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## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for the debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 122 of the Rules of Procedure

on Pakistan - in particular the murder of Shahbaz Bhatti, Minister for Minorities

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on behalf of the PPE Group

**European Parliament resolution on Pakistan - in particular the murder of Shahbaz Bhatti, Minister for Minorities**

*The European Parliament,*

having regard to its previous resolutions on human rights and democracy in Pakistan, in particular of 20 January 2011 as well as those of 20 May 2010 and of 12 July, 5 October and 15 November 2007,

- having regard to its resolution of 16 December 2010 on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World 2009 and the European Union's policy on the matter (2010/2202(INI)),
  - having regard to the Council conclusions adopted on 16 November 2009 on freedom of religion or belief, in which it underlines the strategic importance of this freedom and of countering religious intolerance,
  - having regard to the Council Conclusions on intolerance, discrimination and violence on the basis of religion or belief, adopted on 21 February 2011,
  - having regard to the EU-Pakistan Joint Statement of 4 June 2010, in which both sides have reaffirmed their determination to jointly address regional and global security issues, to promote respect for human rights, and to cooperate to further strengthen Pakistan's democratic government and institutions,
  - having regard to the statement of 2 March 2011 by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the assassination of the Minister of Minorities in the Government of Pakistan, Mr Shahbaz Bhatti,
  - having regard to Article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),
  - having regard to the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),
  - having regard to the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief,
  - having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, on 2 March 2011, the Pakistani minister for minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, has been assassinated by three armed men who opened fire on his car as he travelled to work in the capital Islamabad;

- B. whereas minister Bhatti has been denied by the Pakistani authorities his specific request for the use of a bulletproof official car as well as his own choice of trusted bodyguards;
- C. whereas Shahbaz Bhatti has been the only Christian member of the Pakistani government cabinet and one of the country's few leading politicians repeatedly calling for changes to Pakistan's blasphemy laws;
- D. whereas this assassination happened only two months after the murder of Salman Taseer, Governor of the province of Punjab, was shot in Islamabad by one of his own security guards, Malik Mumtaz Hussein Qadri, who disagreed with Taseer's opposition to Pakistan's blasphemy laws;
- E. whereas a leading Imam reportedly issued a fatwa against Sherry Rehman, a former Pakistani minister, reformist politician and well known journalist, calling her the next case for murder;
- F. whereas the murder of Shahbaz Bhatti is another grave setback in the struggle for tolerance, pluralism, and respect for human rights in Pakistan;
- G. whereas the continuous threats against the life of critics of the blasphemy laws and the ensuing assassinations of politicians like Shahbaz Bhatti or Salman Taseer are the result of the ongoing appeasement of extremist and militant groups who intimidate, threaten, and kill those with opposing views;
- H. whereas on 25 December 2009 President Asif Ali Zardari reiterated the pledge of the Pakistan People's Party to uphold the right of all minorities to be treated as equal citizens,
- I. whereas the legal provisions known as the "blasphemy laws", introduced in 1982 and 1986, undermine the fundamental religious and minority rights granted by the Constitution and are used by extremist groups and those wishing to settle personal scores, leading to an increase of violence against members of religious minorities as well as against critical citizens who dare to raise their voice against injustice,
- J. whereas the blasphemy laws, as currently framed, endanger basic human rights such as free speech, resulting in moderate voices, religious minorities and human rights defenders feeling increasingly insecure;
- K. whereas many politicians and political parties as well as representatives of the media and the civil society are also constantly intimidated by radical religious leaders and therefore do not dare to speak out against their activities;
- L. whereas the Pakistan government has publicly reneged on 30 December 2010 on its manifesto commitment to review discriminatory laws, announcing in a policy statement that it had no intention to repeal or amend the blasphemy laws;
- M. whereas Article 3(5) of the Treaty on European Union states that the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights and civil liberties are fundamental principles

and aims of the European Union and constitute common ground for its relations with third countries; whereas EU assistance in trade and development is conditional upon respect for human rights and minority rights,

