



Plenary sitting

B8-0257/2017

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))

Charles Tannock, Karol Karski, Arne Gericke, Jana Žitňanská, Tomasz Piotr Poręba, Ryszard Antoni Legutko, Ryszard Czarnecki, Monica Macovei, Anna Elżbieta Fotyga, Geoffrey Van Orden, Raffaele Fitto, Angel Dzhambazki, Valdemar Tomaševski, Notis Marias, Branislav Škripek, Ruža Tomašić, Urszula Krupa
on behalf of the ECR Group

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

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh,
 - having regard to the EC-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement of 2001,
 - having regard to the press release of the EU-Bangladesh Sub-group on Good Governance and Human Rights of 20 December 2016 ,
 - having regard to the Joint Statement EU-Bangladesh Diplomatic Consultations by the EEAS of 15 February 2017,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Bangladesh is a party,
 - having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,
 - having regard to the UN Human Right Committee Concluding observations on the initial report of Bangladesh of 22 March 2017,
 - having regard to the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages,
 - having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. Whereas the EU has good, long-standing relations with Bangladesh, including through the Cooperation Agreement on partnership and development;
- B. whereas attacks on places of worship of religious minorities, extortion, intimidation, harassment of, and land grabbing from, religious minorities frequently occur;
- C. whereas four Christians are known to have been murdered in 2016 amidst a string of killings of religious minorities, secularists and political activists by Islamist militants – some with links to the so-called Islamic State; whereas converts to Christianity from Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism come under pressure from their families and communities to re-convert and some experience unemployment, divorce, threats and even violence when their Christian faith becomes known;
- D. whereas Bangladesh continues to have one of the highest child marriage rates worldwide and the highest rate of marriage involving girls under 15; whereas 52% of girls are married by their 18th birthday, and 18% by the age of 15;

- E. whereas the government has begun developing a National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Marriage 2015-2021; whereas progress on adopting and implementing the plan has stalled;
- F. whereas in February 2017 the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017 was passed by the Bangladesh Parliament and signed by the President on 11 March 2017; whereas the bill introduces stricter punishments for those who marry children but contains a provision to allow marriages for girls under 18 in “special cases” or for “the greater good of the adolescent”, not defining what types of “special cases” make child marriage acceptable;
- G. whereas according to the UN Human Rights Committee the Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) may not have a broad enough mandate to investigate all alleged human rights violations, including those involving state actors such as the police, military and security forces and lacks sufficient financial and human resources;
- H. whereas the detention conditions in prisons are poor, particularly with respect to overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and extortion of inmates and their relatives by prison guards to enjoy basic rights; whereas a high number of deaths in prison were recorded over the past years;

- 1. Welcomes that both the EU and Bangladesh consider human rights to be a cornerstone of their bilateral relations, as recognised by the Cooperation Agreement;
- 2. Is concerned at limitations on the rights of journalists, bloggers, human rights defenders and civil society organizations; believes that it is the state’s duty to ensure that journalists, civil society actors and human rights defenders are able to exercise their right to freedom of expression safely;
- 3. Asks the Bangladesh Government to protect international NGOs in the country in order for them to undertake their missions and to ensure that all human rights and civil society groups are able to work in a climate free of fear and repression;
- 4. Supports the Government of Bangladesh in its efforts to defend a pluralist state against murderous attempts by Islamist, jihadist groups to undermine these principles; calls on all political parties and their leaders to unequivocally and unreservedly condemn the extremist violence and to support the right to freedom of expression;
- 5. Is very concerned at recurring cases of ethnic and religiously motivated violence; urges the Bangladesh government to work towards bringing to justice the perpetrators of this kind of violence; furthermore urges the Bangladesh government to protect the safety and security of persons belonging to minority religious groups and ensure their ability to fully enjoy their freedom of religion and to worship without fear of attack;
- 6. Calls on the government to effectively criminalize enforced disappearance and ensure that independent investigations are carried out with respect to disappearances of

- members of opposition parties; calls in this respect on the government to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance;
7. Expresses its concern at the high rate of child marriages in Bangladesh; welcomes the stricter punishments in the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017 for those who marry children, but is worried at the provision to allow marriages for girls under 18 in “special cases”; calls on the government to specify this provision and to ensure that the provision permitting child marriage will be used rarely and carefully;
 8. Urges the government to work with civil society organisations to tackle the root causes of child marriage in Bangladesh and to ensure that girls have access to healthcare, as well as quality education and support from their families and communities; stresses the importance of child protection systems to strengthen response mechanisms to gender-based violence and violence against children;
 9. Stresses the importance of broadening the mandate of the National Human Rights Commission and allow it to investigate all alleged human rights violations, including those committed by military and security actors and to provide the NHRC with sufficient financial and human resources to allow it to impartially and independently fulfil its mandate;
 10. Asks the government to continue to strengthen its efforts to improve conditions of detention by taking practical measures to reduce overcrowding and to also increase efforts to guarantee the right of detainees to be treated with humanity and dignity;
 11. Calls on the authorities to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Bangladesh;
 12. Calls on the European External Action Service, the EU Delegation to Bangladesh and the Member States’ delegations to monitor closely the human rights and political situation in Bangladesh and to use all available instruments;
 13. Calls for the EU, in line with its Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy, to raise immediately the above concerns and recommendations with the Bangladeshi authorities;
 14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the European External Action Service, the Member States, the Government and Parliament of Bangladesh.