MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Question for Oral Answer B8-0219/2017

pursuant to Rule 128(5) of the Rules of Procedure

on implementation of the Council’s LGBTI Guidelines, particularly in relation to the persecution of (perceived) homosexual men in Chechnya (2017/2688(RSP))

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on behalf of the ECR Group
European Parliament resolution on implementation of the Council’s LGBTI Guidelines, particularly in relation to the persecution of (perceived) homosexual men in Chechnya (2017/2688(RSP))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on Russia and on the situation in Chechnya,

– having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,

– having regard to the Guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons, adopted by the Council on 24 June 2013,

– having regard to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,

– having regard to United Nations Human Rights Council resolution 32/2 of 30 June 2016 on the protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity,

– having regard to the European Union Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy,

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

– having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights,

– having regard to the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights, and in particular Article 21 thereof,

– having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 19 thereof,

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

– having regard to the statement of 6 April 2017 by the European External Action Service on human rights abuses of gay men in Chechnya,

– having regard to the Council conclusions on LGBTI equality of 16 June 2016,

– having regard to its resolution of 4 February 2014 on the EU Roadmap against homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity¹,

– having regard to the joint press conference between Vice-President of the

¹ OJ 93, 24.3.2017, p. 21.
Commission/High Representative (VP/HR) of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Moscow on 24 April 2017,

– having regard to the question to the Commission (VP/HR) on implementation of the Council’s LGBTI Guidelines, particularly in relation to the persecution of (perceived) homosexual men in Chechnya (O-000039/2017 – B8-0219/2017),

– having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas Chechnya is a semi-autonomous republic within the Russian Federation; whereas homophobia is widespread in the mainly Muslim region;

B. whereas the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in Russia have long been a cause for international concern, with LGBTI people facing hostility, discrimination, violence, imprisonment and death;

C. whereas while homosexuality was decriminalised in Russia 20 years ago, homophobic and transphobic violence, discrimination, and persecution have significantly increased in recent years, including via legislation and other restrictions on the rights of people due to their sexuality or gender identity;

D. whereas the Chechen legal code imposes the death penalty, albeit officially suspended, for sexual relations between men;

E. whereas since March 2017 a violent crackdown by the Chechen authorities has led to the abduction and detention of at least 100 gay and bisexual men, including some who were perceived to be gay;

F. whereas the crackdown began when a Moscow-based gay rights group began filing requests for demonstrations in Russia’s provincial cities; whereas while none of those demonstrations were planned for Chechnya, authorities used it as a pretext to round up local gay men and those perceived to be gay;

G. whereas those detained in up to six separate camps have been beaten and tortured, with at least three men killed; whereas precise numbers for those detained and/or killed are difficult to obtain and verify and the numbers of those detained or killed are likely to be higher;

H. whereas many of those detained have been held in secret camps having undergone forced disappearances; whereas others were returned to their families with severe injuries following torture and humiliation;

I. whereas some of those abducted were subsequently ‘outed’ by the authorities to their relatives who were then encouraged to carry out ‘honour killings’; whereas some of them were also tortured to reveal the names of other gay men they knew;

J. whereas journalists working for the Novaya Gazeta newspaper, which exposed the crackdown, have reportedly received death threats over their work;

K. whereas the Chechen authorities have denied all the allegations and demanded that
journalists name the interviewed victims;

L. whereas a spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin initially backed the Chechen Government’s denials that men suspected of being gay are being detained, tortured and killed;

M. whereas on 5 May 2017 President Putin backed an inquiry into the allegations;

N. whereas dozens of gay men have reportedly fled Chechnya due to the ongoing campaign of persecution by the security forces;

O. whereas police in St Petersburg and Moscow detained LGBTI activists attempting to raise awareness of, and demanding an investigation into, the persecution of gay men in Chechnya;

P. whereas the United Nations Human Rights Council, the European Union, EU Member States, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and others, have all condemned the persecution and violence against gay men in Chechnya as constituting serious violations of Russia’s obligations under international law; whereas the issue has led to numerous protests outside Russian embassies around the world;

Q. whereas discrimination, violence, torture, and imprisonment of an individual on the basis of their sexuality or gender identity are unacceptable violations of human dignity and incompatible with the founding values of the European Union;

R. whereas in June 2013 Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a new federal law entitled ‘For the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values’, which has been widely condemned as the ‘anti-gay law’; whereas the law has been criticised for leading to an increase in homophobic violence;

1. Condemns all forms of discrimination and violence, including against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity;

2. Restates its belief that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, without distinction of any kind;

3. Condemns the recent detention, torture, and murder of men in Chechnya on the basis of their sexuality, or perceived sexuality, as hate crimes, and demands that all those being held are released immediately without charge;

4. Condemns the threat made by Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov to ‘eliminate’ the LGBTI community in the region ‘by the start of Ramadan’ and his failure to prevent the persecution of gay men by authorities under his control;

5. Reminds the Russian Government that, while respecting national jurisdiction and customs, it has a responsibility to safeguard the rights of all its citizens and to ensure that all people are protected from all forms of discrimination and violence;

6. Notes that President Putin has pledged to ask the Russian prosecutor general and
Interior Minister to look into the allegations, and insists that any such investigation is thorough, independent, credible, and carried out as a matter of urgency;

7. Insists that anyone involved in the enforced disappearance, detention without charge, torture, and murder of gay men in Chechnya, is held accountable for their crimes and receives the appropriate punishment according to law;

8. Reminds the Russian and Chechen authorities of their responsibilities under regional, national, and international law; further reminds the Russian Government of the international conventions on equality and combating discrimination to which it is party;

9. Calls for the immediate release without charge of those activists arrested in St Petersburg and Moscow for seeking to raise awareness of, and demanding an investigation into, the persecution of gay men in Chechnya;

10. Deeply regrets that the Russian Federation voted against the June 2016 resolution in the UN Human Rights Council on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity;

11. Believes relations between the EU, its Member States, and the Russian Federation can only improve if the latter reverses its illegal annexation of Crimea, ends its aggressive actions in Eastern Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and elsewhere in the region, and takes urgent action to protect its own citizens in full respect of human rights principles and international conventions;

12. Reminds the Russian and Chechen authorities that regional, cultural, and religious value systems should not be used as an excuse to condone or engage in the discrimination, violence, torture, and/or detention of individuals or groups, including on the grounds of sexuality or gender identity;

13. Expresses concern that impunity continues to be a significant factor in the violation of human rights, including in Russia, through enforced disappearance, detention without charge, discrimination, torture, and killing;

14. Expresses concern at the rise in homophobic and transphobic discrimination and violence in Russia, including via the enactment of recent legislation;

15. Encourages international cooperation to raise awareness of violence and discrimination against people based on their sexuality or gender identity, and in order to address the causes of such actions, as well to offer as protection for those suffering such abuse;

16. Condemns reports of intimidation and death threats made against those human rights defenders, journalists, and others seeking to expose cases of discrimination and violence against LGBTI people in the Russian Federation, including in Chechnya, and offers its support in continuing to carry out such work, as well as in providing help to victims;

17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the EEAS, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the President of the Russian Federation, Members of the Russian Duma, and the
President and Government of the Chechen Republic.