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B7-0251/2011

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 Syria, Bahrain and Yemen

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European Parliament resolution on Syria, Bahrain and Yemen

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Syria and Yemen,
 - having regard to its report of 24 March 2010 on EU relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council,
 - having regard to its report Parliament's recommendation to the Council on the conclusion of a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Syrian Arab Republic, of the other part, adopted on 10 October 2006,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966, to which Syria is a party,
 - having regard to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 1975, which was ratified by Syria on 18 September 2004,
 - having regard to the Statements by the Vice President of the Commission/EU High Representative on Bahrain of 10 March, 15 March and 17 March 2011,
 - having regard to the Statements by the Vice President of the Commission/EU High Representative on Yemen of 10 March and 17 March 2011,
 - having regard to the Statements by the Vice President of the Commission/EU High Representative on Syria of 18 March, 22 March, 24 March and 26 March 2011,
 - having regards to the conclusions of the FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting, Brussels, 21 March 2011,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the European Council of 24 and 25 March 2011,
 - having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen, as in other Arab as well as MENA (Middle East and North African region) countries, like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan - but also Iran, protestors have taken to the streets in the millions in the past months to demand reforms ensuring a better distribution of power and wealth, the protection of social and civil rights and a more democratic political system,
- B. whereas the great majority of the population in the MENA region is under 35 years of age

and the lack of perspectives of these young generations is intensified in the less resource-rich countries by the effects of the economic and financial crisis,

- C. whereas the respective governments have reacted with an increase of violent repression, applying the state of emergency and counterterrorism laws to justify serious crimes, including extrajudicial killings, abductions and disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture and unfair trials,

On Syria

- D. whereas the take over of the Presidency by Bashar al-Assad raised hopes and expectations for changes and political reforms in Syria; whereas since President al-Assad's take over no reforms have been undertaken and expectations have not been met,
- E. whereas the continued application of the Emergency Law since 1963 has been used to repress all kind of opposition and dissent in the country and has increased the power of the security services; whereas the Emergency Law, which is effectively limiting citizens in the exercise of their civil and political rights while providing an ongoing control of the Syrian authorities over the judicial system, violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Syria is a party,
- F. whereas demonstrations began in the southern Syrian city of Deraa, before rapidly expanding to many others towns and villages in the country; whereas the Syrian authorities severely repressed the demonstrations using live bullets to disperse peaceful gathering and arrested hundreds of civilians; whereas on Wednesday 23 March, the Syrian army entered into the Omari mosque in Deraa and started shooting unarmed civilians,
- G. whereas Syrian authorities have imposed a severe censorship on national and foreign news media seeking to cover anti-governmental demonstrations and arrested national and foreign journalists, notably Ahmed Hadifa, a 28-year old blogger and two Beirut-based Lebanese journalists working for Reuters television,
- H. whereas President Bashar Al-Assad in reacting to the demonstrations announced the lifting of the Emergency Law, the abolition of article 8 of the Syrian constitution which states that the Ba'th party leads the state and the society and the solving of the 1962 survey in al-Hasaka governorate whereby hundreds of thousands of Kurds have been deprived of their passport and registered as foreigners,
- I. whereas the prominent Syrian human rights activist and government critic, Haitham al-Maleh, has been released from jail in March 2011 and has called on the international community to exert pressure on the Syrian regime to respect its international obligations with regard to human rights,

On Bahrain

- J. whereas inspired by protest movements in Tunisia and Egypt, demonstrations started in Bahrain on Feb. 14, the demonstrators calling for political reforms, such as a constitutional monarchy and an elected government, as well as an end to corruption and to the marginalization of Shiites who represent over 60% of the population,

