

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

---

*Session document*

3.2.2009

B6-0079/2009

## 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 Marco Cappato, Metin Kazak, Marios Matsakis, Jules Maaten

on behalf of the ALDE Group

on the situation of Burmese refugees in Thailand

**European Parliament resolution on the situation of Burmese refugees in Thailand**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its resolutions of 23 October 2008, 18 June 2008, 22 April 2008, 26 September 2007, 21 June 2007 and 14 December 2006 on Burma,
  - having regard to its previous resolutions of 7 September 2006 on North Korean asylum seekers, in particular in Thailand,
  - having regard to the rules laid down in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto,
  - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas hundreds of Rohingya (Burmese Muslim) refugees are feared dead after being pushed back into the sea by Thai authorities, according to human rights activists based in Thailand,
- B. whereas up to 200 people are missing and more than 300 others are believed to have died after they were set adrift by Thai soldiers - some with their hands tied behind their backs - in boats without engines,
- C. whereas Thai military authorities have denied these accusations and Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has promised a full investigation,
- D. whereas the United Nations' refugee agency has voiced its concern about the reports and urged the government to investigate the incidents,
- E. whereas Rohingya face harsh treatment and discrimination by the Burmese authorities as they are prohibited from travelling outside their native Arakan state and whereas in September 2008, more than 100 Rohingyas were given six-month prison sentences after they were caught travelling to Rangoon to look for work,
- F. whereas these migrants, like the others detained before them, are members of Burma's ethnic Rohingya minority, who are mostly stateless people living in the west of country on the border with Bangladesh,
- G. whereas in the past few months, thousands of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and Burma have allegedly been rounded up by Thai soldiers and transferred to an island off the coast of southern Thailand, near Ranong, before being put into boats without engines and set adrift in the sea,
- H. whereas these expulsions reverse Thailand's previous policy of allowing Burmese refugees, including Rohingya, to put in to land on their way to seek work, particularly in Malaysia,

- I. whereas there is some concern that the Rohingya may be headed to join the rebellion in southern Thailand, where insurgents are seeking greater autonomy from Bangkok and even a separate Islamic state,
- J. whereas last year more than 5,000 Burmese refugees fleeing in boats from Bangladesh and Burma were detained by Thai authorities and many more have successfully managed the dangerous journey to Malaysia and Indonesia,
- K. whereas a Burmese Buddhist monk, U Gambira, aged 29 years, who was condemned in November 2008 to 68 years' imprisonment for having led demonstrations against the military regime, started a hunger strike in order to be able to meet his family,
- L. whereas on 19 January 2009, a 41-year-old Australian writer of Greek-Cypriot origin, Harry Nikolaides, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in Thailand for insulting the country's royal family in a novel,
- M. whereas Nikolaides told reporters that he had endured "unspeakable suffering" during his pretrial detention and appeared clearly fatigued in court,
- 
1. Calls on the Thai Government to take all measures necessary to ensure that the lives of Rohingya are not at risk and that they are treated in accordance with accepted international humanitarian standards;
  2. Stresses that the issue of the boat-people, which affects Thailand and other countries, is essentially a regional issue having an international perspective, that it needs to be addressed, that it demands a 'permanent solution' and that it requires that the root cause be addressed;
  3. Welcomes the action taken by India and Indonesia to rescue the boat-people who had been cast adrift;
  4. Demands that the Government of Thailand not push the Rohingya refugees and asylum seekers, including the boatpeople, back to Burma, where their lives will be in danger, and that it conduct an impartial inquiry and take appropriate action against those responsible for the loss of lives and tragedy of the boat-people;
  5. Calls on the Government of Thailand to allow UNHCR access to the Rohingya boat-people in Thai custody to determine their status or to see if they are in need of international protection;
  6. Strongly condemns Rohingya's systematic, persistent and widespread human rights violations in Burma, including denial of citizenship rights and severe restrictions on freedom of movement;
  7. Stresses that these crimes against humanity have forced the Rohingyas to leave their homes for various destinations in search of peace, safe shelter and protection;

8. Strongly condemns the SPDC (the ruling Burmese military) for making it impossible for these people to live peacefully; considers them responsible for this human tragedy;
9. Demands that Burmese citizenship be restored to the Rohingya and that all restrictions on their right to education, their right to get married and their freedom of movement be lifted immediately; demands a halt to religious persecution, destruction of mosques, churches and places of worship and the cessation of all human rights violations across the country;
10. Calls on the SPDC to start a genuinely all-inclusive democratic and political process, in accordance with the will of the people of Burma, and to free Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, U Tin Oo, U Kyaw Min, U Khun Tun Oo and all political prisoners;
11. Calls for the immediate release of U Gambria, known figure of the Burmese opposition who played a key-role in the large processions of September 2007, which was violently repressed by the junta;
12. Calls on the Thai authorities to repair this flagrant human rights violation and to free immediately the writer Harry Nikolaides and allow him to return to his home in Australia;
13. Considers sending an EP mission to Burma as a matter of major importance in the present context given that the human rights situation is not improving and international pressure on the regime has to be reinforced;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand, the Government of Burma and the United Nation High Commissioner for refugees.