



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Plenary sitting

14.12.2010

B7-0732/2010

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 Verts/ALE Group

European Parliament resolution on Eritrean refugees held hostage in Sinai

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions, in particular that of 19 January 2006 on Egypt: Violence against Sudanese refugees,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and the 1967 Protocol,
 - having regard to the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of refugees Problems in Africa,
 - having regard to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 1984,
 - having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989,
 - having regard the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 2000,
 - having regard to Rule 122 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. Whereas, according to media reports, in November and early December 2010, traffickers shot or beat to death six Eritrean nationals held at one location near the Israeli border since October and whereas, according to the UNHCR, traffickers are holding a group of some 205 Eritreans, including women, for about a month in about ten underground rooms;
- B. Whereas, according to various testimonies of Eritreans apprehended by Israel, there is a well-established trafficking network and traffickers regularly hold hostage hundreds of mostly Eritrean and other sub-Saharan asylum seekers and migrants, including children, in various locations for weeks or months until their relatives abroad pay ransom to secure their release;
- C. Whereas dozens of migrant women reported back to international organisations that traffickers had repeatedly raped them and that both men and women had been subject to inhumane treatment while awaiting ransom or even after payments had been made;
- D. Whereas every year thousands of people attempt to cross the border from Egypt into Israel risking their lives; whereas, according to UNHCR, about 85 percent of the migrants entering in Israel through the Sinai desert in recent months have been

Eritrean nationals fleeing an extremely repressive state and noting in this respect that they fulfil the UNHCR's eligibility guidelines for the status of refugees;

- E. Whereas Israel's cabinet approved on 28 November 2010 a plan under which migrants' movement should be further controlled including the building of a detention centre in Israel's Southern Negev desert; whereas at the same time Israel began to construct both a barrier and electronic surveillance to secure 140 km of the 250 km border;
 - F. Whereas so far in 2010 the Israeli government is known to have sent back to Egypt 136 people who crossed the border;
 - G. Whereas Egyptian border security forces have arrested thousands of asylum seekers and migrants in recent years and prosecuted many of them before military tribunals;
 - H. Whereas the UNHCR has been calling on the Egyptian authorities to give it access to people arrested in Sinai with a view to being able to determine those among them who are refugees and in need of international protection;
 - I. 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;
 - J. Whereas the migration road through Egypt has been substantially increased mainly due to the EU migration policy which aims at closing the Mediterranean borders;
 - K. Whereas the office of the UNHCR in Libya remains without a legal basis and full cooperation with the UNHCR is still being negotiated with Libya;
1. Urges the Egyptian authorities to take all necessary measures to secure the release of Eritreans held hostage;
 2. Stresses Egypt's obligation 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; calls in particular on the Egyptian authorities to guarantee that detained migrants have the ability to contact UNHCR and to allow UNHCR access to all asylum seekers and migrants, including those arrested in Sinai; urges the Egyptian authorities to prevent any use of lethal force against migrants crossing the borders of Egypt;
 3. Welcomes the fact that the UN High Commissioner for refugees has opened the diplomatic procedures with the Egyptian authorities to initiate a search for the band of traffickers and hostages;
 4. Reminds Egypt and Israel that international refugee and human rights law prohibit refoulement, the forcible return of refugees to persecution or situations threatening their life or freedom, and of anyone to circumstances in which they face torture;

5. Expresses its deep concern that large numbers 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;
6. Urges the Egyptian authorities to take immediate and effective steps to combat trafficking in the Sinai and to bring those responsible to justice; notes in this respect the adoption of a new anti-trafficking law accompanied by implementing regulations issued on 6 December 2010;
7. Stresses once again its strong attachment to the right to everybody to leave any country, including his own in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948;
8. Stresses the importance of UNHCR's mandate and efforts to protect and promote durable solutions for refugees and other uprooted people;
9. Underlines, in this context, that since the Italian-Libyan Treaty of Friendship is in force the migrants and asylum seekers wanting to reach Europe risk to be detained or locked up in detention centres in Libya or have to take the dangerous road of desert's crossing to Israeli border;
10. Urges the EU to ensure that its delegations in countries surrounding Eritrea facilitate Eritrean asylum seekers access to UNHCR and application services;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Government and Parliament of Egypt, the Government and Parliament of Israel, the government and Parliament of Libya, 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.