



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

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*Plenary sitting*

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15.4.2014

B7-0401/2014

## **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 122 of the Rules of Procedure

on Pakistan: recent cases of persecution  
(2014/2694(RSP))

**Véronique De Keyser, Ana Gomes, Joanna Senyszyn, Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg, Mitro Repo, Liisa Jaakonsaari, Antigoni Papadopoulou**  
on behalf of the S&D Group

**European Parliament resolution on Pakistan: recent cases of persecution (2014/2694(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolution on human rights and democracy in Pakistan, in particular of 12 March 2014 on Pakistan's regional role and political relations with the EU, of 10 October 2013 on recent cases of violence and persecution against Christians, notably in Peshawar, of 10 March 2011 on Pakistan, in particular the murder of Shahbaz Bhatti, of 20 January 2011 on the situation of Christians in the context of freedom of religion and of 20 May 2010 on religious freedom in Pakistan,

- having regard to the statements by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton regarding the attack on the Christian community in Peshawar of 23 September 2013 and regarding the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti of 2 March 2011,

- having regard to the UN Human Rights Council's national report on Pakistan of November 2012, particularly the section on freedom of religion in Pakistan,

- having regard to the UN Human Rights Council's Report of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers in Pakistan of 4 April 2013,

- having regard to the World Report 2014 of Human Rights Watch,

- having regard to Article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

- having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws in their present form have been in place since 1986, punishing blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad with death or life imprisonment,

B. whereas in recent months a number of death sentences were handed to Pakistani citizens on the grounds of violating the blasphemy laws, namely Christian Sawan Masih for insulting the Prophet in a conversation with a Muslim friend, Christian couple Shafqat Emmanuel and Shagufta Kausar for insulting the Prophet in an alleged text message to the imam of their local mosque, whereas Mohammad Asgar, a UK citizen with a mental illness was sentenced to death for sending letters to various officials claiming he was the Prophet,

C. whereas, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), since 1988 around 1,000 cases have been lodged for desecration of the Koran while more than 50 cases have been lodged for blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad,

D. whereas hundreds of Christians as well as members of the Ahmadi sect, legally barred from calling themselves Muslim, are among the accused and, according to a US government advisory panel report, 14 of them were given the death sentence for blasphemy against the

Prophet while 19 others serve a life sentence for insulting Islam,

E. whereas according to rights groups most cases are motivated by local rivalries which are more easily exposed by the higher judiciary than the lower courts,

F. whereas in most cases the lower judiciary are often under considerable pressure to order convictions, whereas their decisions are often overruled by the higher judicial level thus acquitting offenders,

G. whereas Pakistan has been requested by UN human rights mechanisms to repeal the blasphemy law or at the very least immediately put safeguards in place to prevent abuse of the law to victimize citizens, often from minority religious communities,

H. whereas Article 3(5) of the Treaty of the European Union states that the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights and civil liberties are fundamental principles and aims of the EU and constitute common ground for its relations with third countries,

I. whereas the EU and Pakistan have deepened and broadened their bilateral ties, as exemplified by the five-year engagement plan, launched in February 2012, and the first EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, held in June 2012; whereas the aim of the EU-Pakistan five-year engagement plan is to build a strategic relationship and forge a partnership for peace and development rooted in shared values and principles;

1. Expresses its deep concern that the controversial blasphemy laws continue to be applied in Pakistan despite numerous calls by the international community - including the European Parliament - to repeal these laws or at the very least immediately put safeguards in place to prevent abuse of the laws as requested by UN human rights mechanisms;

2. Reiterates its call on the Government of Pakistan to amend the blasphemy laws as attempted by nearly all the popular secular parties in the past; encourages the Government to withstand the pressure from religious groups as well as from some opposition political forces to amend these laws while being conscious of the fact that religious conservatism is growing in Pakistan and the Government is wary about losing public support over the issue;

3. Is deeply worried that these laws in their present form continue to open the way to unfair abuses against religious minorities such as Christians and members of the Ahmadi sect, but also against Muslims, and are often used to settle personal disputes;

4. Urges the Government of Pakistan to review the death sentences against Sawan Masih, Mohammad Asgar and Shafqat Emmanuel and his wife Shagufta Kausar, but also of all other citizens currently on death row for violating the blasphemy laws; calls on the Government to continue to apply the de facto moratorium on the death penalty;

5. Is aware that at the level of the lower judiciary there is considerable pressure on judges to order convictions which in most cases fail the test at the higher judicial level where offenders are often acquitted as most cases are motivated by local rivalries which are more easily exposed by the higher judiciary than the lower courts;

6. Calls on the Pakistani authorities to counter attempts of influencing lower judges which are mainly perpetrated by organized religious groups; is concerned that the influence of these

groups on the higher courts is growing too;

7. Is deeply concerned that the Pakistani authorities - through their failure to adequately intervene despite Pakistan's obligation under UN treaties stressing equality, dignity, rule of law and protection of human rights of all Pakistanis - play an important role in the perpetration of institutionalized discrimination on grounds of religion thus rendering themselves responsible for serious violations of international human rights, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

8. Calls on the Government of Pakistan to address the growing political violence instigated throughout the country by a minority of extremist elements which has been nurtured by the pattern of systematic discrimination, be it on grounds of religion or gender;

9. Warns the Government that the fundamentals of the Pakistan nation, including its economic and social survival, could be endangered if the authorities do not respond to the violence by addressing its root causes and, at the same time, ensuring respect and promotion of equality of human rights of all Pakistanis irrespective of their faith, religion or gender;

10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of Member States, and the government of Pakistan.