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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 122 of the Rules of Procedure

on attacks on religious minorities in Egypt and Malaysia

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on behalf of the ECR Group

European Parliament resolution on attacks on religious minorities in Egypt and Malaysia

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on human rights in Egypt and Malaysia,
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2007 on serious events which compromise Christian communities' existence and those of other religious communities,
 - having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights,
 - having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief of 1981,
 - having regard to the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and in particular her reports of 8 March 2007, 20 July 2007, 20 August 2007, 31 July 2009 and 6 January 2009,
 - having regard to the Joint Action Plan signed between the European Union and Egypt in March 2007 within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy,
 - having regard to Article 19 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as ratified by Egypt in 1982,
 - having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas on 6 January 2010, on Christmas Eve according to the Coptic calendar, six Coptic Christians and a security official were killed in cold blood in the Egyptian town of Nag Hamadi, in an unprovoked attack on a group of worshippers leaving their church,
- B. Whereas the Egyptian Constitution guarantees the freedom of belief and the practice of religious rites, although the Government places restrictions on these rights in practice,
- C. Whereas the Egyptian Government continued to sponsor "reconciliation sessions" following sectarian attacks, which generally precluded the prosecution of perpetrators of crimes against Copts and prevents their recourse to the judicial system for restitution; whereas anti-Christian employment discrimination is evident in the public sector, especially the security services and military,
- D. Whereas the Christian community in Egypt is increasingly the victim of violence and persecution, caused by a sharp rise of Islamic fundamentalism;

- E. Whereas these attacks are not an isolated event, but have taken place in a context of growing tensions and increasing violence against Christian minority populations,
 - F. Whereas the Malaysian authorities introduced a ban on non-Muslims using the word "Allah"; whereas this ban has been overturned by the ruling of Malaysia's High Court stating that a Roman Catholic newspaper, the Herald, should be permitted to use the word Allah to describe God in its Malay language editions;
 - G. Whereas following the ruling there was an outbreak of violence and at least 9 attacks on Christian Churches in Malaysia, including three incidents of fire bombing at the Metro Tabernacle Church in Desa Melawati, the Assumption Church in Petaling Jaya and the Life Chapel Church in Damansara;
 - H. Whereas the word "Allah" has been used by Malays for centuries to refer generally to God, and is commonly used by Christians to describe God in such countries as Egypt, Syria and even nearby Indonesia, which is the world's largest Muslim nation;
 - I. Whereas the use of the word "Allah" is accepted by the Malaysian government for the Christian minorities in Sabah and Sarawak states, while questioned in other regions of the country;
 - J. Whereas the Malaysian authorities confiscated in March and September 2009 a total of about 15.000 Bibles because of the usage of the word 'Allah' in these Bibles, and has not returned the Bibles until this date
 - K. Whereas the World Council of Churches called on the Malaysian government to take immediate action and condemned the recent attacks;
 - L. Whereas there is a growing number of episodes of intolerance and repression directed against Christian communities, particularly in African, Asian and the Middle Eastern countries,
 - M. Whereas intolerance directed against Christians may also be found in Europe, with the recent example of the ruling of European Court of Human Rights, banning the use of crucifixes in classrooms in Italy;
1. Strongly condemns the recent killings of Coptic Christians in Egypt and all acts of violence against Christian communities, wherever they happen, and urges the governments concerned to bring to justice the perpetrators of these crimes;
 2. Express its concern about the safety and well being of the ancient Christian community in Egypt;
 3. Deplores that previous attacks on Christians have resulted in very few prosecutions and several violations have gone unpunished;
 4. Deplores that in Egypt Christians face personal and collective discrimination in many areas and those converted from Islam to Christianity are harassed and pressured to revert to Islam;
 5. Calls on the Egyptian government to take all necessary steps to halt the repression and

discrimination against religious believers, including indigenous Coptic Orthodox Christians and through adequate and efficient investigation to prosecute and to punish those responsible for violence against Christians or other severe violations of religious freedom;

6. Urges the Egyptian government to improve the security situation of the Christian minority; stresses therefore that the public authorities have a duty to protect all religious communities, including Christian communities, from discrimination and repression;
7. Calls on the Commission and the Council to raise the subject of the situation of the Christian communities in the framework of the political dialogue with the countries where they are threatened, through the promotion of a strategic commitment from the countries concerned on the basis of the international treaties on human rights;
8. Welcomes the ruling of Malaysia's High Court and calls upon Malaysian authorities to respect its decision and condemns the appeal lodged by the Government at the Court of Appeal against the High Court's decision of 4 January 2010;
9. Calls on Malaysian authorities to take immediate measures to resolve the problem and to bring to justice to all perpetrators of acts of violence against Christian minorities;
10. Strongly condemns the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg and reminds the court about the essential role of Christianity in shaping Europe's historic and cultural identity;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the government and parliament of Egypt, the government and parliament of Malaysia, the OSCE and the Council of Europe.