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Plenary sitting

10.3.2015

B8-0260/2015

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 South Sudan, including recent child abductions
(2015/2603(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

B8-0260/2015

European Parliament resolution on South Sudan, including recent child abductions (2015/2603(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Iraq, Syria, Libya and Egypt, and in particular the one of 9 October 2013 on the recent cases of violence and persecution against Christians, the one of 19 September 2014 on the situation in Iraq and Syria and the ISIS offensive including the persecution of minorities, and the one of 12 February 2015 on the humanitarian crisis in Iraq and Syria, in particular in the IS context,
- having regard to the statements by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on Iraq and Syria, and in particular the one of 16 February 2015 on the beheading of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya,
- having regard to the Joint Communication of 6 February 2015 by the VP/HR and the Commission entitled ‘Elements for an EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da’esh threat’,
- having regard to statement by the UN high commissioner for Human rights on the murder of 21 Christians in Libya on 17 February 2015,
- having regard to the UN Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic entitled ‘Rule of Terror: Living under ISIS in Syria’, of 14 November 2014,
- having regard to the EU guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief adopted on 24 June 2013,
- having regard to the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief,
- having regard to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities of 18 December 1992;
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief of 1981,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas according to reports the Middle East remains one of the most violent region of the world for Christians; whereas violence against Christians by the Daesh and other Islamic terrorist groups increased in countries like Iraq and Syria forcing more than 70 percent of Iraqi Christians and more than 700.000 Syrian Christians to flee their countries;
- B. whereas the Assyrians, one of the world's oldest Christian communities, have been under increasing pressure since Daesh captured large parts of the Middle East region and imposed the harsh interpretation of the Sharia law; whereas in Iraq the 250.000 Assyrians comprise a distinct ethno-religious group and it is estimated that up to 40.000 Assyrians lived in Syria before the country's civil war broke out in 2011;
- C. whereas on 23 February 2015, an estimated 220 Assyrians were captured by Daesh militants after sweeping into about 12 villages on the southern bank of the Khabur river, near the town of Tal Tamr in north-eastern Syria; whereas major Daesh attacks on Assyrian Christian towns in the Khabur river area were reported on 9 March; whereas on 1 March 2015, 19 Assyrians were freed apparently after a Sharia court ordered them to pay an unspecified amount of money levied as a tax on non-Muslims;
- D. whereas the attacks against religious minorities in Libya has increased due to the growing strength of Daesh and number of extremist Islamic groups; whereas the majority of Christians in Libya are Egyptian Copts; whereas on 15 February 2015, 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians were beheaded by a Libyan extremist group;
- E. whereas the United Nations and other international organisations have reported widespread serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by Daesh and associated groups in the Middle East and specially in Syria and Iraq against minority ethnic and religious groups, including targeted killings, forced conversions, abductions, selling of women, slavery of women and children, recruitment of children for suicide bombings, sexual and physical abuse and torture; whereas there are growing concerns for the welfare of those still trapped in areas controlled by Daesh forces as almost no international humanitarian assistance reaches those areas;
- F. whereas Christian, Yezidi, Turkmen, Shabak, Kaka'e, Sabaeans and Shi'a communities as well as many Arabs and Sunni Muslims have been targeted by Daesh; whereas mosques, monuments, shrines, churches, and other places of worship, tombs and cemeteries, as well as archaeological and cultural heritage sites have been deliberately destroyed; whereas a campaign by Daesh has been initiated to destroy any traces of Assyrian culture and history; whereas Daesh fighters have attacked the ancient archaeological site of Nimrud in northern Iraq and damaged it with heavy vehicles;
- G. whereas according to international law each individual has the right to live according

