



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Plenary sitting

14.12.2010

B7-0728/2010

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 Eritrean refugees held hostage in Sinai

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on behalf of the PPE Group

European Parliament resolution on Eritrean refugees held hostage in Sinai

The European Parliament,

- having regard the Barcelona Declaration of November 1995;
 - having regard the first Conference of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network in Cairo 26-27 January 2006;
- A Whereas Egyptian security authorities are searching for hundreds of Eritrean refugees who the UNHCR says are being held hostage by Bedouin smugglers in Sinai after the refugees failed to pay the fees demanded by the smugglers to help them sneak into Israel;
- B Whereas last Tuesday 7 December, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said it was concerned about 250 Eritrean migrants believed to be held hostage in the Sinai desert;
- C Whereas it is claimed that the traffickers are demanding payments of USD 8000 per person for their release, that people are being held in containers and are subject to abuses;
- D Whereas a joint appeal issued on 1 December by non-governmental organizations said that hundreds of illegal refugees from the Horn of Africa have been held for months on the outskirts of a town in Sinai;
- E Whereas the hostages had already paid USD 2.000 for their passage to Israel, according to the NGOs, who described the refugees as being treated by the smugglers in an extremely degrading and inhumane manner;
- F Whereas local officials from North Sinai said security authorities have been actively searching for the Eritreans who are said to be held in scattered groups.
1. Appreciates the ongoing efforts exerted by the Egyptian authorities in verifying the information mentioned in the reports issued by the UNHCR regarding a group of some 250 Eritreans being held hostage in Sinai, by traffickers in violation of national laws and human rights principles

2. Underlines that the Sinai desert border has become a trafficking route for African migrants seeking jobs; thousands of Eritreans each year flee the country, with many heading for Israel;
3. Recalls that in August seven people were killed in clashes with smugglers near the border with Israel after African migrants held by traffickers seized the weapons of their captors in a bid to escape;
4. Takes note that Israel began work in November on a 250km fence along the border designed to stop the influx of illegal migrants;
5. Welcomes Egypt's efforts in combating Human Trafficking specially the establishment of "the National Coordinating Committee for combating and preventing trafficking in persons" in the year 2007, and calling on all countries to resume their efforts in facing the challenge of Human trafficking crimes world wide, and to respect relevant national laws;
6. Appreciates Egypt's continuous commitment in fulfilling its obligations under international treaties, in particular under the 1951 Refugees Convention.
7. Acknowledges that any refugee seeker who participates in acts threatening, directly or indirectly, the safety and independence of the host country, should be considered a threat to its national security according to UNHCR terms;
8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the High Representative / Vice-President, the Council and the Commission, to the Governments and the Parliaments of the Member States, to the Egyptian Government, to the UN Secretary General and the UN Human Rights Council.