



Plenary sitting

B8-0264/2017

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 PPE Group

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

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh, in particular those of 21 November 2013, 14 March 2013, 16 January 2014 and 18 September 2014 and 26 November 2015,
- having regard to the Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and the People's Republic of Bangladesh on Partnership and Development,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Bangladesh in 2000,
- having regard to the 1995 Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) on the Fourth World Conference on Women, signed by Bangladesh and periodically reviewed the progress of its implementation in 2000, 2005, 2009 and 2014,
- having regard to the United Nations Millennium Declaration 2000 endorsed by Bangladesh,
- having regard to the statements of the Heads of Mission of the European Union in Bangladesh from 13 October 2016 on the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Bill 2016 ;
- having regard to the UN Human Rights Committee concluding observations on Bangladesh from 28 March 2017,
- 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 Bangladesh has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as well as a regional plan of action to address child marriage;
- C. whereas Bangladesh has the highest rate of child marriage in Asia;
- D. whereas in Bangladesh 52 % of girls are married by their 18th birthday, and 18% by the age of 15;
- E. whereas in July 2014 the prime minister Sheikh Hasina pledged at the London Girl Summit to end child marriage under the age of 15 by 2021, and to end child marriage completely by 2041;

- F. whereas on February 27, 2017 the Bangladesh parliament approved a law that permits marriage of girls under age of 18 in “special cases”;
 - G. whereas new law defines no minimum age of marriage, and does not define ‘special cases’ or the ‘greater good’, leaving the exception open to potential abuse;
 - H. whereas since 2013 Bangladesh has seen an increasing wave of targeted attacks on human rights defenders, secular or atheists writers, bloggers and members of religious minority groups;
 - I. whereas in 2016 at least 35 journalist, secular bloggers and human rights defenders where arrest under the Information and Communications Technology Act of 2006 which criminalises defamatory and ‘anti-state’ publications;
 - J. whereas Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Bill adopted by the Bangladeshi parliament on 5 October 2016 restrict the ability of foreign non-governmental organisations to operate in Bangladesh and limit their freedom of expression;
 - K. whereas in the past months Bangladesh has seen increasing number of enforced disappearances in the country;
 - L. whereas on 3 February 2017, journalist and human rights defender Abdul Hakim Shimul was killed while reporting on a clash between two regional factions of the local Awami League in Shashzadpur;
1. Calls on the Bangladeshi authorities to take immediate measures to sharply reduce child marriage;
 2. Urges the Bangladeshi Government to amend the Child Marriage Restraint Bill and maintain the legal minimum age of 18 for marriage for girls without any exceptions in accordance with international norms;
 3. Urges the Bangladeshi authorities to work with civil society organisations, development partners, local communities and local authorities in order to tackle the root causes of child marriage;
 4. Urges the Bangladeshi authorities to further condemn the continuing horrendous acts against freedom of expression and to act to bring an immediate end to all acts of violence, harassment, intimidation and censorship against journalists, bloggers and civil society;
 5. Calls on the Bangladeshi Government to act urgently to uphold its obligations under international law to ensure that its people can exercise and defend their legitimate human rights activities including the freedom of expression through ensuring the full independence and impartiality of the court system and appropriately amending the ICT Act as well as the Cyber-Security Act of 2015 in order to bring it in line with international free speech standards;
 6. Calls on the Bangladeshi authorities to amend the Foreign Donations (Voluntary

Activities) Regulation Bill and ensure that any legal provisions would not prevent the smooth and timely implementations of development project nor will limit the non-governmental organisations from operating freely while exercising their full freedom of expression.

7. Urges the Bangladeshi authorities to ensure that investigations into the arbitrary killings, enforced disappearances and excessive use of force shall be comprehensive and impartial with the view to bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards.
8. Calls the EU to use all available instruments to support the Government of the Bangladesh in respecting its international human rights obligations, notably through the Cooperation Agreement. Calls on the European External Action Service to monitor closely the human rights and political situation in Bangladesh;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to Vice-President of the European 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 Member States, the UN Secretary-General, the UN Human Rights Council and the Government and Parliament of Bangladesh.