

4 September 2000

B5-0663/2000

## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

pursuant to Rule 50 of the Rules of Procedure

by Pedro Aparicio Sánchez, Erika Mann, Jean-Claude Fruteau, Robert J.E. Evans  
and Arlene McCarthy

on behalf of the PSE Group

on the continuing plight of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal

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**Resolution on the continuing plight of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal**

*The European Parliament,*

- A. having regard to its resolution of 14 March 1996 on the plight of Nepali-speaking refugees from Bhutan<sup>1</sup>,
- B. having regard to the recent visit to Nepal from 21 to 22 April 2000 of the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with the countries of South Asia and the SAARC, which incorporated an on-the-spot assessment of the continuing plight of the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal who now number almost 98 000 people,
- C. deeply concerned at the continuing plight of these refugees who are currently accommodated in seven refugee camps in eastern Nepal,
- D. aware that the growth in the population of Bhutanese refugees, which is a natural process, means a demand for resources including additional huts and associated facilities in already cramped camps and that, similarly, food and non-food supply is another area in which demand continues to rise each year,
- E. conscious of the vital role played by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UNHCR who are assisting the refugees and that the European Union and other donors have provided funds for the two organisations; welcoming the fact that, in addition, the EU has also been supporting the refugees and refugee-affected communities through NGOs,
- F. stressing that, while the EU remains one of the major donors, both the UNHCR and the WFP are finding it increasingly difficult to raise funds to run the camps and that in recent months the WFP has been facing the real and very serious possibility of a future food shortage; expressing disquiet, furthermore, that donors are more and more concerned at the lack of progress being made,
- G. welcoming the talks on the problem of the Bhutanese refugees held by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs Sadako Ogata, with the Bhutanese and Nepalese authorities during her visit to these countries at the end of April and beginning of May 2000,
  - 1. Reiterates its call to the Governments of Bhutan and Nepal, in cooperation with all other parties involved, to reach an agreement which will allow the early and voluntary repatriation of these Bhutanese refugees to their country of origin;
  - 2. Welcomes the latest round of bilateral talks between Nepal and Bhutan in Thimphu in May this year and calls on both governments to immediately start field verification for the early and time-bound repatriation of the refugees;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 96, 1.4.1996, p. 296.

3. Considers that the visit by the UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees has further helped to create conditions favourable to a positive development of the situation and welcomes the statements issued by the Bhutanese authorities reiterating their determination to resolve the refugee issue and to display the flexibility necessary for an early solution to the problem of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal;
4. Considers that international donors should make sufficient funds available to permit the running of the camps during the negotiation and verification process;
5. Recognises the tremendous goodwill of Nepal in accepting the refugees who are the victims of arbitrary deprivation of nationality and forcible eviction and who came to Nepal through India, which failed to assume its responsibilities as 'a first country' for the refugees and consistently refuses to help in resolving the repatriation issue by pretending that it is a bilateral issue of concern only to Bhutan and Nepal;
6. Considers that the Indian authorities must take full account of the humanitarian situation of the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and should take political initiatives in order to support the solution of the problem;
7. Calls for and encourages all interests, including international donors, to contribute to finding an early and permanent solution bearing in mind that almost 98 000 people have been denied their human rights for the last eight years;
8. Calls on the Commission and the Council, for their part, to initiate meaningful discussions aimed at encouraging all parties involved to take the necessary political initiatives which will result in a final and durable solution at the highest political level;
9. Points to the limited response to the EU allocation of EUR 4.5 million available for resettlement of refugees to Bhutan;
10. Greatly appreciates the direct support for the camps which, so far, has cost over USD 92 million;
11. Welcomes the release of Mr Tek Nath Rizal and 200 other prisoners as a positive indication of Bhutanese goodwill but at the same time regrets the lack of progress in other areas;
12. Regrets the officially instituted and illegal occupation of the homes and lands of those who have been driven out as this complicates possible future repatriation and makes a just settlement more difficult to achieve;
13. Welcomes the positive steps in defining the database and procedural aspects for the verification process and points to the important role that can be played by the UNHCR in facilitating the practical implementation of the process;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States, the Governments of Bhutan, Nepal and India, the secretariat of the SAARC, the WFP and the UNHCR.