- K. whereas violent crack downs stopped for a short time when the government proposed a national dialogue involving opposition activists and political associations however continued when Saudi Arabia sent in one thousand troops in support of the government and 500 police arrived from the United Arab Emirates,
- L. whereas the government of King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa declared a three month state of emergency and martial law on March 15 and has violently repressed the demonstrations, leaving reportedly 11 people dead - most of them killed by security forces using excessive force, namely crowd-control equipment at extremely close range and live gunfire, but also 4 members of the security forces - hundreds injured and dozens disappeared,
- M. whereas major protests have ended but the kingdom is keeping a 10 p.m.-4 a.m. curfew in place in Shiite villages and parts of the capital, using it reportedly as cover for night-time raids and arrests of political opposition leaders, protest movement activists, human rights monitors, artists and even doctors and nurses who have treated wounded demonstrators,
- N. whereas security forces reportedly searched ambulances and medical centres for wounded demonstrators, dragged gravely ill patients out of hospital and obliged the medical staff to turn parts of the hospital into a prison for wounded protesters who were then subject to maltreatment by the security forces,
- O. whereas lawyers and family members of those arrested in recent days have been unable to learn where they are or why they were arrested,
- P. whereas Shiites are being stopped at checkpoints, often insulted, and then robbed; whereas observers speak of 'collective punishment' and an ongoing intimidation campaign against Shiites; whereas many Shiites have lost their state jobs for taking part in protests and general strikes and 40 students lost scholarships for their role in demonstrations,
- Q. whereas at least two government ministers, five members of the Shura Council, an advisor to the King, and many judges in the Shari'a (al-Ja'fariya) courts, who are all Shi'a Muslims, have resigned in protest at the use of excessive force by the Bahraini authorities,

On Yemen

- R. whereas millions of citizens have been demonstrating largely peacefully in Yemen since January with similar demands as those during the uprising in Tunisia and Egypt, and close to one hundred people have allegedly since been killed mainly by the security forces using life munitions aiming at the crowd from roof tops and public buildings while hundreds have been wounded; whereas wounded demonstrators have reportedly been denied access to state hospitals,
- S. whereas after the 18 March demonstrations President Saleh declared the state of Emergency and the Parliament passed an emergency law on 23 March giving the security forces extensive powers of detention, imposing heavy restriction on public assembly and authorizing wide-ranging censorship,
- T. whereas President Saleh who has been ruling the North of the country for the last 32 years and the South since unification in 1994 has reacted to the pressure of the democracy

movement to not re-present himself for elections in 2013,

- U. whereas Yemen is the poorest country in the MENA region with an estimated one third of the population suffering from chronic hunger, 80% of all food products having to be imported, more than 40% of the 23 million inhabitants living of less than 2 dollars a day, while oil and water resources drying up,
- V. whereas there is serious concern for the disintegration of the Yemeni states with a fragile truce since February with the Shiite rebels in the North, a secessionist movement in the South and many Qaeda fighters reportedly using Yemen as a retrieval ground,

On Syria

1. Firmly condemns the violent crackdown by the security and police forces against peaceful demonstrators and expresses its deep concern at the situation in Syria and at the increasing number of persons killed;
2. Urges the Syrian authorities to put an end to the brutal repression against protesters and to refrain from any act of violence; calls in particular on the Syrian authorities to take immediate measures to stop Syrian security forces from targeting civilians and violating international human rights law; calls for the immediate release of detained demonstrators, journalists, human rights defenders and political prisoners and for the end of monopoly of the Ba'th party over the Syrian state and society;
3. Calls on the High Commissioner on Human Rights to send a High level Human Rights mission to Syria and calls for the setting-up of an independent international commission of inquiry to Syria to investigate the alleged violations of international human rights law relating to the repression of the demonstrations;
4. Takes note of the resignation of the government of 29 March but believes that such act will not be enough to satisfy the growing frustrations of the Syrian people;
5. Expresses its disappointment at President Al-Assad's televised address before the members of Parliament in Damascus of 30 March aimed more at taking time than at addressing the genuine requests of the Syrian people for freedom and changes; calls in this regard for the quick lifting of the Emergency Law as well as the dissolving the Supreme State Security Court and firmly opposes to the replacement of this law with an anti-terrorism law which restricts in the same way fundamental freedoms; reiterates its call for the dissolution;
6. Rejects the allegations of President al-Assad who 'blamed conspirators' for the two weeks anti-governmental protests that have rocked the country thus playing down the nature and the strength of the protests;
7. Urges the newly established Committee by President al-Assad to Study Implementing Recommendation on Resolving Problem of 1962 Survey in Hasaka to restore the citizenship of Syrian Kurds and to give them equal rights;
8. Stresses the commitments by the HR/VP and the Commission within the Joint

