



Plenary sitting

B8-0471/2016

12.4.2016

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, in particular the attack in Lahore
(2016/2644(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

B8-0471/2016

European Parliament resolution on Pakistan, in particular the attack in Lahore (2016/2644(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Pakistan, in particular those of 15 January 2015 on the Peshawar school attack, of 27 November 2014 on blasphemy laws, and of 17 April 2014 on cases of persecution,
- having regard to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, in particular his 2013 Report focused on ‘Freedom of religion or belief of persons belonging to religious minorities, his 2014 Report focused on ‘Tackling manifestations of collective religious hatred’ and his 2015 Report focused on ‘Preventing violence committed in the name of religion’
- having regard to the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues on ‘Hate speech and incitement to hatred against minorities in the media’, of 5 January 2015,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on Pakistan of 20 July 2015,
- 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 EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 December 2015 on the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2014 and the European Union’s policy on the matter, which condemns the increasing persecution of Christians and other religious minorities,
- having regard to the statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the attack in Lahore, Pakistan, of 27 March 2016,
- having regard to the UN Security Council statement on terrorist attacks in Lahore, Pakistan,
- having regard to the statement of the EU Special Representative for Human Rights Mr Stavros Lambrinidis of 29 October 2014,
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas on 27 March 2016 at Gulshan-e-Iqbal parc in Lahore, a suicide bombing caused the death of over 73 people and injured around 300, including many women and children, most of them Christians, who were intentionally targeted and for which the terrorist Islamist group Tehrik-e-Taliban has claimed responsibility;
- B. whereas for years terrorism and Islamist extremism have taken its toll on the Pakistani people, in particular, on religious minorities, women and children; whereas since the adoption of the last resolution of the European Parliament on Pakistan in January 2015, some dozens of other terrorist and violent attacks against Christians and other religious minorities have taken place;
- C. whereas several terrorist groups in Pakistan specifically target Christians, such as Tehrek-e-Taliban; Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jamaat-ud-Dawa (also known as Lashkar-e-Taiba) and Sipah-e-Sahaba; whereas extremist Islamic groups have also targeted other Muslims from minority sects such as Ahmadis and Shia as well as Hindus; whereas the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan in its Annual Report 2015 has observed that in most cases the perpetrators enjoyed impunity;
- D. whereas Christian women in Pakistan are often seen as easy targets because of the low social status given to them due to their sex, religious identity and poverty; whereas women from Pakistan's religious minorities are abducted, forcefully married, and forcefully converted to Islam, a phenomenon largely ignored by the police and civil authorities;
- E. whereas Asia Bibi, a Christian woman, has been in prison for blasphemy since 2009, and on death row since 2010 and is currently under high risk of immediate execution; whereas her Muslim lawyer has been facing life threats;
- F. whereas freedom of belief and religious tolerance in Pakistan is both threatened by terrorism and the widespread abuse of blasphemy laws;
- G. whereas two million Pakistani Christians, out of the around 3 million official estimates, live below the line of poverty and are considered to be the lowest cast facing great hardships on a daily basis; whereas many Christians live in city slums, where minority communities live together largely for their own security; whereas Christian children don't have equal access to education;
- H. 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. Strongly condemns the attack on 27 March 2016 in Lahore targeting the Christian community but affecting all religious communities, for which the terrorist Islamist groups Tehrik-e-Taliban has claimed responsibility;

2. Expresses its deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and Government of Pakistan;
3. Underlines the absolute need to bring the perpetrators of the Lahore attack to justice; calls upon the Pakistani authorities, in particular the local and provincial authorities, to ensure effective investigation and prosecution of the authors of crimes against religious minorities;
4. Stresses the importance of the respect of fundamental rights of all religious and ethnic minorities living in Pakistan for them to continue to live in dignity, equality and safety, and practice their religion in complete freedom without any kind of coercion, discrimination, intimidation or harassment;
5. Recognises the recent efforts by the government and authorities of Pakistan to improve their legal and judicial system as well as their police and security forces in order to prevent terrorist attacks, violence, discrimination and harassment of Christians and members of other religious minorities under their jurisdictions;
6. Considers of utmost importance that the authorities of Pakistan fully implement the Supreme Court of Pakistan's judgment of 19 June 2014, calling for specific actions to protect and safeguard the rights of religious minorities and to promote peaceful coexistence of religions in Pakistan;
7. Requests the authorities of Pakistan to tackle the social and economic exclusion of a large majority of Christians and other religious minorities, who lead a precarious existence, making them more vulnerable to terrorism, violence, discrimination and human trafficking, including forced labour and domestic servitude, forced marriages, sexual exploitation, all factors which lead to a large pressure to migrate to other countries;
8. Welcomes the recent positive steps made by Pakistan to improve the situation of Christians and other religious minorities, such as the recent resolution by the Pakistani National Assembly declaring Holi, Diwali and Easter as holidays; notes that more ambitious measures should be taken in the future in particular in the educational field (excluding negative biases and prejudices in curricula and textbooks), and in the prosecution of those inciting to violence or committing other crimes against Christians and members of other religious minorities;
9. Is concerned about the continued use of blasphemy laws in Pakistan and believes that this increases the climate of religious intolerance, therefore calls on the Pakistani government to review those laws and their application; demands the Pakistani authorities to release Asia Bibi, and not to execute the death penalty imposed upon those who have been convicted on the basis of blasphemy legislation and to commute their sentences, and to protect accused persons, as well as lawyers, judges and witnesses in blasphemy cases;

calls for a moratorium with a view of abolishment of the death penalty in Pakistan;

10. Emphasises that when combating terrorism and religious extremism it is crucial to tackle its root causes by addressing poverty, ensuring religious tolerance and freedom of belief and guaranteeing the right and safe access to education for children, especially girls; call on the Pakistani government to strongly condemn terrorism and religious extremism;
11. Expresses its full commitment to tackle the threat posed by terrorism and religious extremism and its readiness to further assist the Pakistani government in this respect; underlines that measures to combat terrorism and extremism have to be taken in full respect of human rights and obligations of international treaties;
12. 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, the Presidency of the UN Security Council, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Government and Parliament of Pakistan.