MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on persecution of Christians around the world in relation to the killing of students in Kenya by Islamist terror group Al-Shabaab (2015/2661(RSP))


on behalf of the PPE Group
European Parliament resolution on persecution of Christians around the world in relation to the killing of students in Kenya by Islamist terror group Al-Shabaab (2015/2661(RSP))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to its resolution of 20 January 2011 on the situation of Christians in the context of freedom of religion¹,

– having regard to its resolution of 10 October 2013 on the recent cases of violence and persecution against Christians, notably in Maaloula (Syria) and Peshawar (Pakistan) and the case of Pastor Saeed Abedini (Iran)², that of 18 September 2014 on the situation in Iraq and Syria and the IS offensive, including the persecution of minorities³, that of 12 February 2015 on the humanitarian crisis in Iraq and Syria, in particular in the IS context⁴ and that of 12 March 2015 on recent attacks and abductions by ISIS/Da’esh in the Middle East, notably of Assyrians⁵,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on Kenya,

– having regard to the annual reports on the situation of human rights in the world, and in particular to its resolution of 12 March 2015 on the Annual report on Human Rights and Democracy in the world 2013 and the EU Policy on the matter⁶,

– having regard to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948,

– having regard to Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) of 1950,

– having regard to Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966,

– having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief of 1981,

– having regard to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities of 1981,

¹ OJ C 136E, 11.5.2012, p. 53.
² Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0422
³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2014)0027
⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0040
⁵ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0071
⁶ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0076

having regard to the report of the UN Secretary-General of 9 January 2014 on the work of the UN to help states and sub-regional and regional entities in Africa in fighting terrorism,

having regard to the annual reports and interim reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief,

having regard to the EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief,

having regard to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance,

having regard to the statement by the UN Security Council of 25 February 2015 condemning the abduction of more than 100 Assyrians by ISIL,

having regard to the statements by the Vice-President / High Representative on violence and persecution against Christians and other communities in the Middle East,

having regard to the statement of 3 April 2015 by the Vice-President / High Representative on the terrorist attacks in Garissa, Kenya,

having regard to the statement of 3 April 2015 by the President of the UN Security Council on the Al-Shabaab attack in Garissa, Kenya,

having regard to the Kenyan Prevention of Terrorism Act 2012,

– having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the number of attacks on religious minorities, and in particular Christians, around the world has risen tremendously in recent months; whereas Christians are being slaughtered, beaten and arrested every day, mostly in some parts of Arab world by jihadist terrorists;

B. whereas UN Resolution 1373 (2001) condemns the financing of terrorist acts and asks all states to refrain from providing any form of support, active or passive, to entities or persons involved in acts of terrorism, to outlaw recruitment by terrorist groups and to end all supplies of weapons to terrorists;

C. whereas according to international reports, such as that of 2014 entitled ‘Aid to the Church in Need - Religious Freedom in the World’, Christians are by far the most persecuted religious group; whereas extremism and persecution of this nature emerges as a significant factor in the growing phenomenon of mass migration;

D. whereas according to OSCE data the number of Christians killed every year is over 150 000;
E. whereas a thriving Iraqi Christian community of 1.5 million people, mostly Chaldean Catholics and Assyrians, which has existed since the 1st century AD, has been reduced to an estimated 450,000, and more than 70% of Iraqi Christians have been forced to flee the country;

F. whereas Syria’s Christian population has dropped from 30% in the 1920s to less than 10% in 2015, which is bringing them to the verge of extinction in their homeland;

G. whereas on 15 February 2015 ISIS/ Da`esh beheaded 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya;

H. whereas on 15 March 2015 14 people were killed in explosions at Catholic churches in Pakistan;

I. whereas on 19 April 2015 ISIS/Da`esh massacred 30 Ethiopian Christians, beheading them cruelly in Libya;

J. whereas because of their faith 12 Christians were thrown overboard by Muslim migrants during a recent crossing from Libya;

K. whereas on 2 April 2015 a terrorist attack, carried out by the Somali Islamist group Al-Shabaab on Garissa University College in north-eastern Kenya, resulted in a 15-hour siege ending with a toll of 148 people killed, most of them Christian students, and many others injured;

L. whereas in response to the Kenyan participation in the African Union mission in Somalia, Al-Shabaab’s attacks in Kenya have dramatically increased in the past two years, during which up to 600 people are estimated to have been killed on Kenyan soil, including 67 in the Westgate shopping mall attack in 2013;

M. whereas Kenyan fighters are estimated to constitute around 10 per cent of Al-Shabaab’s total forces;

N. whereas Al-Shabaab continuously conducts strikes and bombings, mainly in the North-Eastern province of Kenya, targeting police stations and humanitarian convoys, as well as churches and religious gatherings;

O. whereas the attackers in Garissa intentionally targeted non-Muslims and singled out Christians in order to brutally execute them; whereas Al-Shabaab has been openly and publicly claiming to wage a war against Christians in the region;

