



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Plenary sitting

11.3.2014

B7-0260/2014

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))

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

European Parliament resolution on Security and Human Trafficking in the Sinai (2014/2630(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolutions on Egypt, in particular of 15 March 2012 on human trafficking in Sinai, and of 5 February 2014 on the situation in Egypt;
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention against Torture,
- having regard to the 2000 UN Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children,
- having regard to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 protocol thereto,
- having regard to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of 2005,
- having regard to the EU Directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims of 5 of April 2011,
- having regard to the EU Strategy towards the eradication of trafficking in human beings 2012-2016,
- having regard to the latest statements on Egypt by Catherine Ashton, Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,
- having regard to Egypt's Law on Combatting Human Trafficking,
- having regard to Israel's Law on Anti-Infiltration
- having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. Whereas the population of the Sinai peninsula, notably its majority indigenous Bedouin, has strained relations with the Egyptian central authorities, largely as a result of decades of economic deprivation and political alienation; whereas the Sinai is marred by significant economic and social inequalities between its north and south;
- B. Whereas transnational crime and Islamist militancy have thrived in the demilitarized security buffer zone in the Sinai, established under the 1978 Camp David Accords;
- C. Whereas attacks on police and military personnel, buildings and checkpoints in northern Sinai have dramatically increased since the military coup of 3 July 2013; whereas at least 98 security personnel have been killed as a result of these attacks, according to the Egyptian government; whereas a tourist bus was attacked in South Sinai on 16 February causing several deaths and many injured in the first such attack on tourists since the July coup; whereas the Egyptian authorities point to the responsibility of the Muslim Brotherhood for these attacks, although the Islamist group Ansar Bait al-Maqdis has claimed responsibility;
- D. Whereas the Egyptian security forces are engaged in a large-scale offensive against suspected Islamist armed groups in Sinai since July 2013; whereas mass arrests, large-scale house demolitions and deaths among militants and civilians are being reported; whereas most of the illegal but long-tolerated network of tunnels between Egypt and the Gaza Strip are being closed in the course of this operation; whereas the army-enforced media-blackout on developments in Sinai in general and on this operation in particular seriously impedes any informed, independent observation;
- E. Whereas thousands of migrants, in particular refugees and asylum-seekers from Eritrea, Sudan and Ethiopia, are reported to have fallen victim to criminal gangs in Sinai, while attempting to escape political violence, human rights abuse and destitution over the recent years;
- F. Whereas trafficking appears to continue unabated in spite of the ongoing offensive of the Egyptian security forces in Sinai;
- G. Whereas sub-Saharan African migrants are reported to suffer from a pattern of horrific violence, including torture, rape, mutilation, extortion and forced labour, at the hands of their traffickers in Sinai; whereas financial blackmailing is also reported to extend to families of the victims residing in Europe;
- H. Whereas civil society organizations have denounced the collusion between some Egyptian and Sudanese security forces and the traffickers;
- I. Whereas Egyptian authorities have been criticized for not responding to the widely documented reality of trafficking in the Sinai and for failing to investigate and prosecute traffickers and officials who collude with them;

- J. Whereas the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is not allowed to have access to migrants massively detained in police and military stations in Sinai, in contravention of its 1954 agreement with Egypt, which allows the organization to carry out refugee status determination;
- K. Whereas UNHCR data shows that in 2012, 90% of Eritrean asylum-seekers received refugee status or complementary protection worldwide as did 72% of Sudanese asylum-seekers;
- L. Whereas reservations by Egypt to the UN Refugee Convention restrict refugees' rights to education, social security and work rights;
- M. Whereas according to UNHCR figures, Israel is home to 53,000 African asylum-seekers who have entered the country through Egypt since 2005; whereas 67% of them come from Eritrea and 25% from Sudan;
- N. Whereas the entry of asylum-seekers into Israel was almost entirely halted in 2013 due to the construction of a border fence with Egypt; whereas in 2013, only 43 asylum-seekers were reported to have entered Israel; whereas the construction of the fence has further trapped the migrants in the hands of the Sinai trafficking networks;
- O. Whereas to date, not one Sudanese and only two Eritrean nationals have received refugee status in Israel;
- P. Whereas the UNHCR has raised concerns over a recent amendment to Israel's Anti-infiltration law that further limits the rights of asylum-seekers; whereas the UNHCR has expressed its particular concern that one of the provisions of the new Amendment requires asylum-seekers to reside in the so-called open residence facility located in the desert of Negev with serious restrictions on their freedom of movement and that this facility could, in effect, result in indefinite detention;
1. Expresses its concern about the deteriorating security situation in the Egyptian border region of Sinai, including the multiplication of terrorist attacks and other acts of violence claimed by Islamist groups as well as large-scale human trafficking of Sub-Saharan Africans, notably from Eritrea;
 2. Supports all efforts of the Egyptian authorities to address this situation in a manner, which is consistent with human rights standards; in this regard, is concerned by the human and political consequences of the ongoing, heavy-handed security operation against suspected militant groups in Sinai, which is maintained outside media and public scrutiny;
 3. Stresses the need to address the underlining causes of the security challenges in Sinai, which fuel radicalization and criminal activity in this geographic crossroads; in particular, calls on the Egyptian authorities to address the longstanding grievances among the Bedouin, notably by ensuring a more equitable distribution of resources and their political inclusion; calls for an end to restrictions on

