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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 115 of the Rules of Procedure

by Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, Cecilia Malmström, Marios Matsakis, Frédérique Ries and Anneli Jäätteenmäki,

on behalf of the ALDE Group

on Syria

European Parliament resolution on Syria

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the EU guidelines towards third countries on death penalty (1998), on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (2001), on human rights with third countries (2001) and on human rights defenders (2004).
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to Article 11(1) of the Treaty of the European Union and Article 177 of the EC Treaty, which establish the promotion of human rights as an objective of the common foreign and security policy,
 - having regard to the Barcelona declaration of 28 November 1995,
 - having regard to its report on the 10th anniversary of the Barcelona process.
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Syria,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the accession to power of the current President, Bachar Al Assad, gave rise to some hope in Syria and went some way towards opening up the Syrian political system, which had been dominated by the Baath party for many years,
- B. whereas the European Parliament and its President have already intervened several times in the past in favour of the release of Syrian human rights defenders,
- C. concerned by the fact that former Syrian prisoner of conscience Kamal-Al-Labwani was arrested on 8 November 2005 on arrival at Damascus Airport on his return after spending several months in Europe and in north America,
- D. whereas his arrest seems to be connected with his peaceful calls for democratic reform in Syria,
- E. whereas, according to media reports from the region, the Syrian authorities levelled new charges at Labwani last month that could carry a life sentence (with hard labour) or even the death penalty because, "he has contacted a foreign state to get it to initiate aggression against Syria",
- F. whereas Kamal-Al-Labwani never advocated the use of force against Syria and recommended dialogue and support to civil society and opposition focus to open a non-violent transition towards democracy,

- G. deeply concerned by the recent wave of arrest of human rights defenders and civil society activists, Michel Kilo, a prominent writer and pro-democracy activist, Nidal Darwich, a member of the non-government organisation committees for the Defence of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights in Syria, Mahmoud Mer'i the Secretary of the Arab organisation for Human Rights in Syria, Khaled Khalife, writer, former prisoner of conscience and now a member of the Kurdish Future current, Khalil Hussein, Dr Safwan Tayfour and former prisoner of conscience Mahmoud Issa, as well as Fateh Jamus, Ali Al-Abdullah and his sons Muhammed and Omar,
- H. dismayed by the fact that veteran human rights lawyer Anwar Al Bunni was arrested on 17 May 2006 by officers of the State Security Service and taken to an unknown location,
- I. noting that Anwar Al Bunni was to be designated head of a EU funded centre for human rights training, the first in the country, but the centre's opening was blocked by the authorities in March 2006,
- J. considérant que cette vague d'arrestations s'inscrit en représailles directe de la diffusion le 12 mai 2006, d'une pétition signée par environ 500 personnes, appelant à une normalisation des relations entre le Liban et la Syrie cette pétition, d'une importance toute particulière, étant une initiative conjointe d'intellectuels et de défenseurs des droits de l'Homme syriens et libanais, la première de la sorte,
- K. whereas the UN Human Rights Committee has expressed last year its concern 'at the obstacles imposed on the registration and free operation of non-governmental human rights organisations' in Syria and 'intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders',
- L. whereas respect for human rights is an essential element in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership,
1. Believes that Syria plays an essential role in the development of the Barcelona process;
 2. Points out that respect for human rights constitutes a vital component in any future EU-Syria Association Agreement;
 3. Calls on the Syrian authorities to drop immediately all charges against Kamal Al Labwani, Anwar Al Bunni and the other human rights activists, who were the victims of last May's wave of arrests;
 4. Calls on the Syrian authorities to:
 - (a) ensure that the detainees are well treated and not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment;
 - (b) ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

- (c) ensure that detained or imprisoned persons are given prompt, regular and unrestricted access to their lawyers, doctors and families;
4. Calls on the Commission and the Council and the individual Member States to make clear to the Syrian authorities that the agreement which is currently under negotiation includes human rights clauses which are a fundamental element of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and expects concrete improvements in this field on the part of the Syrian authorities;
 5. Calls for the setting up of a subcommittee on human rights with Syria in the framework of the Association Agreement, as has been done with Jordan and Morocco, so as to develop a structured dialogue on human rights and democracy; believes that such a subcommittee would constitute a key element in the Action Plan; emphasises the importance of civil society being consulted on and involved in the work of this subcommittee in order better to monitor the human rights situation; stresses also the need for the European Parliament to be closely associated in the work and follow-up of this subcommittee;
 6. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Government and Parliament of Syria.