P. whereas Kenya is a country of great ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity; whereas in recent years divisions between religious communities have grown significantly and have been widely exploited by terrorist groups;

I. Condemns the recent attacks on Christian communities in various countries and expresses its solidarity with the families of the victims, notably with regard to the throwing overboard of 12 Christians during a recent crossing from Libya and the massacre of 30 Ethiopian Christians on 19 April 2015;
2. Recalls that freedom of religion and belief is significantly violated in 82 out of 196 countries (42%), with Christians being the most persecuted religious minority in the world;

3. Expresses its grave concern over the abuse of religion by the perpetrators of terrorist acts in several areas of the world; denounces the instrumentalisation of religion in various conflicts; condemns the increasing number of terrorist attacks on churches around the world, notably the attack that killed 14 people in Pakistan on 15 March 2015; strongly condemns the incarceration, disappearances, torture, enslavement and public execution of Christians in North Korea;

4. Expresses its deep concern at the proliferation of episodes of intolerance, repression and violence directed against Christians, particularly in some parts of the Arab world; 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 conditions of dignity, equality and safety; notes that for centuries members of different religious groups coexisted peacefully in the region;

5. Condemns the use of an ancient law or ‘dhimmi pact’ by ISIS/Da’esh in Syria and Iraq aimed to extort Christians by religious tax obligations and restrictions under the threat of death;

6. Supports the international efforts against ISIS/Da’esh, including the military actions of the international coalition to stop the spread of jihadists;

7. Calls on the Commission, the international community and organisations such as the UN to take a proactive and preventive approach towards any violations of freedom of religion and belief, which is enshrined as a fundamental right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

8. Stresses that international jihad terrorism is financed by illegal money-laundering, ransom, extortion, drug trafficking and corruption; calls on the Commission and the Member States to enhance cooperation with third countries on sharing intelligence related to money-laundering for financing terrorism and tougher legislation on freezing suspects’ assets;

9. Welcomes the establishment of a delegation of mediators and experts on intercultural and interreligious dialogue, which should be included in UN peacekeeping missions with the aim of stimulating negotiations and conflict mediation by UN envoys;

10. Urges the EU institutions to comply with their obligation under Article 17 TFEU to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with churches and with religious, philosophical and non-confessional organisations, in order to ensure that the persecution of Christian communities and other religious communities is considered an EU priority issue to be discussed on a systematic basis;

11. Condemns and rejects any misinterpretation of the message of Islam to create a violent, cruel, totalitarian, oppressive and expansive ideology legitimising the extermination of Christian minorities;
12. Strongly condemns the barbaric massacre that took place on the Garissa campus and targeted innocent Kenyan students and staff performing their duties; expresses its deepest condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims;

13. Denounces the targeting of educational institutions and premises for terrorist attacks, as a means of undermining the education and dignity of all citizens as well as causing mistrust and division between communities; recalls last year’s worldwide-condemned abduction and disappearance of Christian girls in the Nigerian town of Chibok by the jihadist terror group Boko Haram;

14. Encourages the Kenyan authorities to step up their efforts in the fight against terrorism, extremism and radicalisation; stresses Kenya’s key role for regional stability, and in this regard reiterates the EU’s support for the African Union Mission in Somalia;

15. Recalls that the implementation of political, economic, institutional and security reforms is critical for reconciliation and prevention of further conflict in Kenya; calls on the Kenyan government to further enhance democracy and stability and ensure good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights in the whole country;

16. Calls on the Kenyan government to promptly investigate and bring to justice all perpetrators of the unlawful killings;

17. Welcomes Kenya’s political and religious leaders’ call for national unity; calls on the government to take concrete measures in favour of interethnic and interreligious dialogue initiatives and activities and to promote the peaceful coexistence of all communities;

18. Recalls the government’s responsibility to ensure the protection of citizens and fight impunity; stresses the importance of protecting victims of terrorism, providing psychological support to victims and their family members, and safeguarding their freedom to practice their religion and beliefs;

19. Stresses the need for more humanitarian aid and international assistance to safeguard the lives of Christians and other religious minorities in conflict areas and refugee camps; in this regard, calls on the UN, together with the Kenyan authorities, to address the growing concerns about the security situation in the Dadaab refugee camp, which is currently home to 335 000 Somali refugees in Northern Kenya;

20. Reaffirms its solidarity with all Christians persecuted in different parts of Africa, with special regard to recent jihadist atrocities in Libya, Nigeria and Sudan;

21. Urges Muslim leaders to fully condemn all terrorist attacks, including those targeting religious communities and minorities and in particular Christians;

22. Reiterates its support for all initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue and mutual respect between religious and other communities; calls on all religious authorities to promote tolerance and to take initiatives against hatred and violent and extremist radicalisation;
23. Stresses once again that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a fundamental right;

24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of Kenya, the institutions of the African Union, the United Nations Secretary-General and the United Nations General Assembly.