



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Plenary sitting

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B7-0731/2010

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 GUE/NGL Group

European Parliament resolution on Eritrean refugees held hostage in Sinai

The European Parliament,

- having regard to UNHCR Statement of 7 December 2010 on Eritrean hostages in the Sinai, in Egypt,
 - having regard to relevant UN and African conventions on Refugees, namely Geneva Convention of 1951 and the Organization of Africa Unity's 1969 Convention
 - having regard to the 'Friendship Treaty' between Italy and Libya, in particular its references to migration policy,
 - having regard to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership for promoting the rule of law and fundamental freedoms,
 - having regard to Rule 122 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas a group of some 250 Africans, mostly Eritreans, have been held hostage for about a month by traffickers in the Sinai, Egypt;
- B. whereas very limited information about this group is available and following media reports, the traffickers are demanding payments of US\$8,000 per person for their release, people are being held in containers and are subject to abuses, and some may have been held for months;
- C. whereas according to media reports, in late November and early December 2010 traffickers shot or beat to death eight Eritrean nationals who were among asylum seekers and following latest information from sources on the spot seven other hostages have been shot;
- D. whereas since mid-2007, hundreds of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants have risked their lives trying to cross the Egyptian border into Israel;
- E. whereas according to UNHCR, about 85 percent of the migrants entering the Sinai desert in recent months have been Eritrean nationals fleeing a repressive state and in conformity with UNHCR's eligibility guidelines should be considered as refugees;
- F. whereas Egyptian border security forces have arrested thousands of asylum seekers and migrants in recent years and prosecuted many of them before military tribunals;
- G. whereas a sizable network smuggling sub-Saharan migrants through Egypt to Israel has been operating in Sinai since last 2007;

- H. whereas Israel began work in November on a 250 km fence along the border aimed at stopping the influx of migrants;
- I. Whereas the Israeli Government also continues to implement a policy of forcibly returning to Egypt migrants who enter Israel at the Sinai border without giving them a meaningful opportunity to lodge refugee claims, a practice that is in violation of the non-refoulement principle;
- J. whereas a variety of humanitarian crises have occurred in the Horn of Africa;
- K. whereas in June 2010, 10 African refugees, including Eritreans, were killed by human smugglers in Sinai after being held for more than 2 months in a secret location;
- L. Whereas, following press agencies reports, in the most recent mass arrests on December 8, Egyptian police arrested 83 asylum seekers and migrants - 63 Ethiopians and 20 Eritreans - 10 kilometres outside the town of Suez and do not allow the UNHCR to access them;
- M. Whereas, since the Italian-Libyan Treaty of Friendship is in force, migrants and asylum seekers are obliged to undertake the more dangerous road of the desert in order to reach the Israeli border;
- N. whereas the office of the UNHCR in Libya remains closed;
1. Calls on Egyptian authorities to rapidly intervene in order to ensure that these refugees and migrants are rescued and to take appropriate measures to proceed to arrest and prosecution of members of trafficking organisations;
 2. Welcomes the fact that the UN High Commissioner for refugees has opened diplomatic procedures with the Egyptian authorities to initiate a search for the band of traffickers and hostages;
 3. Stresses that Egypt has a duty to urgently bring its treatment of refugees into line with international norms to which it is a signatory so that every refugee in Egypt is afforded full protection and assistance;
 4. Expresses its deep concern that large number of people who are entitled to protection under international law are being forcibly detained by criminal gangs for such lengthy periods of time and with evident impunity;
 5. Calls on the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to put this topic with high priority on the agenda of political dialogue with Egypt and to impress its Government to combat human trafficking and to uphold its obligations under international refugees conventions;
 6. Stresses that the EU has definitely to address the root causes of migration and deplores in particular the dramatic side effects of the Italian-Libyan 'Friendship

Treaty'; condemns refoulement practices since they constitute a gross violation of human rights;

7. Underlines, in this context, that since the Italian-Libyan Treaty of Friendship is in force the migrants and asylum seekers risk being detained or locked up in detention centres in Libya or have to take the dangerous path of crossing the desert to Israeli border;
8. Reminds to EC negotiators of the EU-Libya frame agreement that rights of asylum seekers cannot be negotiated and thus no chapter should be agreed about fight against irregular immigration unless Geneva Convention of 1951 is signed by Libyan authorities;
9. Recognises the mandate of the UNHCR and the importance of its efforts to protect and promote durable solutions for refugees and other uprooted people;
10. Expects the EU's partner countries to ensure that all people submitting applications for asylum at their borders are guaranteed safety and a fair procedure in accordance with international conventions and principles of international refugee law;
11. Underlines that respect for human rights, included asylum seekers rights, constitute an essential element of the EU-Egypt Association Agreement that is not only based on trade arrangements;
12. Deplores the persistent violation by Eritrea of its obligations, under domestic and international law, despite the repeated appeals by the international community;
13. Invites Member States to tackle this humanitarian emergency through the resettlement in the EU of all the asylum seekers involved in this crisis; asks the European Commission to coordinate this operation and use available funding through the ERF;
14. Asks the Commission to send without delay a delegation to Cairo in order to agree with Egyptian authorities possible support measures in this frame;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Government and Parliament of Egypt, the Government of Sudan, the government of Eritrea, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, the Council, the Commission, the UN Secretary-General, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the African Union institutions including the Pan-African Parliament, the Secretary General of the SADC and the governments of the Member States and candidate countries.