



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Plenary sitting

17.12.2014

B8-0382/2014 }
B8-0383/2014 }
B8-0384/2014 }
B8-0385/2014 }
B8-0386/2014 }
B8-0387/2014 } RC1

JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of the Rules of Procedure

replacing the motions by the following groups:

Verts/ALE (B8-0382/2014)

PPE (B8-0383/2014)

ECR (B8-0384/2014)

S&D (B8-0385/2014)

EFDD (B8-0386/2014)

ALDE (B8-0387/2014)

on Mauritania, in particular the case of Biram Dah Abeid
(2014/2999(RSP))

**Cristian Dan Preda, Davor Ivo Stier, Bogdan Brunon Wentz, Elmar Brok,
Lorenzo Cesa, Joachim Zeller, Tunne Kelam, Monica Macovei,
Franck Proust, Andrej Plenković, Jaromír Štětina, Philippe Juvin,
Francesc Gambús, Giovanni La Via, Dubravka Šuica, Lara Comi,
David McAllister, Jeroen Lenaers, Tomáš Zdechovský, Seán Kelly,
Eduard Kukan, Inese Vaidere, Csaba Sógor, Alessandra Mussolini,
Stanislav Polčák, Andrzej Grzyb, Pál Csáky, Pavel Svoboda,
Michaela Šojdrová, Marijana Petir, Gabrielius Landsbergis**

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on behalf of the PPE Group

Josef Weidenholzer, Victor Boştinaru, Hugues Bayet, Enrico Gasbarra, Ana Gomes, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Alessia Maria Mosca, Miroslav Poche, Gilles Pargneaux, Nicola Caputo, Elena Valenciano, Kashetu Kyenge, Liisa Jaakonsaari, Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg, Enrique Guerrero Salom, Andi Cristea, Alessandra Moretti, Goffredo Maria Bettini, Krystyna Łybacka, Marc Tarabella, Marlene Mizzi, Miriam Dalli, Michela Giuffrida, Doru-Claudian Frunzulică, Neena Gill, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė

on behalf of the S&D Group

Charles Tannock, Mark Demesmaeker, Jana Žitňanská, Arne Gericke

on behalf of the ECR Group

Gérard Deprez, Fernando Maura Barandiarán, Frédérique Ries, Ramon Tremosa i Balcells, Marielle de Sarnez, Ivo Vajgl, Pavel Telička, Juan Carlos Girauta Vidal, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Marietje Schaake, Ivan Jakovčić, Jozo Radoš, Petras Auštrevičius, Antanas Guoga, Nathalie Griesbeck, Johannes Cornelis van Baalen, Dita Charanzová, Javier Nart

on behalf of the ALDE Group

Barbara Lochbihler, Judith Sargentini, Maria Heubuch, Ernest Urtasun, Heidi Hautala

on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

Ignazio Corrao, Fabio Massimo Castaldo

on behalf of the EFDD Group

European Parliament resolution on Mauritania, in particular the case of Biram Dah Abeid (2014/2999(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Mauritania, including those of 14 June 2012 on human rights and the security situation in the Sahel region¹ and of 22 October 2013 on the situation of human rights in the Sahel region²,
 - having regard to the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 17 March 2014 on the implementation of the EU strategy for security and development in the Sahel,
 - having regard to the statement of 25 June 2014 by the spokesperson of the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the presidential elections in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania,
 - having regard to Article 1 of the Mauritanian Constitution, which ‘guarantees equality before the law to all of its citizens without distinction as to origin, race, sex, or social condition’,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ratified by Mauritania in 1986), Article 5 of which expressly prohibits slavery, and to Mauritania’s accession to international instruments which prohibit contemporary forms of slavery, namely the Slavery Convention of 1926 and the amending protocol thereto, and the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery of 1956,
 - having regard to the Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000 (the Cotonou Agreement),
 - having regard to the concluding observations on Mauritania of 24 July 2014 of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,
 - having regard to International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 105 on the abolition of forced labour,
 - having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Biram Dah Abeid, the son of freed slaves, is engaged in an advocacy campaign to eradicate slavery; whereas in 2008 he founded the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (*Initiative pour la Resurgence du Mouvement Abolitionniste*); whereas this organisation is seeking to draw attention to the issue and to help take specific cases before courts of law; whereas Biram Dah Abeid was awarded the United Nations

¹ OJ C 322 E, 15.11.2013, p. 94.

² Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0431.

