



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Plenary sitting

25.11.2014

B8-0302/2014

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 Pakistan : blasphemy laws
(2014/2969(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

B8-0302/2014

**European Parliament resolution on Pakistan : blasphemy laws
(2014/2969(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Pakistan, especially those of 10 October 2013, of 20 May 2010, and of 17 April 2014 as well as its resolution on the situation of Christians in the context of freedom of religion of 20 January 2011,
- having regard to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief of 1981,
- having regard to the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 16 November 2009 on freedom of religion or belief, in which the Council emphasises the strategic importance of this freedom and of countering religious intolerance,
- having regard to the EU-Pakistan five-year engagement plan of March 2012, which contains priorities such as good governance and dialogue on human rights, as well as the closely related 2nd EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue of 25 March 2014,
- having regard to the statement of 18 October 2014 by the Spokesperson of the European Union External Action Service on the Lahore High Court decision to uphold the conviction of Ms Asia Bibi in Pakistan,
- having regard to the statement of 22 October 2014 by the Italian Presidency of the Council on behalf of the EU High Representative/ Vice-President Catherine Ashton on death penalty in Pakistan and the case of Asia Bibi,
- having regard to the press release of the European Union Delegation to Pakistan of 29 October 2014, on the occasion of the visit by the EU Special Representative for Human Rights to Pakistan from 26 to 29 October 2014,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 March 2014 on Pakistan’s regional role and political relations with the EU,
- having regard to Regulation 978/2012 (‘GSP Regulation’) and Commission Delegated Regulation 155/2013
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas Asia Bibi, a Christian mother of five children, was arrested in 2009 and sentenced to death in 2010 for blasphemy under Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal for having drunk water from a well reserved for Muslims; whereas the Lahore High Court on 16 October 2014 dismissed Asia Bibi's appeal and upheld the verdict; whereas the Supreme Court, following the appeal, or the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan by presidential pardon can still overturn the Lahore High Court decision and grant amnesty to Asia Bibi;
 - B. whereas on 7 November 2014 a Christian couple, Shama Bibi and Shahbaz Masih, were beaten by a Muslim mob accusing them of burning pages of the Koran in eastern Pakistan; whereas their bodies were incinerated in a brick kiln;
 - C. whereas since years several cases of the application of blasphemy laws in Pakistan raised global concern;
 - D. whereas Pakistan's blasphemy laws make it dangerous for religious minorities to express themselves freely or engage openly in religious activities;
 - E. whereas Pakistan plays an important role in fostering stability in South Asia and should therefore lead by example in strengthening rule of law and human rights;
1. Is deeply concerned and saddened by the decision of the Lahore High Court of 16 October to confirm the death sentence for blasphemy for Asia Bibi, and condemns the verdict; calls on the Supreme Court to uphold the rule of law and the full respect of human rights, to start its proceedings on the case without delay and to strike down the verdict;
 2. Strongly condemns the murders of Shama Bibi and Shahbaz Masih, and calls for the perpetrators of these acts to be brought to justice; takes note of the decision of the Punjab government to set up a committee to fast track the investigation into their killings and to order additional police protection to Christian neighborhoods in the province; underlines, however, the need to end the climate of impunity and for broader reforms in order to address the issue of violence against religious minorities, which remains pervasive in Pakistan;
 3. Is concerned that the judicial and political authorities in Pakistan are put under enormous pressure by religious extremists and risk their life when defending Christians; recalls the brutal murders of Salmaan Taseer, Governor of Pakistan's Punjab province, and Shahbaz Bhatti, Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs, who were both killed for their stances in favour of religious tolerance, their defence of Christians and outspoken criticism of the blasphemy laws;
 4. Expresses once again its deep concerns about the proliferation of episodes of intolerance, repression and violent events directed against Christians, particularly in the countries of Africa, Asia and the Middle East;
 5. Is concerned that the Pakistani blasphemy laws continue being used to persecute religious minorities, including Christians, and reiterates its call to the Pakistan Government to carry

out a thoroughgoing review of the blasphemy laws and their current application, and – *inter alia* – of Section 295 C of the Pakistan Penal Code, which prescribes a mandatory death penalty for anyone found guilty of blasphemy;

6. Notes that, while so far no death sentence has been carried out, the accused, even if acquitted, may face various years in jail waiting for trial, and that their security and that of their families is under risk;
7. Deplores the effects that this has on the freedom of expression and those defending Asia Bibi; urges, therefore, the Pakistan Government to guarantee the human rights of minorities as laid down in the Constitution and the UNDHR, in particular Article 18 thereof, which stipulates that ‘everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion’;
8. Reminds that on 1 January 2014, Pakistan was granted to join the GSP+ scheme; underlines that the granting of the GSP+ status is conditional and, among others, subject to the ratification and implementation of 27 international conventions, as indicated in Annex VIII of the new GSP basic Regulation, most of them on human rights, and that the EU may decide to withdraw GSP+ preferences where a country does not meet its engagements;
9. Urges the European External Action Service and the European Commission to strictly monitor the compliance of Pakistan with its commitments under the GSP+, and to promote and defend human rights in Pakistan;
10. Urges the international community to actively engage in the campaign and make determined diplomatic efforts to free Asia Bibi;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the European Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the UN, the UN Human Rights Council, and the Government and Parliament of Pakistan.