Communication on a Partnership for Democracy and shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean to further support democratic transformation and civil society in response to the current historic developments in the region; calls therefore on the HR/VP, the Council and the Commission to support the legitimate aspirations and political expectations of the Syrian population and to stop pressing to conclude the EU-Syria association agreement following the violent repression; is of the opinion that the conclusion of such agreement should depend on the capacity of the Syrian authorities to carry out expected democratic reforms with special regard to the pertinence of the reforms undertaken;

9. Calls in this spirit on the HR/VP to increase the funds allocated to the support of the Syrian civil society as civil society organisations are the EU's most faithful and powerful allies in promoting democratic values, good governance and human rights;

On Bahrain

10. Strongly condemns the use of excessive force against peaceful protesters by the Bahraini security forces, extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances, possible torture of detainees and in particular the attacks on ambulances and hospitals;
11. Calls on the Bahraini government to find a peaceful answer, through political dialogue, to the people's legitimate aspirations and to fulfil its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law;
12. Calls on the Bahraini authorities to lift the state of emergency, to respect the right of its citizens to freedom of expression, movement and assembly and to release all those recently arrested who have been protesting peacefully, as well as all other prisoners of conscience;
13. Expresses its disappointment over the reaction of the Gulf Cooperation Council and some of its members, who actively intervened in favour of repression of the largely peaceful protests in Bahrain while at the same time appealing to the international community to come to the help of the popular protest movement in Libya; calls on the GCC to bring its possibilities as a regional collective to bear in order to mediate in the interest of peaceful reforms in Bahrain;
14. Calls on the government to account publicly for everyone who has been killed or injured and those who remain missing and to investigate all deaths, injuries, arrests, detentions and other possible human-rights violations committed by government forces or officials since the protests began on 14 February and urges to bring all those responsible for human-rights violations to justice, regardless of rank, position or affiliation.
15. Is disturbed by the statement of Bahrain's foreign minister Sheik Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa's classifying the citizens of his country as two groups 'that have hated each other for 1 400 years' and appeals to the government to prevent the further raising antagonism between the Sunni and Shiite communities and the particular intimidation and persecution of Shiite citizens;
16. Expresses its concerns that Bahrain could turn into a conflict zone between Saudi Arabia

and Iran and welcomes the statement by Ali Salman, one of the most senior Shiite opposition leaders, who publically rejected all foreign involvement in his country, including by Saudi Arabia and Iran;

17. Condemns the statement by EEAS Councilor Robert Cooper to the European Parliament on 22 March where he publicly defended Bahraini authorities' brutal crackdown and called the deaths of unarmed protesters and bystanders as 'accidents' that happen during policing operations;
18. Calls on the EU to immediately ban all security assistance to Bahrain, including the sale of riot-control materials and military hardware, until Bahraini authorities halt the abuses and hold those responsible accountable;
19. Urges the EU, in light of the deteriorating human-rights situation in Bahrain, to call for a special session of the United Nation's Human Rights Council with the view to suspend Bahrain's membership in the Council;

On Yemen

20. Calls on President Saleh to resign and to pave the way for democratic elections;
21. Expresses its solidarity with the people of Yemen, welcomes their aspirations for democratic change in the country and applauds the largely peaceful nature of the demonstrations despite Yemen being one of the most heavily armed societies;
22. Condemns the use of violence against protesters, calls on the security forces to refrain from using disproportionate force and urges the authorities to inquire into the recent deaths and injuries of demonstrators, to bring those who committed the crimes to justice and to compensate the victims and their families;
23. Expresses its grave concern over the level of poverty and unemployment and the raising political and economic instability in Yemen; insists that the delivery on the ground of the pledges from the donor conference 2006 have to be sped up; additionally calls on the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council to make a particular effort of financial and technical support as soon as President Saleh is ready to give way to a democratically established government;
24. Calls on the EU to immediately take the lead in convening a Special Session at the HRC to address abuses committed in Syria, Yemen and Bahrain during the crackdown of demonstrations and repression of dissent;
25. Urges Member States to organise a conference under the auspices of the EU to analyse on a case by case basis debt cancellation or rescheduling of foreign debt for MENA countries that have enacted substantial democratic reforms;
26. Calls on the EU to urgently review its migration policy with the MENA countries and within the EU in order to get prepared for a much greater influx of migrants from these countries as part of an EU contribution towards economic development in that region;

27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-president of the Commission and High Representative of the Union for foreign affairs and security policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Member Countries of the Maghreb and Mashrek delegation and of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the UN Human Rights Council.