

## **P6\_TA(2005)0136**

### **Bangladesh**

#### **European Parliament resolution on Bangladesh**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and the People's Republic of Bangladesh on partnership and development<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the mounting criticism of numerous and worsening abuses of human rights by official forces and fundamentalist religious organisations expressed by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in February 2005 (E/CN.4/2005/NGO/32), the US Department of State also in February 2005 (Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Bangladesh 2004) and Amnesty International (for example, Urgent Action 061/2005),
  - having regard to the Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the attack in Habiganj, Bangladesh, on 29 January 2005,
  - having regard to Rule 115 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. concerned about repeated bomb attacks on key opposition politicians, minority religious groups, journalists and NGO representatives, in particular about the two recent grenade attacks where two prominent opposition politicians were targeted – Sheikh Hasina, Head of the Awami League and former Prime Minister, on 21 August 2004, and Shah Mohammad Kibria, former Finance Minister, on 27 January 2005, who was assassinated,
- B. concerned about recent political developments in Bangladesh, where the risk of fundamentalism seems to be growing and where poor governance, corruption and nepotism have severely undermined the rule of law, including safeguards in the constitution to protect fundamental rights in Bangladesh,
- C. concerned that the Government of Bangladesh had limited success in curtailing outbreaks of violence and that threats from extremist groups are continuing; noting that paramilitary groups are continuing to operate in the countryside with the support - in some cases - of local authorities,
- D. concerned to note that religious minorities, including Hindus, but also moderate Muslim groups as well as women's rights organisations, have fallen victim to a number of violent attacks and intimidation in recent years,
- E. recognising that the ensuing climate of fear has been created by the misuse of power on the part of Muslim fundamentalist parties in government,
- F. whereas, while Bangladesh has made some progress in socio-economic sectors including health, sanitation, education, empowerment of women, family planning and self-

---

<sup>1</sup> OJ L 118, 27.4.2001, p. 48.

sufficiency of food, it has lagged behind in improving the overall governance issues and promotion of human rights, which, if implemented, could further boost socio-economic progress for its people,

- G. concerned about the failure of the Government of Bangladesh so far to bring to justice those who perpetrate these attacks and about the general deterioration in law and order in Bangladesh over the last year; noting, however, that on 22 February 2005 the Government of Bangladesh banned the activities and froze the assets of two Muslim criminal organisations,
  - H. emphasising that the EC-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement is based on respect for human rights and democratic principles, and that the violation of Article 1 is a breach capable of threatening the continuation of the Agreement,
  - I. whereas the Commission must ensure that the human rights situation in Bangladesh is monitored and that Parliament is kept informed of it,
  - J. emphasising 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, but has yet not passed any enabling legislation,
1. Condemns the repeated bomb attacks and urges the Government of Bangladesh to ensure that international investigators assisting Bangladesh's intelligence forces will have full access to all evidence regarding the attacks in accordance with the government's own promises, and urges the Government of Bangladesh to publish the investigation report in full;
  2. Urges the Government of Bangladesh to respect the instructions given by its High Court to avoid abuse of legal instruments in detaining opposition demonstrators and to refrain from repressing peaceful political protests through means of detention and torture;
  3. Urges the Government of Bangladesh, in particular, to put an end to the anti-crime operations by the paramilitary forces RAB (Rapid Action Battalion), which come down to extrajudicial killings; points out that the reputed human rights organisation ODHIKAR has stated that there were 90 publicly reported custodial deaths due to torture in 2004;
  4. Encourages the Government of Bangladesh to enable the population to participate in traditional cultural events and to provide security measures in order that these events, which reflect a tradition of tolerance and secularism, can take place safely;
  5. Urges the Government of Bangladesh to take preventive steps against Muslim paramilitary groups, which have spread violence and intimidation in rural areas of Bangladesh;
  6. Reiterates its support for the demand that those known to have participated in the massacre of Bangladeshi citizens and other war crimes during the Bangladeshi liberation war of 1971 be brought to trial;

7. Considers that, with a view to the parliamentary elections scheduled for late 2006/early 2007, systemic reforms are necessary in order to re-establish the principles of good governance, so that the election commission and the caretaker government can operate independently;
8. Considers that a coordinated approach by all donors worldwide will be necessary to support such reforms;
9. Calls on all sides to refrain from undemocratic practices and to enter into an all-party dialogue through full participation in the democratic process in parliament; calls, in particular, on the opposition parties to end the boycott of parliamentary activity, since agitation and violence cause suffering to the people of Bangladesh;
10. Expresses its support for the principled steps which EU representatives have taken during the last year in defence of the rights of religious minorities in Bangladesh, such as their physical presence at a complex of the Ahmadiyya Muslims, in October 2004, when fundamentalists had prepared to stage a mass assault on the complex;
11. Calls on the Council to review the application of the human rights and democracy clause of the EC-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement and to ascertain whether the Government of Bangladesh is making sufficiently strong efforts to fundamentally improve the human rights situation;
12. Notes recent modest steps taken by the Government of Bangladesh to improve the political situation in the country, will encourage the Government of Bangladesh to establish a situation respectful of law and order and will support any substantial progress on issues like good governance, freedom of press, the fight against corruption and respect for human rights;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the European Council, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and candidate countries, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Government of Bangladesh.