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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 Pasqualina Napoletano, Glenys Kinnock, Catherine Stihler

on behalf of the PSE 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 the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and to the Protocol on the Status of Refugees of 1967,
 - having regard to the joint statement by the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) and the Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK) of 26 January 2009,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas it has been reported that around 1000 Rohingya and Bangladeshi boat-people were intercepted by the navy in Thai territorial waters between 18 and 30 December 2008 and were subsequently towed into international waters without navigational equipment or sufficient food and water and whereas many of them are missing and feared drowned,
- B. whereas 126 Rohingya are reportedly being kept in custody by the Thai authorities: 80 are believed to have survived being cast adrift and 46 believed to have been intercepted by the Thai navy in January 2009, their whereabouts being unknown,
- C. whereas a Thai court in the province of Ranong has reportedly ordered the deportation of 62 Rohingya boat-people who had been arrested by the Thai navy and charged with illegally entering the country and who had been sentenced to five days in jail for being unable to pay the fine for illegal entry,
- D. whereas the Rohingya were fleeing Burma where they face systematic persecution and severe human rights violations including denial of citizenship and freedom of movement,
- E. whereas the detained asylum seekers appealed to the court not to send them back to Burma where their lives were at risk,
- F. whereas Thai military officers have denied any mistreatment of the refugees and have accused foreign media of trying to tarnish the country's image,
- G. whereas nearly 650 Rohingya have been rescued by India and Indonesia and their testimonies confirm the allegations levelled against the Thai military,
- H. whereas the Thai authorities see the issue of the Rohingya purely in terms of security and the fight against illegal immigration,

1. Strongly condemns the inhumane treatment inflicted on the Burmese refugees, in blatant violation of international rules on the treatment of refugees;
2. Joins the UNHCR in his appeal to the Thai Government to take all measures to make sure that the lives of the Rohingya boat-people are not put at risk and that they are treated in accordance with humanitarian standards;
3. Urges the Thai authorities to launch a thorough and impartial investigation with full transparency in order to establish the facts and take to take appropriate action against those responsible for mistreatment of Burmese refugees;
4. Appeals to the Thai Government to give the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees immediate and full access to the detained Rohingya boat-people in order to define their protection needs;
5. Expresses its gratitude to the governments of India and Indonesia for rescuing the boat-people who were left adrift;
6. Takes a positive view of the Thai Government's efforts to increase cooperation among regional neighbours to address the Rohingya issue; welcomes, in this respect, the meeting held on 23 January 2009 with the Ambassadors of India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Burma; at the same time, calls on the Thai Government and international organisations to seek a permanent solution for the Rohingya;
7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States, the government of Thailand, the governments of the ASEAN nations, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.