



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Plenary sitting

17.1.2011

B7-0039/2011

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation of Christians in the context of freedom of religion

Fiorello Provera, Nikolaos Salavrakos, Mario Borghezio, Oreste Rossi, Francesco Enrico Speroni, Niki Tzavela, Lorenzo Fontana, Mara Bizzotto
on behalf of the EFD Group

European Parliament resolution on the situation of Christians in the context of freedom of religion

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on freedom of religion,
 - having regard to Article 18 of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - 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 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights and civil liberties are fundamental principles and aims of the European Union and constitute common ground for its relations with third countries,
- B. whereas, according to international human rights law and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in particular, everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; whereas this right includes freedom to change one's religion or belief, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest one's religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching,
- C. whereas Christian communities all over the world are increasingly suffering the blow of religious intolerance,
- D. whereas at the new year mass a suicide bombing in Alexandria, Egypt caused 21 deaths of Coptic Christians,
- E. whereas Egypt, Pakistan, Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Nigeria, China, North Korea, Vietnam, Malaysia, Burma, Nepal are just some of the countries that in recent weeks have experienced repeated attacks against Christians,
- F. whereas intimidation and violence against Christian communities in particular in the Middle East aim at eliminating their presence from the region, the presence of the Christians as a symbol of the West has been repeatedly touted by specific terrorist groups,
- G. whereas, according to the US State Department, Iraqi Christians, who have inhabited the region for almost 2000 years, have seen their numbers sliced from a thriving community of a million to just 400000,
- H. whereas in Lebanon, which has not have an official census since 1932, the Christians population has shrunk to 30%, and many Lebanese Christians fled during the civil war,

- I. whereas in the West Bank the number of Christians has shrunk to just 2% of the total population and that the Israeli government estimates that there are 210000 Christians left in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, whereas in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, Christians used to make 80% of the population but today they make up less than a third,
- J. whereas, at the turn of the 20th century Christians made up approximately 20% of the population in the Middle East, but now it is estimated to be less than 10%,
- K. whereas Christians in the world look to Europe for support, as Europe is predominantly Christian,
 - 1. Stresses that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a fundamental human right guaranteed by international legal instruments, and strongly condemns all kinds of violence, discrimination and intolerance, based on religion and belief, against Christian communities all over the world;
 - 2. Condemns the recent attacks against Coptic Christians in Egypt and expresses its solidarity with the families of the victims; reiterates its call on the Egyptian Government to ensure the personal safety and physical integrity of Coptic Christians and of members of other religious minorities in the country; calls on the Egyptian Government to guarantee that Coptic Christians and members of other religious communities and of minorities enjoy the full range of human rights and fundamental freedoms – including the right to choose and change their religion freely – and to prevent any discrimination against them;
 - 3. Condemns the interruption by force of the Christmas Mass celebrated on Christmas Day by the remaining 300 Christians in the occupied part of Cyprus by the Turkish authorities;
 - 4. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in the framework of EU relations and cooperation with third countries, to pay particular attention to the situation of religious minorities, especially Christian denominations;
 - 5. Calls on all religious authorities to promote tolerance and to take initiatives against hatred and violent and extreme radicalisation;
 - 6. Calls on the newly established External Action Service to establish a permanent system monitoring the situation of Christians in the context of freedom of religion and to report annually to the European Parliament;
 - 7. 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, the Government and Parliament of Egypt, the Arab League.