



Human rights: Uganda, Yemen, Thai-Cambodian border

Plenary sessions

Discrimination against homosexuals in Uganda, the persecution of juvenile offenders in Yemen and border clashes between Thailand and Cambodia were all the subject of urgent debates and resolutions at the European Parliament on Thursday.

Uganda

Following the murder of a well-known gay activist in Uganda in January, MEPs in today's resolution call on the authorities to conduct investigations and bring the perpetrators to justice.

They add that the EU must take Uganda's discriminatory attitude towards gay people into account in its bilateral relations and they call on the Member States and the EU institutions "to restate the principle that persons at risk of persecution should be considered for refugee status".

The tragedy was prompted by the publication in the local tabloid "Rolling Stone" in October and November 2010 of a list of names and addresses of over a hundred allegedly homosexual individuals, including David Kato Kisule. The newspaper incited readers to harm or even hang them. Mr Kato, a human rights defender and leader of the gay and lesbian community, sued the newspaper and won his lawsuit but on 26 January this year he was brutally murdered.

Meanwhile, the Ugandan Parliament is considering an "Anti-Homosexuality Bill" tabled in 2009 with the aim of punishing homosexual acts by between seven years' and life imprisonment or by the death penalty.

MEPs strongly regret that the Ugandan authorities have "nothing to say" about discrimination against homosexuals. The resolution stresses that they are obliged under international law "to protect all persons - regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity". Parliament has repeatedly tried - so far unsuccessfully - to include an explicit mention of the protection of sexual orientation rights in the revision of the second Cotonou Agreement (governing the EU's partnership with 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries).

In Africa, homosexuality is legal in only 13 countries and is a criminal offence in 38 others. It is punishable by death in Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan and northern Nigeria.

* * *

Yemen

In a resolution on Yemen, MEPs call on the president of the country to halt the execution of Muhammed Taher Thabet Samoum, a young man convicted for a murder he allegedly committed under the age of 18.

More broadly, Parliament urges the Yemeni government to stop executing juvenile offenders under 18, since this breaches both Yemeni law and the country's obligations under international human rights agreements.

Press release

Yemen often has problems in determining the age of juvenile offenders, since many, like Muhammed Taher, do not have a birth certificate. His execution was first scheduled for last December and then put on hold following pressure from the international community.

* * *

Thai-Cambodian border

Parliament also adopted a resolution condemning the border clashes between the armed forces of Thailand and Cambodia and urging both parties to reduce tension, resume dialogue and accept the assistance offered by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), currently chaired by Indonesia.

The temple of Preah Vihear, listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site, has been the centre of recurring boundary disputes between the two countries. MEPs welcome UNESCO's decision to send a special envoy to the area and the fact that Thailand and Cambodia have agreed to participate in an urgent ASEAN meeting.

At a press conference today, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen announced his intention to offer a permanent cease-fire with Thailand at the ASEAN meeting on 22 February.

Contact :

Maria ANDRÉS MARIN

AFET/DROI/SEDE

BXL: (+32) 2 28 44299

STR: (+33) 3 881 73603

PORT: (+32) 498 98 13 45

EMAIL: foreign-press@europarl.europa.eu

Paola BUONADONNA

London

STR: (+33) 3 881 74822

PORT: (+44) 7 786 060 531

EMAIL: Press-en@europarl.europa.eu

EMAIL: paola.buonadonna@europarl.europa.eu

ADDINFO: (+44) 207 227 43 35

Eimear NÍ BHROIN

Dublin

STR: (+33) 3 881 64122

PORT: (+353) 868 559 423

EMAIL: Press-en@europarl.europa.eu

EMAIL: eimear.nibhroin@europarl.europa.eu

ADDINFO: (+353) 1 605 79 32