



Plenary sitting

B8-0252/2017

4.4.2017

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 Bangladesh, including child marriages
(2017/2648(RSP))

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on behalf of the EFDD Group

**European Parliament resolution on Bangladesh, including child marriages
(2017/2648(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh,
- having regard to the Statements by the EEAS Spokesperson of 26 April 2016,
- having regard to the Article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,
- having regard to Article 23 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
- having regard to the Convention on the Rights of the Child,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. Whereas in February 2017, Bangladeshi Parliament adopted the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017, despite widespread concerns over a special provision allowing child marriage in “special cases”; whereas the President of Bangladesh signed the bill into law on 11 March 2017; whereas the act does not define what those “special cases” might be;
- B. whereas there are concrete fears that such a provision will legitimise statutory rape and encourage child marriage,
- C. whereas Bangladesh ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in August 1990, marking children’s rights to life, survival and development on the national agenda; whereas, despite this, outdated legislation, inadequate policies and poor services continue to jeopardize the rights of children,
- D. whereas there is no comprehensive national legislation governing the rights of children in Bangladesh; whereas there is no comprehensive public system to protect children from violence, abuse or exploitation; whereas many of the policies are not child friendly and are in conflict with the Convention on the Rights of the Child,
- E. whereas, according to the United Nations children’s agency, UNICEF, Bangladesh has the fourth-highest rate of child marriage in the world after Niger, the Central African Republic, and Chad,
- F. whereas the minimum legal age for marriage in Bangladesh is 18 for women and 21 for men; whereas the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017 includes a loophole where a

court can allow child marriage in “special cases” and the act does not explicitly define what those “special cases” might be,

- G. whereas child marriage is more prevalent in rural areas where 71% of girls are married before the age of 18, compared to 54% in urban areas,
 - H. whereas Bangladesh is a member of the South Asian Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC), which adopted a regional action plan to end child marriage,
 - I. whereas although illegal, the practise of dowry encourages the marriage of the youngest adolescent girls because younger brides typically require smaller dowries; whereas dowry demands could continue after the wedding and sometimes result in violence against the bride when families are unable to pay,
 - J. whereas early marriage causes girls to drop out of education and limits their opportunities for social integration; whereas only 45 per cent of adolescent girls are enrolled in secondary school and even fewer attend regularly,
 - K. whereas marriage is also seen as a deterrent to the sexual harassment common in urban Bangladesh; whereas rape conviction rates continued to be extremely low, mainly because investigations were not timely or effective; whereas many women and girls were reluctant to report rape to the authorities, for fear of being stigmatized and subjected to police harassment,
 - L. whereas floods, droughts and natural disasters have forced thousands of farmers in rural Bangladesh out of work by destroying their crops, livestock and homes; whereas between 50,000 and 200,000 people have been forced to migrate to Dhaka where the costs of living are much higher; whereas these higher costs are forcing many families to marry off their young daughters and sons,
 - M. whereas the government and local employers retaliate against union organizers and workers trying to organize; whereas workers are unable to bargain collectively with employers and use formal channels for addressing grievances,
 - N. whereas garment workers and labour leaders are facing unfair or apparently fabricated criminal cases in Bangladesh after wage strikes in December 2016,
 - O. whereas the right to freedom of expression was further restricted as the government applied repressive laws and pressed criminal charges against critics,
 - P. whereas in the last two years several people has been sentenced to death and several were executed;
1. Strongly condemns every form of forced marriage and compulsion, which are imposed on girls and children all over the world, as grave violations of human rights;
 2. Stresses furthermore that child marriage around the world is associated with many harmful consequences, including health dangers associated with early pregnancy,

lower educational achievement for girls who marry earlier, a higher incidence of spousal violence, and an increased likelihood of poverty;

3. Calls on Bangladeshi authorities to help adolescent girls to ensure access to information and services on reproductive health and sexuality;
4. Calls on Bangladeshi authorities to systematically involve communities and civil society, including non-governmental and children's organizations, in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all State-supported policies, plans and programmes relating to children's rights;
5. Calls on Bangladeshi authorities to refrain from taking any further legislative measure likely to reduce the age of 18 as the minimum age of marriage; calls as well on Bangladeshi authorities to effectively prosecute as violators people who authorize the marriage of persons below 18 and those who forge official documents to raise the age of the child;
6. Calls on Bangladeshi authorities to adopt a comprehensive strategy to eliminate any *de facto* discrimination against all groups of children in marginalized and disadvantaged situations and ensure the implementation of all legal provisions in full compliance with article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
7. Calls on Bangladeshi authorities to expedite the process of adoption of child-related laws and the adoption of the Education Act; recommends also that sufficient human, technical and financial resources are allocated for the full dissemination of child-related laws and develop institutional capacity for their effective implementation;
8. Calls on Bangladeshi authorities to establish an independent body or commissioner for child rights and to supports connected multisectoral training for judges, magistrates, police officers, probation officers, lawyers, social workers and staff in institutions;
9. Calls on Bangladeshi authorities to establish a programme devoted to raising awareness on children marriage, among pupils of primary and secondary schools of the whole Country;
10. Calls on Bangladeshi authorities to substantially increase budget allocations to all social sectors, in particular education, health and child protection, including resources earmarked for children in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations who may require affirmative social measures;
11. Recalls that corruption could affect the efforts to fight against abuses in any sector and calls for taking all measures necessary to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen institutional capacities to effectively detect, investigate and prosecute corruption;
12. Urges the government to refrain from harassing international NGO's in the country which include Amnesty International and Transparency International; calls on the authorities to systematically involve communities and civil society, including non-governmental and children's organizations, in planning, implementing, monitoring

and evaluating all State-supported policies, plans and programmes relating to children's rights;

13. Asks the government to prohibit and criminalize the involvement of children in prostitution and all forms of their exploitation and to urgently take effective measures to prevent it, to monitor the implementation of such measures and provide victims with rehabilitation and care;
14. Notes with concern how existing voluntary initiatives for garment sector's global supply chain sustainability have fallen short to effectively address human rights and labour rights related issues in the garment sector; Calls, therefore, on the Commission to present a legislative proposal on binding due diligence obligations for supply chains throughout the garment sector;
15. Calls on EU Member States, the EU High Representative, European External Action Service, the European Commission to immediately raise the above concerns and recommendations with Bangladeshi authorities, in line with the EU's Strategic Framework on human rights and Democracy; asks the Commission to take into account the respect for women's rights and children's rights in all commercial and partnership agreements with Bangladesh;
16. Strongly calls for an end to all harassment of labour leaders, workers, and journalists;
17. Reaffirms its absolute opposition to the death penalty and reiterates its call for the abolition of the death penalty;
18. 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, and the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Bangladesh.