Human Rights Prize for 2013;

- B. whereas on 11 November 2014, Biram Dah Abeid, a leading Mauritanian anti-slavery activist and founder of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement, was arrested following a peaceful anti-slavery march; whereas Biram Dah Abeid has been charged with calling for a demonstration, participating in a demonstration and belonging to an illegal organisation, and whereas some reports suggest that he is at risk of facing the death penalty; whereas the death penalty is still provided for in the Mauritanian Criminal Code, is not restricted to the most serious crimes, and is imposed following convictions based on confessions obtained under torture;
- C. whereas other anti-slavery campaigners have also been arrested and detained, bringing the total number of imprisoned activists from the Mauritanian Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement to 17; whereas it is alleged that during the arrests the Mauritanian gendarmerie used excessive force, including beatings with batons, physical dragging along the floor and humiliation techniques, which included forcing detainees to strip naked; whereas there are also allegations of prison guards having attempted to coerce some of the activists into signing confessions;
- D. whereas Biram Dah Abeid was voted runner-up in the 2014 Mauritanian presidential elections; whereas his reputation has made him a prime target for the Mauritanian authorities; whereas his arrest and those of his colleagues represent a crackdown on political opposition as well as civil society;
- E. whereas, although officially abolished in 1981 and criminalised in 2007, the practice of slavery persists in Mauritania; whereas according to the Global Slavery Index 2014, Mauritania is the biggest offender, with the highest proportion of its population (up to 4 %) enslaved; whereas some figures estimate the prevalence of slavery at up to 20 %; whereas the recently adopted Slavery Act does not cover all forms of slavery in Mauritania, excluding all forms of serfdom, for example;
- F. whereas slavery in Mauritania is explicitly racialised, with slaves almost universally drawn from the (black) Haratin community, which comprises between 40 % and 60 % of the Mauritanian population, as well as from other communities, as acknowledged by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery; whereas the Haratin, even those not in slavery, are frequently denied access to higher-status work or prominent positions in public life;
- G. whereas slavery is usually hereditary, and babies born to enslaved women are frequently considered to be the property of a master's family for their whole lives; whereas female slaves are routinely subjected to sexual violence; whereas most slaves are denied a formal education and are taught that their destiny is to belong to their masters, thus perpetuating so-called psychological slavery; whereas women slaves require their masters' permission to marry; whereas many slaves are born as the product of rape; whereas even slaves who have been released have few opportunities to find meaningful employment;

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- H. whereas Mauritania has ratified conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement;
1. Condemns strongly the arrest and ongoing detention of anti-slavery activist Biram Dah Abeid and his fellow campaigners, and calls for their immediate release; expresses concern about reports of violence used against some of the activists, and urges the Mauritanian authorities to prosecute those officials who have been involved in the abuse and torture of prisoners;
 2. Calls upon the Mauritanian Government to stop using violence against civilians who participate in peaceful public protests and media campaigns in support of Biram Dah Abeid, to cease its crackdown on civil society and political opposition, and to permit anti-slavery activists to pursue their non-violent work without fear of harassment or intimidation; urges the Mauritanian authorities to allow freedom of speech and assembly, in accordance with international conventions and Mauritania's own domestic law;
 3. Condemns strongly all forms of slavery, and specifically the reported high prevalence of slavery, slavery-related practices and the trafficking of human beings within Mauritania; welcomes the Mauritanian Government's criminalisation of slavery, the existence of a special court for slavery and the government's announcement in March 2014 of the introduction of a roadmap for the abolition of slavery;
 4. Notes with regret that there has only been one prosecution for slavery; calls on the Mauritanian Government to end all forms of slavery, to enact anti-slavery laws and to pass legislation aimed at amending or repealing discriminatory legislation, including the discriminatory provisions of its penal, personal status and nationality codes; stresses that allegations of slavery and slavery-like practices should be investigated and prosecuted effectively;
 5. Calls on the Mauritanian authorities to raise awareness in terms of people's attitudes and beliefs regarding slavery at all levels of society; encourages strongly the Mauritanian authorities to help change social attitudes towards race and slavery, particularly as regards the Haratin population; stresses that discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, especially in the realms of education and employment, should be outlawed; calls also on the Mauritanian authorities fully to dismantle the caste-based system of enslavement, in particular in respect of women in domestic work;
 6. Urges the development of universal formal education, so that current and former slaves, as well as their children, can improve their literacy and become equipped with the tools to find meaningful employment; notes that all Mauritanian citizens should be entitled to own land, particularly when they have occupied and cultivated it for generations, a right which Biram Dah Abeid and the Mauritanian Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement are proposing as the key means to end the cycle of slavery; encourages the Mauritanian Government, in this connection, to ratify ILO Convention 169, which recognises the forms of land use of indigenous peoples;

7. Underlines the importance of a fruitful relationship between the EU and Mauritania, with the aim of contributing to democracy, stability and development in the country; stresses that Mauritania is a significant partner in the EU strategy for security and development in the Sahel;
8. Urges the Vice-President / High Representative, the European External Action Service and the Member States to step up their efforts to address slavery in Mauritania, specifically by ensuring a clear and workable foreign affairs and human rights policy which is in line with the EU strategic framework on human rights and democracy, and by promoting a human rights dimension as part of the EU's Sahel strategy and in dialogues with the Mauritanian Government, including in the context of formal bilateral agreements;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the Member States, the Mauritanian authorities, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the UN Human Rights Council, the Economic Community of West African States, the Arab League and the African Union.