



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

---

*Plenary sitting*

---

11.3.2014

B7-0256/2014

## **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 security and human trafficking in the Sinai  
(2014/2630(RSP))

**Véronique De Keyser, Saïd El Khadraoui, Ana Gomes, Richard Howitt, María Muñoz De Urquiza, Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg, Joanna Senyszyn, Liisa Jaakonsaari, Mitro Repo, Marc Tarabella**  
on behalf of the S&D Group

**B7-0256/2014**

**European Parliament resolution on security and human trafficking in the Sinai  
(2014/2630(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Sinai, in particular that of 15 March 2012 on human trafficking in Sinai, in particular the case of Solomon W., and of 16 December 2010 on Eritrean refugees held hostage in the Sinai,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Egypt, in particular that of 6 February 2014 on the situation in Egypt,
- having regard to the statements of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the terrorist attack in Sinai of 17 February 2014; on the recent violent attacks in Egypt of 24 January 2014; and on the car bombs in Mansoura, Egypt, of 24 December 2013;
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
- having regard to the UN Convention relating the Status of Refugees of 1951, and the 1967 Protocol thereto,
- having regard to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 1984,
- having regard to the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children of 2000, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime,
- having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950,
- having regard to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of 2005,
- having regard to the European Union's Brussels Declaration on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of 2002,
- having regard to Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims of 5 April 2011,
- having regard to Article 89 of the Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt,
- having regard to Law No. 64 of 2010 on Combatting Human Trafficking of Egypt,

- having regard to the report '*I wanted to lie down and die. Trafficking and Torture of Eritrean in Sudan and Egypt*' of Human Rights Watch of February 2014,

- having regard to the expert study '*The Human Trafficking Cycle: Sinai and Beyond*' of December 2013,

- having regard to Rule 122 (2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas terrorist attacks, the proliferation of weapons, the infiltration of foreign and Egyptian jihadists, and the radicalisation of a part of the local population in Sinai have created increasing security challenges for Egypt, Israel and other countries in the region; whereas the security situation in Sinai has rapidly deteriorated – with more than 250 terrorist attacks mostly against Egyptian security forces and their installations – since July 2013, which killed more than hundred people, the majority of them police and military personnel; whereas terrorist attacks in the Suez Canal zone and against gas pipelines are also a major source of concern;

B. whereas extremist infiltration undermines the efforts aimed at restoring security in Sinai; whereas various Al-Qaida-affiliated or –inspired terrorist groups – such as Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, al-Salafiyya al-Jihaddiyya, Jund al-Sharia, the Muhammad Jamal Network, Ansar al-Jihad in the Sinai Peninsula, al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula, and others – continue to operate in the area; whereas some of these groups, notably Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, have extended the scope of their terrorist actions beyond Sinai; whereas other local militants operating in Sinai do not belong to any extremist group but are armed Bedouins involved in smuggling and human trafficking;

C. whereas Sinai have long served as a smuggling route in and out of the Gaza Strip; whereas smuggling through the tunnels at the Sinai-Gaza border have been a major source of revenues for Hamas; whereas the flow of arms from Libya, Sudan and Yemen into Sinai has contributed to the security crisis in the area; whereas, according to reports, hundreds of Sinai-based militants regularly travel to Libya for training with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb;

D. whereas Egyptian armed forces have recently launched military operations in Sinai in order to combat terrorist and extremist groups and to restore security, and have also deployed into de-militarized zones with the permission of the Multinational Force of Observers and the support of Israel; whereas dozens of extremists have been killed and many others have been arrested in this campaign; whereas Egyptian forces have also suppressed smuggling operations at the border with the Gaza Strip; whereas, however, the Egyptian government and security forces have not been able to restore security and the rule of law in Sinai so far;

E. whereas the socio-economic marginalisation of the local Bedouin population is a major reason of security challenges in Sinai; whereas Sinai residents have long suffered from poverty, discrimination, limited access to health services and education, which has alienated them from official authorities neglecting their situation and ignoring their demands;

F. whereas thousands of asylum-seekers and migrants have lost their lives and disappeared in Sinai, while others, including many women and children, are held hostage for ransom, are sold and resold, and are tortured by human traffickers; whereas, according to the expert study

‘The Human Trafficking Cycle: Sinai and Beyond’, an estimated 25,000 to 30,000 people were victims of human trafficking in Sinai between 2009 and 2013; whereas it is believed that around 1,000 African refugees are currently being held in captivity in Sinai;

G. whereas victims of human traffickers in Sinai are abused in the most dehumanising manner and are subject to systemic and brutal torture - including rape and sexual abuse, mutilation, the burning of genitalia and other body parts, electrocution, beating with metal rods and sticks, hanging from ceilings, threatening with death, sleep deprivation, and other forms of torture – and forced labour; whereas once in the trafficking cycle, there is no way out for the vast majority of the victims;

H. whereas Sinai survivors – the vast majority of them exhausted and severely depressed, mentally disturbed, and suicidal – are in need of physical and mental support; whereas, however, most Sinai survivors are detained, denied medical assistance and social services, denied access to fair and effective asylum procedures, asked to sign papers they do not understand, and receive no legal assistance in destination countries, while many of them are repatriated to their home country in violation of the principle of non-refoulement;

