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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 religious freedom in Pakistan

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on behalf of the ALDE Group

European Parliament resolution on religious freedom in Pakistan

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on human rights and democracy in Pakistan, in particular those of 12 July [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2007-0536+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN - def_1_1#def_1_1](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2007-0536+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN-def_1_1#def_1_1), 25 October and 15 November 2007,
- having regard to the Council conclusions adopted on 16 November 2009 on freedom of religion or belief in which it underlines the strategic importance of this freedom and of countering religious intolerance,
- having regard to the EU-Pakistan Joint Statement of 17 June 2009, in which both sides underlined the importance of an integrated long-term strategy including social economic development and the rule of law; as well as acknowledging the significance of non-military means in countering terrorism,
- having regard to Article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),
- having regard to the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief,
- having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure
 - A. whereas the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights and civil liberties are universal principles and aims of the European Union and constitute common ground for its relations with third countries,
 - B. whereas the majority and state religion of Pakistan is Islam and minority religious groups consist of Hindus, Sikhs, Ahmadis, Buddhists, Christians, Parsis, Baha'is, and others,
 - C. whereas reports and surveys done by independent agencies reveal that minorities in Pakistan are deprived of basic civil liberties and equal opportunities in jobs, education and political representation,
 - D. whereas the Fundamental Rights chapter of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan guarantees 'freedom to profess religion and manage religious institutions' (article 20) and the equality of all citizens (article 25),
 - E. whereas the government of Pakistan appointed a spokesman for minorities and Member of the Pakistan Parliament Shahbaz Bhatti, as Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs in November 2008, while also elevating this position to cabinet level for the first time,

- F. whereas, in the period since November 2008 the government of Pakistan has created a quota of 5% for minorities in the federal jobs sector, recognized non-Muslim public holidays, declared 11 August to be National Minorities Day and committed to providing Senate seats for minority representatives,
- G. whereas, on 25 December 2009, President Asif Ali Zardari reiterated the pledge of the Pakistan People's Party to uphold the rights of all minorities to be treated as equal citizens,
- H. whereas the legal provisions known as the 'blasphemy laws', contained within section 295 of the Pakistan Penal Code, are misused by extremist groups and those wishing to settle personal scores,
- I. whereas the vast majority of people accused under the blasphemy laws are Muslim but accusations against individuals from minority faiths can trigger disproportionate violence against their community as a whole; whereas it was blasphemy accusations that triggered mob violence in Gojra and Korian in summer 2009, leaving seven dead and at least one hundred houses destroyed,
- J. whereas blasphemy prisoners face discrimination and religiously-motivated assault and many of those who are acquitted spend the remainder of their lives in hiding,
- K. whereas it is estimated that over 85% of women in Pakistan face domestic abuse which includes physical and psychological abuse. Violence against girls and women including rape, domestic violence and forced marriages continue to be serious problems;
- L. whereas lawyers and human rights activists in Pakistan experience frequent death threats and harassment, and lawyers who defend blasphemy cases are especially vulnerable to such risks,
- M. whereas Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan suffer frequent discrimination and persecution underpinned by the anti-Ahmadiyya provisions in section 298 of the Pakistan Penal Code, a recent example being the murder of a retired Ahmadi professor by masked gunmen on 5 January 2010,
- N. whereas the government of Pakistan has signed but not ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1984 UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
 - 1. Welcomes the measures taken in the interest of religious minorities by the government of Pakistan since November 2008; supports the efforts of the Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs in establishing a network of Local Interfaith Harmony Committees to promote dialogue and ease the religious tensions; welcomes the commitment made by the Prime Minister of Pakistan of granting of property rights to minority slum dwellers in Islamabad;

2. Supports the Pakistani government's commitment to provide minority seats, and also for women representatives of minority groups in the Senate and insists that these guarantees be fulfilled;
3. Expresses its deep concern that the blasphemy laws are dangerously vague and continue to be open to a misuse that affects people of all faiths in Pakistan;
4. Calls upon the government of Pakistan to repeal the blasphemy laws and, in the meantime, to implement amendments as suggested by the Federal Minister for Minority Affairs;
5. Expresses its particular concern at the ongoing discrimination against and persecution of the Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan and in this regard, calls upon the Pakistani government to repeal Section 298 of the Penal Code and to discourage state-sponsored, inflammatory events;
6. Is particularly concerned about Pakistan's leading role in the 'Combating Defamation of Religion' campaign at the UN, stressing the Council conclusions of 16 November 2009 that international human rights law protects individuals and groups of individuals and that, in this regard, defamation of religions is not a human rights concept;
7. Calls on the government of Pakistan to ratify the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1984 UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
8. Calls on the government of Pakistan to cope with the existing gender-related social order since the violence against women is the most powerful mechanism used by family, society and State to silence voices of women.
9. Fully supports all initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue and mutual respect between communities; calls on political and religious authorities to promote tolerance and to take initiatives against hatred and violent extremism;
10. Calls upon the Council of the European Union to include the issue of religious tolerance in society in its counter-terrorism dialogue with Pakistan; this matter being of central importance to the long-term fight against religious extremism;
11. Calls upon the Member States and the European Commission to continue financial support of human rights organisations and defenders and outline practical measures to support the growing civil society movement in Pakistan against the blasphemy laws and other discriminatory legislation;

12. Calls upon the Council to support the government of Pakistan in the development of its Ministry for Human Rights, and in establishing a meaningful, independent and authoritative National Human Rights Commission;
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, and the Government and Parliament of Pakistan.