



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Plenary sitting

16.9.2014

B8-0097/2014

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 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on human rights violations in Bangladesh
(2014/2834(RSP))

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on behalf of the ECR Group

B8-0097/2014

**European Parliament resolution on human rights violations in Bangladesh
(2014/2834(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh,
 - having regard to the EC-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement of 2001,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Bangladesh in the year 2000,
 - having regard to Art. 135 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 in recent years, notably towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and in its economic performance;
- C. Whereas in recent years Bangladesh has seen a number of tragedies in its garment factories, the deadliest being the Rana Plaza factory collapse with over 1,100 casualties; whereas following the Rana Plaza collapse Bangladesh, together with major stakeholders in the garment sector, have embarked on a reform programme aiming at safe and decent working conditions; whereas the EU supports this programme through the Bangladesh Sustainability Compact but some stakeholders are reluctant to take part;
- D. Whereas following the general elections on 5 January 2014, which was boycotted by the main opposition party Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and which was overshadowed by BNP-instigated strikes and resulting violence, the Awami League government led by Sheikh Hasina has taken several steps limiting civil rights;
- E. Whereas in July this year the Bangladesh government has proposed a law, the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act, that could impose severe restrictions on the activities of nongovernmental organizations;
- F. Whereas on 6 August 2014 the Bangladesh government published its new media policy; whereas elements of this policy impose limits on media freedom when, for example, banning speech that is "anti-state", "ridicules the national ideology" and "is inconsistent with Bangladesh's culture" and restricting the reporting of "anarchy, rebellion, or violence";

- G. Whereas there continue to be many cases of ethnic- and religiously motivated violence, including for example an attack by several dozen armed men in early July on the convent of the Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions nuns in Boldipuku (PIME); whereas during this attack the convent was looted and the nuns were physically assaulted;
- H. Whereas a worrying number of enforced disappearances allegedly involving state security forces is reported; whereas these forces at times seem to operate beyond the law and with impunity;
1. Commends the Bangladesh government for the progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which has resulted in significant and real-life improvements for millions of its citizens; furthermore acknowledges the fact that these improvements were realized under difficult domestic circumstances, which include the constant threat of violent attacks by radical groups such as the BNP-affiliated Jamaat-e-Islami party;
 2. Expresses, however, its concern at the proposed NGO law; urges the Bangladesh government to continue the consultations with independent groups on the content of this draft law and to make sure that, if it is eventually adopted, it complies with international standards and civil rights conventions Bangladesh has committed itself to;
 3. Expresses, furthermore, its concern at the announced new media policy, which allows the Bangladesh authorities to restrict the country's media; welcomes efforts made by the Bangladesh government to revise its new media policy, taking into account the international obligations the country has imposed on itself when signing and ratifying the ICCPR and other civil rights conventions;
 4. Is very concerned at recurring cases of ethnic and religiously motivated violence; urges the Bangladesh government as well as religious organizations and their leaders to embark on a process of reconciliation; the Bangladesh government to work towards bringing to justice the perpetrators of this kind of violence; furthermore urges the Bangladesh government to offer sufficient protection and guarantees to minorities such as Hindus, Buddhists and Christians, but also Biharis; welcomes the arrest of suspects in relation to the criminal attack on the Convent;
 5. Urges the Bangladesh government to bring the state security forces, including the police and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), back within the bounds of the law; stresses that allegations of extrajudicial operations need to be examined and when necessary lead to prosecution; points out that it will closely monitor the proceedings of the 'Narayanganj case', whereby three RAB officers have been arrested and are awaiting judicial proceedings following the abduction and killing of seven people in Narayanganj in April 2014;
 6. Takes note of the progress of the reform programmes in the garment industry, including amendments to the labour law, the establishment of new trade unions and the recruitment and training of inspectors; Urges, however, the Bangladesh

government to pursue further labour law reform, improved training of inspectors and thorough inspections of its many thousands of factories; urges the signatories of the Accord on Fire and Safety in Bangladesh to live up to their commitments, including with regards to financial compensation for victims and minimum standards;

7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Government and Parliament of Bangladesh, the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; and the governments and parliaments of the EU Member States.