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Plenary sitting

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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 in Egypt and Syria, in particular of Christian Communities

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on behalf of the PPE Group

European Parliament resolution on the situation in Egypt and Syria, in particular of Christian Communities

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Egypt and Syria,
- having regard to the statements of the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on Syria of 8 and 31 July; 1, 4, 18, 19, 23 and 30 August; 2, 12, and 23 September; and 8 October 2011,
- having regard to the resolution voted on 20 January by the European Parliament on the situation of Christians in the context of freedom of religion in which the European Parliament has asked to the High Representative to develop a permanent capacity within the human rights directorate of the European External Action Service and monitor the situation of governmental and societal restrictions on religious freedom and related rights, and to report annually to the Parliament,
- having regard to the conclusion of the Council of the European Union - Foreign Affairs, taken place on the 20th of February in which Catherine Ashton, the High Representative has been asked to report about the measures adopted and the concrete proposals to strengthen further the European Union actions concerning the promotion and the defence of religion and freedom of belief,
- having regard to the conclusions on Syria of the Foreign Affairs Council 10 October 2011,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, to which Egypt and Syria are parties,
- having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

Egypt

- A. whereas at least 28 Egyptian citizens have been killed and more than 350 wounded on 9 October by military forces among Coptic Christians in Cairo after a protest against an attack on a church in Aswan province;
- B. whereas since the beginning of the Arab Spring events, some 100 000 Copts have left Egypt;

Syria

- C. whereas, since the start of the violent crackdown on peaceful protesters in Syria in March 2011, the systematic killings, violence and torture have been dramatically escalating and the Syrian army and security forces continue to respond with targeted killings, torture and

mass arrests, whereas according to UN estimates, over 3000 people have lost their lives, many more have been injured and thousands detained; whereas many Syrians are facing a deteriorating humanitarian situation as a result of the violence and displacements;

- D. whereas there are estimates that the Christian population in Syria, mostly because of migration, may have dropped from 10 to 8 percent; whereas thousands of Iraqi Christians came to Syria to escape targeted violence in Iraq; whereas many Christians in Syria fear that they will become victims of sectarian violence in the country;

Egypt

1. Strongly condemns the killing of protestors by security forces in Egypt; expresses its sincere condolences to the families of the victims; calls on the authorities to ensure that security forces do not use excessive and totally disproportionate force and calls for a thorough and independent investigation into the violent repression of protestors in Cairo;
2. Calls on the Egyptian authorities to ensure the full religious freedom for all citizens in Egypt, including the Coptic Christians, and that Coptic Christian communities do not fall victim to violent attacks and can live in peace and freely express their beliefs throughout the country; calls for the adequate protection to the churches in order to put an end to the continuous aggression and destruction of churches by Islamic extremists;
3. Calls on the Egyptian authorities to set up a mechanism with members from the government, civil society and international organisations to register and make public any attacks against religious minorities in Egypt;
4. Calls on the EU Member States to put foreign military aid to Egypt on the condition that arms delivered as part of such aid are not used for attacks on unarmed civilians;
5. Calls the Egyptian authorities to release the 28 arrested Christians in Maspero;
6. Calls the Egyptian authorities to take over the medical expenses of the victims of the recent riots and also to pay the follow-up costs as compensation;
7. Urges the Egyptian authorities to end the discrimination of Coptic Christians, for example deleting the reference to religion in all official documents;
8. Urges the Egyptian authorities to ensure equal dignity and equal opportunities for all citizens in Egypt, including the Coptic Christians, to access all public and political posts, including representation in Armed Forces, in Parliament and in Government;
9. Urges the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton, to ensure the implementation and compliance with these requirements;
10. Expresses the conviction of the necessity to adopt a Constitution before the holding of legislative elections;
11. Takes the view that the constitution must explicitly contain the protection of the right to religious freedom and the protection of minorities;

12. Calls for the interim government of Egypt to be replaced as soon as possible by a government established on the results of free elections;
13. Calls on the Egyptian authorities to take measures to put an end to criminal acts driven by religious motives, such as the kidnapping of Coptic girls that have been forced to convert to Islam (around 1000 documented cases);
14. Calls for an amendment to the Egyptian Penal Code in order to criminalise those acts of proselytism, that involve coercion to force people to convert their religious beliefs;
15. Considering that the relations between the EU and Egypt are based on the respect of human rights and fundamental liberties, the EU reserves the right in the case of serious violations of human rights of all citizens in Egypt, including the Coptic Christians, who are institutionally discriminated against, persecuted, massacred and forced to flee their country, to adopt measures against Egypt; underlines the necessity for the EU to stand ready to adopt further measures in order to assist the Egyptian people who are striving for a democratic future through peaceful means;

Syria

16. Strongly condemns the killings, mass arrests and torture of civilians, peaceful protestors and their relatives; is appalled by the brutal repression led by the Syrian regime against its population; reiterates its call on President Bashar al Assad and his regime to relinquish power immediately to allow a political transition to take place in Syria;
17. Is deeply concerned about the situation of Christians in Syria, in particular their safety; condemns actions aimed at inciting inter-confessional conflict; urges the current and future Syrian authorities to provide reliable and efficient protection for the national Christian Community;
18. Expresses its sincere condolences to the families of the victims; commends the courage and determination of the Syrian people and strongly supports their aspirations to achieve full respect of the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms and the guarantee of better economic and social conditions;
19. Reiterates its call on the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council and the Commission to further encourage and support the emergence of organised Syrian democratic opposition forces both within and outside Syria; welcomes the efforts of the political opposition to establish a united platform, and notes the creation of the Syrian National Council;
20. Welcomes the commitment of the EU to continue to press for strong UN action to increase international pressure; reiterates its call on the members of the UNSC, and in particular Russia and China, to not block a resolution condemning the use of lethal force by the Syrian regime and urging to end this use of force, and to put in place sanctions for failure to do so; strongly supports the decision of the EU of 23 September to adopt additional sanctions against the Syrian regime; underlines the necessity for the EU to stand ready to adopt further measures in order to assist the Syrian people who are striving for a democratic future through peaceful means;

21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation, the Government and Parliament of the People's Republic of China, the US Administration and the US Congress, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Government and Parliament of the Syrian Arab Republic.