



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Plenary sitting

16.12.2014

B8-0388/2014

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 Mauritania, in particular the case of Biram Dah Arbeid
(2014/2999(RSP))

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on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

B8-0388/2014

**European Parliament resolution on Mauritania, in particular the case of Biram Dah
Arbeid
(2014/2999(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. Whereas millions of people throughout the world, including children, are faced with persistent violations of their fundamental rights while being subjected to modern-day slavery, with insufficient political will and resources dedicated to lifting them out of such inhuman conditions; whereas contemporary forms of slavery are directed particularly to women as they suffer triple discrimination: firstly as girls, secondly as mothers and thirdly as slaves;
- B. Whereas according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) almost 21 million people are victims of forced labour or slavery-like conditions – 11.4 million women and girls and 9.5 million men and boys, 19 million victims are exploited by private individuals or enterprises and over 2 million by the state or rebel groups;
- C. Whereas between those exploited by individuals or enterprises, 4.5 million are victims of forced sexual exploitation;
- D. Whereas addressing the prevalence of contemporary forms of slavery requires that governments take measures in order to prevent private sector actors, and namely transnational corporations, from doing business with suppliers in developing and developed countries, to eliminate forced labour, bonded labour or other forms of slavery;
- E. Whereas forced labour in the private economy generates US\$ 150 billion in illegal profits per year, domestic work, agriculture, construction, manufacturing and entertainment are among the sectors most concerned;
- F. Whereas the capitalist crisis and the neoliberal measures are destroying workers' rights, namely their wages, increasing poverty and weakening workers capability to face pressure by companies; whereas the increased poverty among the workers increases their vulnerability to trafficking, forced labour and other contemporary forms of slavery;
- G. Whereas migrant workers and indigenous people are particularly vulnerable to forced labour;
- H. Whereas Mauritania is part of the Sahel region, one of the poorest regions in the world but very rich in natural resources such as gas, uranium and oil,
- I. Whereas slavery has existed for centuries in all ethnic communities in Mauritania, crossing all the colonial period; whereas being deeply ingrained as part of a hierarchical social structure; whereas slaves are treated as property and suffer degrading treatment,

they totally dependent on their masters for food, clothing and shelter;

- J. Whereas according to the UN it is difficult to know how many people in Mauritania today live in slavery; whereas it is believed to be still a serious problem, although in decline in its figures;
- K. Whereas since 2007 Mauritania passed a law criminalizing slavery but still not yet fully implemented to result in concrete changes in practice; whereas according to the UN Special Rapporteur there is still a need to ensure better protection for victims recognized as slaves; whereas the setting-up of a special Tribunal to persecute crimes of slavery can bring the country closer to effectively end the practice of slavery;
- L. Whereas as a prerequisite for the efficiency of the combat on contemporary forms of slavery it's necessary to provide detailed and precise data, statistics and a thorough study; whereas there's a need to publish the anti-slavery conventions that Mauritania ratified in order to raise awareness that all work should be entered into freely and respect the fundamental rights of the human person;
- M. Whereas Trade Unions and anti-slavery organizations have a determinant role in eradicating slavery, raising awareness, collecting materials, bringing cases before the court, in assisting victims of slavery and giving support to their psychological recovery and reintegration measures;
 - 1. Strongly condemns all forms of contemporary slavery, including forced labour, and denounces that millions of people remain in this abhorrent situation all over the world (including developed and developing countries) and even in the EU;
 - 2. Calls the attention for the situation in Mauritania;
 - 3. Endorses the appeal of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on slavery calling the Mauritanian authorities to take more vigorous measures to eliminate slavery and to fully implement the laws and policies through a road map, to eradicate slavery and its remnants once and for all;
 - 4. Appeals to the Mauritanian authorities to promote and respect the right of anti-slavery activists and organizations to demonstrate and the right of assembly; appeals to the Mauritanian authorities to free all those exercising this rights;
 - 5. Considers that the framework of the EU-Mauritania relations needs to be revised, namely the Fisheries Partnership Agreement EU-Mauritania, the EU-ACP Partnership Agreement and the EUROMED Partnership, in order to support programmes and measures to address root causes of slavery, in particular poverty, the absence of legislation defending workers' rights, employment opportunities, an educational system focused in people's rights, in particular women and girls, the lack of access to justice; considers fundamental to create the conditions to implement the principle of "equal pay for men and women for work of equal value";

6. Stresses the need for EU programmes and measures to support increasing and diversifying Mauritania's production in order to increase worker's rights and a fair distribution of revenues; criticises the way that the Fisheries Partnership Agreement EU-Mauritania has been implemented to explore its fisheries stocks without promoting the construction of the necessary infrastructure, the modernization of the sector and related activities, and not implementing fully its aim of stimulus of the country's economic and social development and the food needs of its population;
7. Considers fundamental to combat contemporary forms of slavery in Mauritania that the EU supports trade unions and their programmes to defend and promote awareness of workers' rights, promote membership and defend the implementation of collective bargaining;
8. Underlines the importance of defending the right to strike and the right to form a union as a mean to defend workers' rights but also its educational importance to endow slaves with their rights as workers; appeals to the government of Mauritania to do all the necessary to put an end to measures that limit or restrict workers' rights and trade union members or activists rights, according to the respective ILO conventions that Mauritania has signed, including Forced Labour Convention; appeals to Mauritania to respect the right to strike and to free all those workers put in prison while exercising this right, and promote trade unions and workers access to justice;
9. Stresses the need to terminate the EU neoliberal policies promoting privatization of public services such as water, education and health which reduces rights and increases prices, making even more difficult the reintegration measures of former slaves;
10. Strongly defends that Member States governments' take the necessary measures in order to prevent private sector actors, and namely transnational corporations doing business with suppliers in developing and developed countries, to eliminate forced labour, bonded labour or other forms of slavery; considers fundamental that EU stops funding to private or State actors that use or promote slavery;
11. Condemns the further militarization and destabilization of the Sahel region;
12. Underlines that those EU policies such as migration policy exacerbates repression and violation of human rights of migrants, some of them escaping from slavery in the Sahel region;
13. Rejects any attempt to use the slavery problem in Mauritania to promote foreign interference and to deny the sovereign right of the Mauritanian people to determine their lives and future;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European Council, the President of the Commission, the parliaments of the Member States, the Secretary-General's of ACP countries and EUROMED, the Government of Mauritania, the African Union.

