



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Plenary sitting

19.11.2013

B7-0531/2013

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 Bangladesh: human rights and forthcoming elections
(2013/2951(RSP))

**Charles Tannock, Ryszard Antoni Legutko, Tomasz Piotr Poręba,
Ryszard Czarnecki, Adam Bielan**
on behalf of the ECR Group

B7-0531/2013

**European Parliament resolution on Bangladesh: human rights and forthcoming elections
(2013/2951(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- Having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh, notably of 14 March 2013 and of 23 May 2013,
 - Having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - Having regard to the Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and the People's Republic of Bangladesh on partnership and development;
 - Having regard to the statement issued by the local EU delegation on the detention of Mr. Adilur Rahman Khan,
 - Having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. Whereas the EU has good, long-standing relations with Bangladesh, including through the Cooperation Agreement on partnership and development;
- B. Whereas Bangladesh has made significant progress on human rights in recent years;
- C. Whereas the next general elections are required by the Constitution to be held between 26 October 2013 and 24 January 2014;
- D. Whereas in 2010 the Awami League Government under the leadership of Sheik Hasina set up the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the massacres during the nine-month secession war between former East and West Pakistan in 1971; whereas in 2013 the first final verdicts were handed down and seven people have been sentenced to date, five to death and two were sentenced to life imprisonment, one of whom has since been sentenced to death by the Supreme Court;
- E. Whereas huge demonstrations both in favour of and against the verdicts resulted in deadly street violence, killing more than 150 people, including members of the security forces, between February and May 2013;
- F. Whereas the political tensions between the governing Awami League and the main opposition party Bangladesh Nationalist Party and bouts of violence triggered by the

judicial proceedings of the ICT may lead to further politically motivated violence in the run-up to the elections;

- G. Whereas on 10 August 2013 Mr Adilur Rahman Khan, the secretary of Odikhar, a human rights group, was detained; whereas Mr Nasiruddin Elan, the group's director, was denied bail and jailed in Dhaka on 6 November 2013;
- H. Whereas Elan and Khan are charged under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act (ICT Act), and the activists are accused of falsely reporting human rights abuses by government security forces during mass demonstrations by the Islamist Hefazat-e-Islami movement and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party in Dhaka in May;
- I. Whereas on 5 November 2013 a court sentenced 152 soldiers to death, more than 150 others to life imprisonment, and more than 250 to lesser prison sentences following a 2009 border guard mutiny over pay and privileges which left 74 people dead, 57 of them officers;
- J. Whereas it is more than six months since the Rana Plaza textile factory collapse, which killed over 1100 and wounded many others, some permanently;
1. Is concerned about the situation in Bangladesh in light of the upcoming elections and following a host of death sentences handed out recently by the ICT and in the trials against a soldiers' mutiny in 2009, all potential causes for instability and violence;
 2. Calls on the Government of Bangladesh to put in place the necessary framework to ensure a fair, transparent and democratic election process;
 3. Calls on the Bangladesh Election Commission to organize and oversee the next general elections in a fully transparent way; supports the recognition of new political parties that intend to participate in the next general elections and that meet reasonable criteria for political participation and representation;
 4. Calls on all political parties to refrain from any violence or instigation of violence during the electoral process and to prevent a repetition of the politically motivated violent clashes that occurred in the first half of 2013; expresses its serious concerns, in this regard, about a recent flaring up of politically motivated violence, leaving at least 15 people dead at the end of October;
 5. Calls on all political parties, including those in the opposition, to fully participate in the electoral process and to refrain from boycotting the elections;

6. Asks the Government of Bangladesh to invite the EU to send an Election Observation Mission to oversee the next general elections;
 7. Acknowledges the need for reconciliation, justice and accountability for the crimes committed during the 1971 war of independence; stresses and supports the important role of the ICT in this matter;
 8. Insists however, that the court upholds the highest national and international standards on fair trials and due process in criminal proceedings; expresses its concerns, in this regard, about the retroactive application of an amendment to the ICT law, adopted following the life imprisonment sentence of Mr Abdul Qader Mollah on 5 February 2013, allowing the Supreme Court to hand out a death sentence to Mr Mollah on 17 September 2013;
 9. Urges the Government of Bangladesh to open an independent investigation into the deadly events surrounding the Hefazat demonstrations earlier this year;
 10. Expresses its serious concerns about the arrests of Mr Adilur Rahman Khan and Mr Nasiruddin Elan and urges the Bangladeshi authorities to observe due process at all stages of the proceedings against these human rights defenders and to ensure full respect for their human rights;
 11. Expresses its concerns about the mass death sentencing in the trials against those involved in the 2009 border guard mutiny; insists on the application of the highest national and international standards on fair trials and due process;
 12. Encourages all parties involved in the aftermath of the Rana Plaza factory collapse, including those working on investigation, prosecution, working conditions and safety standards, and compensation, to work in a spirit of good cooperation in order to prevent such a disaster from ever happening again; urges European and other international clothing brands to fulfil promises and pledges made in the aftermath of the Rana Plaza factory collapse, including under the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh;
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13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the UN Secretary-General, the UN Human Rights Council and the Government and Parliament of Bangladesh.