- to their conscience and to freely hold and change religious and non-religious beliefs;
- H. whereas the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion and belief, are fundamental principles and aims of the EU and constitute common ground for its relations with third countries; whereas political and religious leaders have a duty at all levels to combat extremism and promote mutual respect among individuals and religious groups;
- I. whereas the EU has reiterated its firm commitment to Iraq's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity;
1. Strongly condemns the recent attacks against Christians and other religious and ethnic minorities, in particular Assyrians and Egyptian Copts by Daesh; expresses its solidarity with the families of the victims; is extremely concerned about the proliferation of episodes of intolerance, repression and violent events perpetrated by this and other terrorist organizations against religious and ethnic minorities, and most vulnerable groups; strongly condemns attacks directed at civilian targets, including hospitals, schools and places of worship, and the use of executions and sexual violence by Daesh in the Middle East; underlines that there should be no impunity for the perpetrators of these acts; recalls the kidnapping of Bishops Yohanna Ibrahim and Paul Yazigi by armed rebels in the northern province of Aleppo on April 22, 2013 and calls for their immediate release;
 2. Underlines that widespread or systematic attacks directed against civilians because of their ethnic or political background, religion, belief or gender may constitute a crime against humanity and those responsible should be referred to the International Criminal Court; strongly condemns all forms of persecution, discrimination and intolerance based on religion and belief, and acts of violence against all religious communities; stresses once again that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a fundamental human right;
 3. Condemns the destruction of sites representing some of the oldest civilizations in the world and their loss described by UNESCO as a campaign of "cultural cleansing"; expresses its concern about the reports that state that Daesh is selling valuable artefacts on the black market to fund its activities;
 4. Supports all those engaged in the fight against the Daesh terrorism and other armed/terrorist groups; further calls on all regional actors and governments to cooperate fully in combatting the Daesh threat; stresses that such cooperation is vital to the security of the region;
 5. Expresses its support for, in particular, the Middle East Christian community, who are victims of religious intolerance and hatred; expresses its solidarity with the members of the Christian communities being persecuted and facing the danger of extinction in

their motherlands, Iraq and Syria, as well as with other persecuted religious minorities; confirms and supports the inalienable right of all religious and ethnic minorities living in Iraq and Syria, including Christians, to continue to live in their historical and traditional homelands in dignity, equality and safety, and to practise their religion freely;

6. Stresses that the crimes committed against Christian minorities such as Assyrians, Syriacs and Chaldeans, as well as Yezidis and Shia Muslims, represent a final push by the IS for a complete religious cleansing in the cradle of civilisation and Christianity; emphasises that in order to protect and safeguard the indigenous minorities and avert a refugee crisis of even more alarming proportions, the creation of a safe haven needs to be implemented; expresses its support for the creation of an internationally guaranteed and enforced safe haven for Iraqi minorities; notes that for centuries Christians and Muslims coexisted peacefully in the region;
7. Stresses the importance of all actors providing military protection to particularly vulnerable groups targeted by Daesh in the Middle East, such as ethnic and religious minorities, including Christians, Yezidis and Turkmens, in the current crisis, and of their participation in future lasting solutions, with the aim of preserving their lives and tradition of intercultural, interethnic and interreligious coexistence in the region; calls on all parties involved in the conflict to respect universal human rights, to facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid and assistance through all possible channels;
8. Is concerned about reports of Christian minorities not having access to refugee camps in the region as these would be too dangerous for them; requests the EU to adapt its development assistance to target all possible minority groups that are being displaced by the threat of Daesh; encourages the EU to provide financial assistance through local and regional churches, like the Patriarchates of the Middle East, as well as through international relief organisations of churches already having considerable experience and presence in humanitarian activities in the region, in order to ensure that all minority groups can benefit from the protection and support of European aid; stresses that the EU should take an overall leadership in increasing humanitarian and development funding for Christians as a major sign of European solidarity and responsibility for the persecuted people;
9. Rejects without reservation and considers illegitimate the announcement by the Daesh leadership that it has established a caliphate in the areas it now controls, and rejects the notion of any unilateral changes to internationally recognised borders by force; stresses again that Daesh is subject to the arms embargo and assets freeze imposed by UN Security Council resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011), and underlines the importance of prompt and effective implementation of those measures; calls on the Council to consider a more effective use of the existing restrictive measures, and in particular to deny Daesh the benefits of illicit oil sales or sales of other resources on

international markets; emphasises that the creation and expansion of the 'Islamic caliphate', as well as activities of other extremist groups in the Middle East, is a direct threat to the security of the European countries; expresses its concern at the increasing involvement of extremist Islamist groups and transnational foreign fighters in the conflict in Syria;

10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the Governments and Parliaments of the EU Member States, the Government and Council of Representatives of Iraq, the Regional Government of Kurdistan, the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Libyan Government and the House of Representatives, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the United Nations Human Rights Council and all the parties involved in the conflict in Syria.