1. Strongly condemns the brutal murder of Shahbaz Bhatti, Minister for minorities in the government of Pakistan, on 2 March 2011 and expresses its condolences to the family and friends of the victim and to the people of Pakistan;
2. Applauds Minister Shahbaz Bhatti's courage and proven commitment to justice, interfaith dialogue as well as freedom of religion and belief in Pakistan, in addition to his concern over Asia Bibi, the Christian woman and mother of five children, condemned to death for blasphemy, despite continuous threats and enormous personal risks involved;
3. Recognises Minister Shahbaz Bhatti's dedication to combating the blasphemy laws and the injustice they have facilitated; recognises the progress made during his period as Minister, including significant, discreet negotiations on potential amendments to these laws;
4. Urges the Pakistan authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into all aspects of Shahbaz Bhatti's murder and bring all perpetrators of this crime rapidly to justice following the strict rule of the law as well as to ensure the swift and fair prosecution of the late Governor Salman Taseer's killer;
5. Calls on the Pakistani government to step up measures to ensure the security of cabinet ministers and persons under concrete threat from religious extremists and terrorists, such as former Information Minister Sherry Rehman and lawyers defending cases related to blasphemy accusations;
6. Urges the Pakistani government to appoint without delay a new minister of minorities and affirms its position that this person should be Christian as they are the biggest religious minority in Pakistan;
7. Urges the Pakistani government to support the Ministry for Minorities and the new Minister, in particular at setting up a national level dialogue between religious leaders and the grassroots project of the District Interfaith Harmony Committees;
8. Urgently repeats its call on the Pakistani government, all political parties, the civil society and the media to stand united and fight the extremist onslaught;
9. Calls for an urgent and meaningful policy shift away from appeasement of such extremists, to be supported by the military, the judiciary, the media and the political class alike, given that the status quo has produced such dramatic consequences;
10. Calls for urgent and visible measures to be taken by the government of Pakistan in the fight against the spread of violent extremism and expresses its support for all such measures; calls on the Government of Pakistan to not let the moderate voices in the country be silenced by extremists;

11. Urges the Government of Pakistan to prosecute those inciting violence in Pakistan, in particular those calling for and, in some cases, offering rewards for the deaths of individuals and groups with whom they disagree; and to take further measure to facilitate debate on the issue;
12. Expresses its deep concern that the blasphemy laws – which can carry the death sentence in Pakistan and are often used to justify censorship, criminalisation, persecution and, in certain cases, the murder of members of political, racial, religious and ethnical minorities – are open to a misuse that affects people of all faiths in Pakistan;
13. Reiterates its call upon the Government of Pakistan to reconsider its stance on the blasphemy laws and to carry out a thoroughgoing review of the blasphemy laws and their current application, as well as – inter alia – of Section 295 C of the Penal Code, which prescribes a mandatory death penalty for anyone found guilty of blasphemy, and in the meantime to implement amendments already suggested;
14. Commends particularly the efforts of former minister Sherry Rehman and the late Minister for Minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, who has introduced a private members' bill seeking an end to the death penalty for blasphemy charges; calls on the parties in the Pakistani National Assembly to vote on this bill in order to reduce the scope of the deliberate application of the blasphemy laws;
15. Calls on the competent EU institutions to include the issue of religious tolerance in society in its political dialogue with Pakistan, this matter being of central importance to the long-term fight against religious extremism;
16. Calls on the competent EU institutions to invite the Pakistani government to an annual joint roundtable meeting on the situation of Pakistan's minorities;
17. Calls on the competent EU institutions to continue with financial support for human rights organisations and defenders, and to outline practical measures to support the civil society movement in Pakistan against the blasphemy laws and other discriminatory legislation;
18. Calls on the competent EU institutions to investigate the possibility of using the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in order to finance actions supporting the fight against religious intolerance, extremism and discriminatory laws worldwide;
19. Urges the competent EU institutions to insist that the Government of Pakistan uphold the democracy and human rights clause enshrined in the Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; calls on the European External Action Service to present a report on the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement and the democracy and human rights clause;
20. Calls on the competent EU institutions to support the Government of Pakistan in the development of its Ministry for Human Rights and in establishing a meaningful, independent and impartial National Human Rights Commission;

21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the European External Action Service, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and the Government and Parliament of Pakistan.