independent voices in Sinai;

4. Remains gravely concerned about the fate of migrants, particularly Eritrean and Sudanese nationals, who are falling prey to trafficking networks in Sinai and are suffering the most horrific acts of violence at the hands of these criminal gangs; believes that the inadequate response from concerned State authorities, notably Egypt and Israel, further compounds the predicament of the Sinai trafficking victims;
5. Is concerned about the fate of the victims of trafficking after their interception by the Egyptian security forces, notably at reports of inhumane detention conditions, denied access to UNHCR and humanitarian organizations and forced deportation;
6. Reiterates its call on the Egyptian government to take urgent and effective measures to combat trafficking in accordance with its domestic and international obligations; insists that trafficking victims should not be detained and should receive the assistance and protection to which they are entitled under Egyptian law; insists that trafficking victims be allowed access to UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies and be guaranteed the right to claim asylum; reiterates its call on the Egyptian authorities to undertake measures such as research, information and mass media campaigns and social and economic initiatives to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, as well as to collect and publish statistics on the victims of trafficking;
7. Calls on the Egyptian authorities to dismantle and prosecute trafficking networks and to investigate all allegations of collusion by security forces with traffickers and to prosecute those responsible for such crimes;
8. Urges Egyptian and Israeli security forces not to use lethal force against migrants attempting to cross the Sinai border and to strictly uphold the principle of non-refoulement by not forcibly deporting those arrested to Eritrea, Sudan or Ethiopia;
9. Welcomes the efforts by Bedouin community leaders to end trafficking; reiterates its appreciation of the activities of Egyptian and Israeli human rights organisations, which provide assistance and medical treatment to victims of human traffickers in Sinai; urges the international community and the EU to support the efforts of these local communities and NGOs;
10. Calls for an end of the blockade imposed by Egypt and Israel on the Gaza Strip, which aggravates the extreme hardship of the Gazan Palestinian people and fuels illicit trade and radicalisation; expresses concern at the reports of an indiscriminate, scorched-earth campaign aiming to create a “buffer zone” along the Egypt-Gaza border, as part of the ongoing security offensive conducted by the Egyptian military;
11. Calls on Israeli authorities to treat asylum-seekers in line with international refugee and human rights law, including by ensuring access to fair and efficient asylum procedures and by ending forced deportations; calls on Israel to address

the concerns of the UNHCR that the latest amendment to the Anti-infiltration Law may in effect result in the indefinite detention of asylum-seekers;

12. Calls on the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to put the security situation in Sinai with high priority on the agenda of the EU's political dialogue with Egypt and to promote international cooperation with all source, transit and destination countries concerned by the Sinai human trafficking, as well as with relevant organisations, including the UN Multinational Force and Observers;
13. Calls on the Commission and EU Member States to prevent the push-back and the detention of victims of Sinai trafficking and to guarantee their right to seek asylum and to have access to protection procedures, including short-term residence in line with EU legislation;
14. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to investigate the reports of financial extortion of families of victims living in the EU by Sinai traffickers;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the High Representative / Vice-President, the Council and the Commission, to the governments and parliaments of the Member States, to the Egyptian and the Israeli governments, to the Egyptian Parliament and the Israeli Knesset, and to the UN Secretary General and the UN Human Rights Council.