

P5_TA(2002)0572

Situation in Bangladesh

European Parliament resolution on Bangladesh

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh,
 - having regard to the EU-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement,
 - having regard to the mounting criticism of alleged violations of the human rights of those detained, as by Amnesty International and the International Organisation against Torture (OMCT),
 - having regard to the report of the US Department of State,
- A. whereas the Government of Bangladesh allegedly deployed 40 000 members of the armed forces and launched “Operation Clean Heart” on 17 October 2002,
- B. whereas authorities claim that the operation has been launched in order to fight rising levels of crime in the country and the number of fire arms in private possession,
- C. whereas the military immediately started house-to-house raids and searches, stopped, questioned and searched vehicles and picked up occupants for questioning, all without warrants,
- D. whereas thousands have so far been arrested and detained incommunicado, many reportedly tortured during detention and interrogation, resulting in 25 deaths in the first 25 days of the said military operation, with almost all the killings taking place during military custody,
- E. whereas the government, while acknowledging deaths in custody, has claimed that all the deaths were the result of 'heart attacks', while families of victims have insisted that the detainees died because of torture and, as they were taken to hospital, witnesses reported marks on the bodies consistent with infliction of torture,
- F. whereas the military have, without any judicial mandate, arrested members of the Bangladesh Parliament, as well as other political leaders and party followers of the opposition; and whereas the opposition’s Centre for Research and Information has been raided, computers damaged and documents taken by the military,
- G. noting that a four-party coalition government, including two Islamist parties, were voted into power in the parliamentary general election on 1 October 2001, and immediately thereafter Bangladesh witnessed an outburst of violence against the losing Awami League’s (AL) voters, party workers and, in particular, the Hindu community,

- H. noting further that there seem to be no members of the Jamaat among those having been seized under "Operation Clean Heart" although this movement is renowned as being equipped with a considerable amount of arms,
- I. whereas the widespread and systematic attack on minority Hindus has continued unabated,
- J. noting that the EU-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement is based on respect for human rights and democratic principles, and that violation of Article 1 is a breach that can lead to suspension of the Agreement,
- K. whereas the Commission must ensure that the human rights situation in Bangladesh is monitored and that the European Parliament is kept informed of it,
- L. noting that Bangladesh has obligations under international law as a State party to both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
 - 1. Expresses its serious concern at the arbitrary arrests, detention, torture, killings in military custody and the deteriorating human rights situation in Bangladesh following the military's "Operation Clean Heart", and fears that the crackdown on crime is also being used for politically partisan purposes;
 - 2. Understands the need for the Bangladesh authorities to improve the state of law and order in the country and counteract the fast-growing levels of various types of criminal activity;
 - 3. Expresses its concern at the fact that the situation of minorities, especially Hindus, has not improved;
 - 4. Expresses its concern at the growing Islamic radicalisation in the country;
 - 5. Calls on the government to immediately institute an independent body to conduct a prompt and fair investigation into the killings and acts of torture, and to ensure that its findings are made public and that those responsible for deaths and ill-treatment are made accountable before courts of law;
 - 6. Calls on the government to release members of parliament and opposition political leaders, to cease attacks and harassment of opposition activists and to stop arbitrary mass arrests, detentions, acts of torture and killings in military custody, and other custodial deaths and to guarantee adequate reparation to all those who have been injured;
 - 7. Strongly urges that a Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission be established without further delay, endowed with adequate powers and sufficient staff to perform effectively and properly, and that the military should not be kept out of the Commission's purview;
 - 8. Calls for the perpetrators of human rights violations not to be granted impunity under any circumstances;

9. Encourages the Government of Bangladesh to protect human rights and apply democratic principles in all areas, including their action to deal with rising crime rates;
10. Calls on the Commission to engage with the Government of Bangladesh under the EU-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement to ensure that violations stop, human rights are protected and the European Parliament is kept informed;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Parliament and Government of Bangladesh.