



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Plenary sitting

16.9.2014

B8-0101/2014

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 S&D Group

B8-0101/2014

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

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh, in particular those of 16 January 2014, 19 November 2013, 23 May 2013 and 3 March 2013

- having regard to the declaration of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton of 9 January 2014 on the outcome of the legislative elections in Bangladesh

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

A. whereas the EU has a good, long-standing relationship with Bangladesh, including through the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development;

B. whereas Bangladesh held parliamentary elections on 5 January 2014 following five years of rule by an elected, civilian government resulting in the Awami League to win 232 of the 300 elected seats thus reaching a three-quarters majority; whereas these elections were overshadowed by violence; whereas in the run up to election day hundreds lost their lives; whereas these elections were one of the most violent in the history of the country;

C. whereas the opposition led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) boycotted the January 2014 national elections allowing the ruling party a walkover; whereas after violent protests by opposition security forces cracked down on activists and supporters and engaged in disappearances and killings of at least 100 protesters; whereas there is a threat of further protests by the opposition to press for fresh elections; whereas opposition members themselves have been responsible for serious abuses during street protests;

D. whereas members of the security and police forces involved in the deaths of protesters have not been investigated through an independent and impartial mechanism; whereas no one has been brought to justice for any unlawful killings;

E. whereas the Government of Bangladesh 10 years ago created the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) comprising both military and police as an emergency measure to counter threats to security from militant groups; whereas the force has instead been deployed in civilian law enforcement and been responsible for widespread extrajudicial executions; whereas independent groups put RAB's death toll at about 800 with no prosecutions or punishment of officers responsible;

F. whereas the Government of Bangladesh has a responsibility to safeguard the human rights of its people; whereas so far, the new government has not come forward with a clearly defined human rights protection agenda;

G. whereas the government has adopted new policies that further restrict human rights,

especially the right to freedom of expression and media freedom; whereas the policy provides only vague guidance on what is permitted content and language; whereas the government is planning to introduce a legislative framework through which to enforce the policy;

H. whereas there are new proposals to regulate nongovernmental organizations including those that document human rights abuses; whereas the proposed legislation targets in particular groups who receive foreign donations and requires prior approval of various government bodies;

I. whereas it is welcome that Bangladesh wants to prosecute war crimes and crimes against humanity during the war for independence; whereas the rules and regulations governing the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) are seriously flawed, including in that it denies fundamental rights to the accused; whereas there are allegations of improper collusion between the prosecutor and judges in the conduct of the trial; whereas witnesses reported threats and intimidation by both prosecution and defence; whereas the tribunal has awarded the death penalty and already executed one person through retroactive legislation;

1. Reminds the Bangladeshi government that the European Union has consistently engaged with Bangladesh to support the consolidation of democracy;
2. Urges the government to use minimal force to restore public order and to abide strictly by the UN's Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms; strongly condemns violent attacks by opposition groups against both civilian and government targets; calls upon opposition groups to only engage in peaceful protests;
3. Expresses concern about continuing human rights violations by the Rapid Action Battalion and other security forces including enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings of opposition activists; urges the Bangladesh government to disband the RAB and establish a civilian law enforcement authority, with no military component, to replace RAB;
4. Strongly calls on the government to ensure that its security forces exercise restraint and respect human rights and put an end to RAB's impunity by ordering investigations and prosecutions into alleged illegal killings by RAB forces;
5. Urges the Bangladesh Government to recognise and respect freedom of the press and media and to allow human rights groups to play their important role in strengthening accountability and documenting human rights abuses;
6. Urges the Bangladeshi authorities to revoke the new media policy and abide by its obligations to allow free speech and expression; urges the government to withdraw its proposed legislation on increasing regulations over NGO's and ensure that NGO's are allowed to operate without undue restraint and hurdles;
7. Reiterates its calls for the abolition of the death penalty;
8. Calls on the EU Institutions and EU Member States, to ensure a clear and principled EU policy vis-a-vis Bangladesh that addresses the on-going serious human rights violations, in line with the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights,

9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the European External Action Service, the 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.