionists, human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers;
6. Insists that the independence of journalists and bloggers must be safeguarded and that their right to operate without fear of harassment or intimidation by state forces must be guaranteed; and calls on the Bangladeshi authorities to revoke the new media policy and to respect fundamental democratic and human rights as an integral part of a democratic society;
7. Is deeply concern about the conditions of garment workers in Bangladesh; shares the concern of the International Trade Union Confederation that reports of serious shortcomings and failures by the Bangladeshi authorities to live up to its commitments in relation to improving workers' rights, including rights relating to health and safety at work; defends the rights of workers in Bangladesh to form, register and join independent trade unions without fear of harassment; considers the existence of democratic trade union structures to be a vital instrument in the struggle for better health and safety standards and working conditions, including higher wages; calls on the government of Bangladesh to guarantee these fundamental rights; Urges Bangladesh government to enhance labor rights and comply with ILO core standards;
8. Calls on the Bangladeshi authorities to effectively commit to the achievement of the recently internationally adopted sustainable Development Goals, especially in order to reduce inequalities and ensure gender equality and women rights including access to free and save abortion services;
9. Calls on the Bangladesh authorities to urgently ensure the protection of innocent people under such an assault against freedom of expression; ensuring and protecting the aforementioned rights and guarantee the integrity of those facing threats for exercising those rights;

10. Call on the European Union to take all the necessary diplomatic measure to effectively enhance Human Rights respect by Bangladesh's authorities;
11. Calls on the European Commission to initiate an investigation into the extent to which the government of Bangladesh is in breach of its compliance with international human rights and labour rights conventions under the EU GSP 'Everything But Arms' scheme.
12. Notes with concern how existing voluntary initiatives for garment sector's global supply chain sustainability have fallen short to effectively address human rights and labour rights related issues in the garment sector; Calls, therefore, on the Commission to present a legislative proposal on binding due diligence obligations for supply chains in the garment sector;
13. Reiterates that the activities of European companies present in third countries must be entirely consistent with international human rights standards; calls, therefore, on the Member States to ensure that companies which come under their national law do not disregard human rights or the social, health and environmental standards which apply to them when moving to, or doing business in, a third country; calls on the Commission and Member States to take the requisite action against European companies which do not comply with those standards or which do not adequately compensate victims of human rights violations for which they are directly or indirectly responsible; Call on the European Commission the European Council and the Member States to introduce a legislative proposal for binding and enforceable mechanisms on Corporate Social Responsibility for EU based companies operating in third countries in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the 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 United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Government and Parliament of Bangladesh;