I. whereas an estimated 95 per cent of refugees who fall victim to human traffickers in Sinai arrive from Eritrea, with others arrive from Ethiopia and Sudan; whereas Eritrean refugees continue to be kidnapped from refugees camps in Ethiopia and in Sudan and transferred to human traffickers in Sinai; whereas, according to testimonies of refugees, certain Sudanese police officials participate in the transferring of refugees to traffickers; whereas Sudanese authorities have investigated into some such cases and prosecuted some police officials in connections with these cases;

J. whereas Article 89 of the recently adopted constitution of Egypt declares that all forms of slavery, oppression, forced exploitation of human beings, sex trade, and other forms of human trafficking are prohibited and criminalized by law in the country; whereas Egypt’s Law No. 64 of 2010 on Combatting Human Trafficking declares that victims of human trafficking should receive assistance, protection and immunity from prosecution; whereas, however, according to human rights organisations, Egyptian authorities are not undertaking adequate efforts to stop human trafficking in Sinai, while they often charge victims with immigration offenses, detain them for a long period, and deny them access to medical care and to UNHCR; whereas, according to Human Rights Watch, victims have also reported about cases of Egyptian security officers colluding with traffickers, facilitating abuses, and returning escaped victims to traffickers; whereas Egyptian authorities deny the existence of such cases;

K. whereas the European Neighbourhood Policy progress report on Egypt of 2013 says that “human trafficking in Sinai remains a matter of concern. Migrants, primarily from Eritrea and Sudan, are being held for ransom and seriously abused by human traffickers and other criminals before they are allowed to continue their journey to Israel. Egypt has a strong law against human trafficking, but prosecutions are very rare” and that “hundreds of African nationals (most of them Eritreans) are reportedly detained in police stations in Sinai in conditions that fall well below minimum detention standards required by human rights law. The Egyptian government has consistently denied UNHCR contact to the detained refugees and asylum seekers. It claims that the detained persons are economic migrants and not asylum seekers, and as such it perceives no obligation to give UNHCR access to these centres”;

L. whereas, in January 2013, Israel completed the main sections of its barrier along the Israeli-Egyptian border, stretching from Kerem Shalom in the north to Eilat in the south; whereas this barrier has considerably reduced the number of African migrants entering Israel illegally; whereas Israel continues to detain thousands of asylum-seekers, including Sinai survivors, under the ‘Prevention of Infiltration Law’, while they face a set of severe measures limiting their access to asylum procedures;

M. whereas the European Union has repeatedly invited Egypt and Israel to develop and improve the quality of their protection and assistance offered to asylum-seekers and refugees residing or transiting their territory;

1. Expresses its deep concern about the security vacuum in Sinai, and urges the Egyptian government and security forces to step up their efforts in the field of combating terrorists and jihadists as well as human traffickers in this area, in line with international law and international standards on the use of force and policing, with the support of the international community;

2. Expresses its strong solidarity with the victims of human trafficking in Sinai and their families, and stresses again the responsibility of the Egyptian government to combat human trafficking in this area; underlines that any military and law-enforcing operation by Egyptian security forces in Sinai should include actions aimed at rescuing victims of human traffickers, protecting and assisting these victims, as well as arresting and prosecuting the traffickers, and any security official colluding with them, in order to hold them to account;

3. Stresses that the security crisis and the human trafficking crisis in Sinai can only be solved in the long term through

a) a comprehensive development programme aimed at improving the socio-economic status and conditions of the local Bedouin population;

b) effective regional cooperation with the contribution of all countries concerned in the region, particularly Egypt, Israel, Libya and Sudan;

c) increased international support to the countries concerned in the region, with special regard to Egypt;

4. Stresses the importance of the protection of and assistance to Sinai survivors, with special regard to medical, psychological and legal support; calls on all destination countries concerned to prevent the detention of Sinai survivors, to put in place improved systems to identify victims, to provide them access to fair and effective asylum procedures and to UNHCR, to assess all cases on an individual basis, and to avoid the deportation of Sinai survivors – in particular to Eritrea, or to any other country where they run the risk of being deported to Eritrea – in violation of the principle of non-refoulement;

5. Underlines the importance of coordinated regional action in restoring security and combating human trafficking in Sinai, and calls for more cooperation in this field by the governments of Egypt, Israel, Libya and Sudan in particular;

6. Calls on the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission to put the issue of human trafficking in Sinai high on the agenda of the European Union's dialogue and cooperation with Egypt, and with other countries concerned in the region;

7. Encourages the EU and its Member States to support all efforts aimed at combating the human trafficking cycle in Sinai, in line with their international obligations to combat trafficking in persons, and to offer an increased number of residence permits to Sinai survivors, in the spirit of a balanced sharing of the burden among Member States;

8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the High Representative/Vice-President, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and to the parliaments and governments of Egypt, Israel, Libya, and Sudan.