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Plenary sitting

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B7-0040/2014

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 elections in Bangladesh
(2014/2516(RSP))

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on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

B7-0040/2014

**European Parliament resolution on recent elections in Bangladesh
(2014/2516(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh

- 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 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

- having regard to the UN Declaration of Human Rights Defenders and in particular Article 1 and Article 12.2 thereof,

- having regard to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

- having regard to Statement of the EU High Representative on the preparation for general elections in Bangladesh of 30 November 2013,

- having regard to Declaration by the High Representative Catherine Ashton on behalf of the European Union on the Legislative Elections in Bangladesh from 9 January 2014,

- having regard to Rule 122 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. Whereas politics have a violent history in Bangladesh, where parties in power routinely fight political opponents in a violent way by killing them or keeping them in jail in order to stay in power as long as possible;

B. Whereas 2013 was marked by political unrest, strikes and protests in Bangladesh, whereas 500 or so people were killed in political clashes in the most violent year since independence, whereas political tensions and unrest increased in the run up to the elections

with local sources reporting 52 killings and 4213 people injured in November 2013 alone, whereas at least 20 were killed by security forces on election day, whereas this situation continues after the elections;

C. Whereas Bangladesh has had a caretaker administration system in election period, due to the deep distrust between the two major parties, which was abolished in 2011 with an explanation that it was no longer necessary;

D. Whereas the situation in Bangladesh has been constantly tensed in the lead-up to general elections scheduled for January 2014 also due to abolishing caretaker administration system in election period;

E. Whereas the situation in Bangladesh is increasingly tensed in the aftermath of January 2014 general elections, whereas it is characterized by the challenges to overcome extreme poverty, violent confrontation between the ruling and opposition parties and horrific accidents linked to the garment industry;

F. Whereas Bangladesh has been hit in recent months by a wave of violent protests also over war crimes convictions and execution of Jaamat leader, where a lot of people have been killed in the clashes;

G. Whereas general elections in Bangladesh preceded by weeks of political tensions and violent street protests; whereas lot of people has been killed, hundreds injured, thousands arbitrarily arrested and there has been extensive destruction of property in the run-up to the elections;

H. whereas January 2014 elections are considered to be of the most violent elections in the country's history, with opposition-led election-related demonstrations across the country followed by a boycott of the polls by main opposition parties; mainly due to the fact that the opposition contests the ruling government's decision to remove the caretaker government system through the 15th amendment to the Bangladeshi constitution in 2011;

I. Whereas in the absence of the main opposition party and with the low turnout governing Awami League Party has won the general elections and remained in power with more than three-quarters of the seats in the Parliament; whereas over half of the 300 constituencies, namely 153, were not contested and therefore automatically won by the incumbent Awami League Party;

J. Whereas the voter turn-out in the recent elections was very low, 40% according to government figures, 20% according to Dhaka based diplomats and 5% according to representatives of the opposition parties;

K. Whereas general elections on 5th January passed in a violent manner with nearly 500 voting centers which had to be closed because of the violence; whereas at least 18 people died as a result of election-day violence and more than hundred in the run-up to the election in political violence in past weeks;

L. Whereas European Union refused to send its observation mission in Bangladesh for January 2014 general elections;

M. Whereas Bangladesh is currently benefitting from duty free quota free access to the European market under the GSP's 'Everything but Arms regime'; whereas according to media reports, there are discussions taking place to withdraw GSP preferences from Bangladesh; Is deeply concerned about the outbreak of violence in Bangladesh following the ICT verdicts and last events before, during and after general elections in January 2014;

1. Strongly condemns killings and widespread violence which erupted in the run-up to and during the January 2014 elections across the country, especially attacks on religious and cultural minorities and other vulnerable groups;

2. Calls for an independent Commission of Inquiry into the violence, shootings and killings leading up to and including election day as well as following the elections and for all perpetrators, including government and security forces to be brought to justice and for victims and their families to be adequately compensated;

3. Expresses its regret about the high number of casualties in electoral campaign; urges the Bangladeshi authorities to thoroughly investigate the deaths of all those killed during electoral period and that those found responsible are brought to justice;

4. Regrets that main political parties in Bangladesh have not acted in a constructive and cooperative manner with regards to the difficulties faced with before and after elections;

5. Urges the government to end the crackdown against members of the political opposition, trade unionists, human rights defenders and journalists;

6. Reiterates its strongest opposition to the death penalty and calls on the Bangladeshi authorities to immediately introduce a moratorium on the death penalty with a view of abolishing the death penalty as soon as possible;

7. Urges all political leaders in Bangladesh to refrain from violence in the future and to initiate dialogue that will end the political violence in the country; calls on all political leaders to find acceptable, peaceful and lasting solution of the current situation to be in line with the interests of the people of Bangladesh;

8. Notes that Bangladesh is faced with political deadlock and deep mistrust between political parties in country; calls for urgent reconciliation between political leaders in order to overcome existing divisions and make further efforts for reinforcement of stability in the country;

9. Is extremely concerned about reports of increased intimidation against human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists as well as against members of ethnic minorities; in this context calls for the dropping of all charges against Messrs. Adilur Rahman Khan and ASM Nasiruddin Elan, respectively Secretary and Director of the human rights NGO Odhikar; equally calls for the dropping of charges and the release of all activists, human rights defenders, trade unionists and journalists who were detained on politically motivated grounds during the recent protests;

10. Demands on Bangladeshi authorities that worker's rights should be respected; calls for better working conditions of all workers and increase of minimum wages; urges for authorities to combat poverty, which is one of the biggest problems of people of Bangladesh and also one of inhibitors of the recent protests and demonstrations in the country;

11. Calls on the Bangladeshi authorities to fully implement the Action Plan it agreed and signed with the ILO in May 2013; in particular calls on the Bangladeshi authorities to amend the labour Act 2006 and to extend its coverage to all workers, including those working in the so- called export processing zones where working conditions, health and safety standards are known to be extremely poor; insists that ILO conventions 87 and 98 must be fully complied with as all workers must be allowed to join trade unions of their own choice;

12. Calls on the European Commission the European Council and the Member States to introduce a legislative proposal for binding and enforceable mechanisms on Corporate Social Responsibility for EU based companies operating in third countries in order to make it mandatory for EU based companies to adhere to social, labour and environmental standards throughout their supply chain;

13. Calls in the European Council and its Member States to exclude companies violating human rights in Bangladesh from public procurement procedures and tenders;

14. Continues to support democratic processes in the country where majority of country's 150 million people are desperate for a sustainable solution and an end of the mindless violence;

15. Reiterates its position that tariff preferences under the EU's generalized system of preference, including the everything arms scheme for LDCs is an important tool for the development of those countries; calls on the European Council and Commission to allow for a full and transparent debate with the European Parliament and other important civil society stakeholders, in particular trade unions and NGOs involved in working in the region, before taking any decision in relation to a possible GSP withdrawal;

16. 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 governments and parliaments of the Member States, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Government and Parliament of Bangladesh;