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B7-0048/2010

## **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 the freedom of belief and recent attacks against religious minorities in Egypt and in Malaysia

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

**B7-0048/2010**

**European Parliament resolution on the freedom of belief and recent attacks against religious minorities in Egypt and in Malaysia**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
- Having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights,
- Having regard to the EU Charta of Fundamental Rights,
- having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

**On Europe**

A. whereas the European Union has repeatedly expressed its commitment to the freedom of thought, conscience and religion and stressed, that governments have a duty to guarantee these freedoms all over the world,

B. whereas, according to international human rights law, and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in particular, everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; whereas this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance,

C. whereas Europe, as other parts of the world, is not exempt of cases of violation of this very freedom and experiences individual crimes committed against members of minorities on the basis of their beliefs,

D. having regard to regular incidents of vandalism against Jewish institutions as well as increasing occurrences of attacks against members of minorities, recalling notably the brutal killing of the Egyptian national Marwa al-Sherbini in July 2009 in a German court room, motivated by hatred against Muslims, for which the murderer was sentenced to life in prison,

E. having regard also to the recent referendum in a European country banning the building of minarets, the most visible symbol of Islamic worship,

F. whereas interreligious dialogue is crucial to promote peace and mutual understanding between peoples in the world,

**On Egypt**

G whereas on 6 January 2010 a drive-by shooting killed seven individuals, 6 Coptic

Christians and a policemen, and injured dozens of others when worshippers were leaving a church after a midnight mass on Coptic Christmas Eve in the city of Nagaa Hammadi in Upper Egypt; whereas further clashes broke out between Coptic Christians and Muslims in the past weeks that were qualified by the Egyptian Government as individual incidents;

H. whereas on 8 January 2010 Egyptian authorities announced that they had been arrested and were holding three people in connection with the attack of 6 January;

I. whereas Coptic Christians represent around 10 per cent of Egyptian population; whereas several violent acts against Coptic Christians took place in the past years in Egypt including the attack that killed at least 20 people in Kosheh village in 2000 and the murder of two young Copts in 2007 in Awlad Toq Garb;

J. whereas at least twenty Coptic Christian and Muslim democracy activists and bloggers who travelled to the city of Nagaa Hammadi to express Christian-Muslim solidarity have been arrested and reportedly charged with "illegal assembling and disorderly conduct/causing unrest"; whereas all of them have been released after one day detention;

### **On Malaysia**

J. whereas the Malaysian Catholic Church had filed a lawsuit against the government in 2007 after the government threatened to prohibit publication of The Herald newspaper on the grounds of national security if it did not stop using the word "Allah" commonly used by the Bahasa-Malaysia speaking community of Christian faith as translation of "God";

K. whereas on 31 December 2009 the High Court ruled that the Christians in Malaysia have the constitutional right to use the word "Allah" to refer to God and that the word "Allah" is not exclusive to Islam;

L. whereas the government had confiscated over 15 000 copies of the Bible in Malay language in 2009 where the word "Allah" was used as a reference to God;

M. whereas the Malaysian High Court's verdict sparked protests from Muslim groups that led to firebombs being thrown at eight churches in the country;

1. Stresses that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a fundamental human right which is guaranteed by international legal instruments and strongly condemns all kinds of violence, discrimination and intolerance based on religion and belief;

### **On Europe**

2. Recalls Europe's multi-religious and multi-ethnic origins; deeply regrets incidents of religiously motivated violence on European soil, notably the murder of Marwa al-Sherbini and expresses its solidarity with the families of the victims;

3. Calls on the European authorities - from the European Union level to the municipalities - to continue and further enhance measures in favor of religious and ethnic tolerance and mutual

cultural understanding, notably for the Muslim and Jewish minorities;

4. Expresses its disapproval of the referendum to ban the construction of minarets, and considers that referenda violating basic European and UN human rights norms should be prohibited by law;

### **On Egypt**

5. Expresses its deep concern about the recent attacks against Coptic Christians in Egypt and its solidarity with the families of the victims; calls on the Egyptian government to ensure the personal safety and integrity of Coptic Christians, and of members of other religious minorities, in the country;

6. Takes note of the efforts made by the Egyptian authorities to identify the perpetrators of the 6 January attack; calls on the Egyptian Government to ensure that all persons responsible for this attack, as well as for other violent acts against Coptic Christians or other religious minorities, be brought to justice;

7. Calls on the Egyptian government to guarantee that Coptic Christians, and members of other religious minorities, fully enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms and to prevent any discrimination against them;

8. Calls on the Egyptian government to drop the charges against the group of Coptic and Muslim activists and bloggers and to guarantee the respect for actions of solidarity against sectarian violence;

### **On Malaysia**

9. Expresses its concern about recent attacks against Christian churches in Malaysia, which bear witness of growing intolerance towards Malaysia's religious minorities, notably Christians and Hindus;

10. Welcomes the clear condemnation of the acts of vandalism by the Malaysian government, however expects that the government steps up its agenda in support of religious tolerance as stipulated in the Constitution of Malaysia;

11. Considers that the action of the Malaysian Home Ministry constitutes violation of the freedom of religion; is especially worried that the Malaysian government has acted outside the law and its interference contributed to the mounting of tensions among religious groups in the country and calls on the Malaysian authorities to carry out a thorough and rapid investigation into reported cases of attacks against the places of worship and to bring those responsible to justice;

12. Welcomes the Malaysian High Court's decision as a victory for freedom of religion in a country where the dominant religion followers enjoy special privileges;

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High

Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Council of Europe and the Government and Parliament of Egypt, and Government and Parliament of Malaysia.