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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 Verts/ALE Group

European Parliament resolution on religious freedom in Pakistan

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Pakistan,
- 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 the resolution on "Combating Defamation of Religions" adopted by a narrow vote in the UN Human Rights Council on 25 March, proposed yearly by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC),
- having regard to the statement of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on attacks in Pakistan of 4 April 2010,
- having regard to the statement by the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the adoption of the 18th Constitutional Amendment of 20 April 2010,
- having regard to the up-coming EU-Pakistan Summit,
- 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 Pakistan's internal stability and its democratic institutions are being put to a severe test by the increasing number of violent attacks by extremists occurring almost on a daily basis,

B. Whereas the growing threat by radical Muslim forces operating on both sides of the Pakistan - Afghanistan border make concerted international efforts to support and invigorate economic and social development in Pakistan ever more imperative,

C. Whereas excessive recourse to repressive measures and serious violations of the rule of law in the fight against terrorism in recent years worldwide have contributed to a perception of growing antagonism between different cultures and ethnicities,

D. Whereas in this context there are concerns over increasing signs of intolerance in the Islamic-Christian cultural sphere towards minorities, reinforced by legal action such as the ban on minarets in Switzerland, the interdiction of the veil in France or the blasphemy laws in Pakistan, Iran and Egypt, which serve as a reference for the anti-defamation of religion campaign of the OIC,

E. Whereas in Pakistan the blasphemy law that was introduced in 1982 and 1986 has led to an increase of violence against members of religious minorities, particularly Ahmadis, but also Christians, Shiites, Sikhs and Hindus, as well as critical citizens who dare to raise their voice against injustice,

F. Whereas in August 2009 the Prime Minister Gilani announced the setting up of a Committee to review and improve "laws detrimental to religious harmony", alluding in his statement to the blasphemy laws of 1982 and 1986; whereas however to date no such revisions have been proposed,

G. Whereas harmful traditional or religious-based practices such as "honour killings" continue to claim hundreds of fatal victims every year, the majority being women and whereas the human rights organisation Madadgaar estimates that 75000 women have been killed in such violent acts in Pakistan in the last 10 years,

1. Considers that the freedom of belief as enshrined in the UN Covenant provides the adequate framework and reference to which all signatories should adhere, providing protection to their citizens in order to enable them to freely exercise their faith;

2. Deeply regrets individual events in Europe that add to a growing sense of Islamophobia perceived by Muslims all over the world,

3. Equally criticizes the existing blasphemy laws - which can carry the death sentence in Pakistan and in Iran and which are often used to justify censorship, criminalization persecution and in certain cases murder of political racial and religious minorities;

4. Calls in this context notably on the European Commission the Member States, the OIC and its members to enhance investments into education promoting tolerance, better mutual understanding and respect for the diversity of beliefs;

5. Welcomes the measures taken in the interest of religious minorities by the government of Pakistan since November 2008, (such as establishing a quota of five per cent for minorities in the federal jobs sector; recognizing non-Muslim public holidays; and declaring National Minorities Day);

6. However calls on the Government of Pakistan to repeal the blasphemy laws as well as section 295 C of the Penal Code which carries the mandatory death penalty for anyone found guilty of blasphemy;

7. Calls on the Government to guarantee the human rights of minorities laid down in the Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, notably Art. 18 which provides that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion";

8. Calls on the Government to follow through with its 2008 promise to commute all death

sentences to prison terms as a first step in the direction of the abolition of the death penalty;

9. Calls on the government 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;

10. Calls on 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 organizations 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 on 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 High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and the Government and Parliament of Pakistan.