



8.10.2013

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## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 122 of the Rules of Procedure

on recent cases of violence and persecution against Christians, notably in Maaloula (Syria), Peshawar (Pakistan) and the case of Pastor Saeed Abedini (Iran)  
(2013/2872(RSP))

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on behalf of the ALDE Group

**European Parliament resolution on recent cases of violence and persecution against Christians, notably in Maaloula (Syria), Peshawar (Pakistan) and the case of Pastor Saeed Abedini (Iran) (2013/2872(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- Having regard to its previous resolutions on Syria, Pakistan and Iran.
  - Having regard to the resolution voted on the 20th 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, 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 defense of religion and freedom of belief;
  - Having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and in particular its Article 18 and to Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 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 Rule 122 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. Whereas the European Union has repeatedly expressed its commitment to freedom of religion, freedom of conscience and freedom of thought, and has stressed that governments have a duty to guarantee these freedoms all over the world;
- B. Whereas freedom of thought, conscience and religion applies to adherents of religions, but also to atheists, agnostics and people without beliefs;
- C. Whereas political and religious leaders have a duty at all levels to combat extremism and promote mutual respect among individuals and religious groups;
- D. Whereas on 4 September 2013 militants from Jabhat al-Nusra, a group with ties to Al-Qaeda, launched an assault on the Syrian village of Maaloula.
- E. Whereas militants from Jabhat al-Nusra and other extremist groups have murdered and injured both Christians and Muslims in Maaloula and the surrounding area.

- F. Whereas according to reports not one of the 5,000 Christian residents, nor a single member of the 2,000-strong Muslim community, has returned to Maaloula since Syrian forces re-took the town.
- G. Whereas Maaloula was a place of worship for both Orthodox and Catholic Christians but also for Shia Muslims, many of them Iranians.
- H. Whereas an attack on 22nd September by Jundallah, militants with ties to the Pakistani Taliban, killed 81 people outside Peshawar's Anglican church.
- I. Whereas twin blasts on the 29th September at a market in the city of Peshawar killed 33 people and wounded 70.
- J. Whereas the same group had in the past claimed responsibility for the murder of a number of tourists and a group of Shia Muslims.
- K. Whereas September 26, 2013, marks the one-year anniversary of the Iranian regime's illegal imprisonment of an American Pastor Saeed Abedini, because of his religious beliefs.

**Recent cases of violence and persecution in Maaloula:**

1. Condemns the actions of Jabhat al-Nusra and associated militants in Maaloula and the surrounding area.
2. Expresses deep regret at the increasing fragmentation of the civil war in Syria along sectarian lines, instigated not only by Jabhat al Nusra but also other actors in the conflict including the regime; noting that before the war reached Maaloula, both Christians and Muslims agreed that the town must remain a place of peace.
3. Expresses its sincere condolences to the families of the victims and calls on the International Community, with a prominent role by the EU, to act immediately to help negotiate a political solution to this conflict, recognising that the attack on Maaloula is only one aspect of the Syrian civil war.

**Recent cases of violence and persecution in Peshawar:**

4. Strongly condemns the ongoing violence in Pakistan, which has been to be on the rise in recent months, destabilising the country,
5. Welcomes the firm condemnation of the attack by the PTI-led provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the visit by Imran Khan to the hospital where the wounded are being treated.
6. Emphasises that support for militant groups is fuelled by broader political and socio-economic problems within the state, such as the marginalisation of certain groups and areas in Pakistan; urges the Pakistani government therefore to formulate a balanced counter-terrorism strategy and security policy,
7. Notes that Jundallah claimed to have carried out the bombing it retaliation for US drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal northwest,

8. Calls on the Government of Pakistan and all sides, aided where appropriate by the international community, to look for political solutions to the wider conflict which grips the whole of northern Pakistan and of which many different armed groups are a part.

#### **Recent cases of violence and persecution in Iran, notably Saeed Abedini**

9. Whilst strongly condemning the imprisonment of Pastor Saeed Abedini, welcomes the talk of moderation and religious tolerance from Iran's new president.
10. Believes the acknowledgment of women's rights, release of journalists and political or religious detainees are essential if the opportunity of an increased dialogue with Iran is to be furthered.
11. Believes the EU should engage in a human rights dialogue with Iran, but this must be accompanied by meaningful action from the Iranian regime, which should include the release of Pastor Saeed Abedini.
12. 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, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the Syrian Arab Republic, the parliament and government of Pakistan and the parliament and government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.