



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Plenary sitting

17.1.2011

B7-0051/2011

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 relation to freedom of religion

Marietje Schaake, Metin Kazak, Vincenzo Iovine, Marielle De Sarnez, Charles Goerens, Frédérique Ries, Kristiina Ojuland, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Ramon Tremosa i Balcells
on behalf of the ALDE Group

B7-0051/2011

European Parliament resolution on the situation of Christians in relation to freedom of religion

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its annual reports on the situation of human rights in the world and its previous resolutions on religious minorities in the world,
 - having regard to Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) of 1950,
 - having regard to Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966,
 - having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief of 1981,
 - having regard to the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and in particular her reports 29 July 2010 and 19 February 2010,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions adopted on 8 December 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 Statement by the spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following the attack against worshipers at Coptic Church in Alexandria, Egypt on 1 January 2011,
 - having regard to the statement of the President of the European Parliament, Buzek on the deadly blast at Egyptian church, on 1st January 2011,
 - having regard to Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
 - having regard to its resolution on the human rights and democracy clause in European Union agreements, adopted on 14 February 2006,
 - having regard to Rule 110 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the European Union has on several occasions expressed itself in favour of the rights of religious communities and the protection of their identity all over the world and in favour of the recognition and protection of religious minorities, without any distinction,
- B. concerned, about the proliferation of episodes of intolerance and repression directed against Christian communities, particularly in the countries of Africa, Asia and the Middle East,

- C. sends his condolences and support to the families of the victims following the car bomb explosion outside a Church in the north Egyptian city of Alexandria on 31 December 2010. According to news wires the blast killed 21 people and injured at least another 43,
- D. sends his condolences and support to the families of the victims following the dramatic news from Nigeria on 11 January 2011, where once again innocent lives are being cut short in atrocious attacks designed to strike the Christian community, show that religious intolerance is both very grave and vast in scope,
- E. strongly concerned by the violent events in Iraq, whereas on 22 November 2010 two Iraqi Christians were killed in Mosul; whereas on 10 November a series of bomb and mortar attacks targeting Christian areas has killed at least five people in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad,
- F. whereas in Vietnam too, the activities of the Catholic Church and of other religious communities have been severely repressed, as is demonstrated by the serious situation facing the communities of Vietnamese 'montagnards',
- G. whereas political and religious leaders have a duty at all levels to combat extremism and promote mutual respect,
- H. whereas, according to international human rights law and particularly Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance,
- I. whereas other groups of people such as refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum-seekers, migrants, persons deprived of their liberty, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and children of believers also face a growing number of violations of their right to freedom of religion or belief; recalling, in this respect, the principle of non-refoulement, according to Article 33 of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees,
- J. whereas the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is enshrined in the Egyptian Constitution which unequivocally states that all the citizens enjoy equal rights and duties before the law without any discrimination on any basis.
- K. whereas the Egyptian Penal Code protects the practice by all citizens of their religion and all religious symbols and punishes any individual that tries to hinder the religious practice of any group or to hold to any religion in contempt or defame it,
- L. whereas Art 10 of the Iraqi Constitution establishes the Government's commitment to assuring and maintaining the sanctity of holy shrines and religious sites; whereas Art. 43 states that followers of all religious groups shall be free to practice their religious rites and manage their religious institutions,;
- M. whereas an Egyptian court has sentenced to death an individual held responsible for attacking Coptic Egyptians,

1. Strongly condemns all kinds of discrimination and intolerance based on religion and belief and acts of violence against all religious communities;
2. Urges the governments concerned to bring to justice the perpetrators of these crimes; urges the countries concerned to ensure that their constitutional and legislative systems provide adequate and effective guarantees of freedom of religion or belief as well as effective legal remedies for victims where the right to freedom of religion or belief is violated;
3. Strongly supports any initiative to promote dialogue and mutual respect between religions; calls on all religious authorities to promote tolerance and to take initiatives against hatred and violent and extremist radicalisation;
4. Stresses again that the respect for human rights and civil liberties are fundamental principles and aims of the European Union and constitute a common ground in its relations with third countries; and invites the Council and the European Commission to include the issue of freedom of religion on the agendas of the political meetings aimed at promoting political dialogue between the EU and third countries, and to promote projects related to freedom of conscience and dialogues with minorities in the EU cooperation programs;
5. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission to pay increased attention to the subject of the freedom of religion and to the situation of religious minorities in the agreements and cooperation with third countries as well as in human rights reports; and ensuring compliance with the human rights and democracy clause in European Union agreements;
6. Invite the forthcoming External Affairs Council on 31 January 2011, to discuss the question of persecution of Christians and respect for religious freedom or belief. This discussion in Europe should give rise to concrete results, especially as regards the instruments that can be used to provide security and protection for religious Christian communities under threat, wherever in the world they may be;
7. Condemns the use of death penalty as inhumane;
8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, parliaments and governments of the Member States, the parliament and government of Egypt, the parliament and government of Iraq, and the parliament and government of Nigeria and Vietnam.