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*Plenary sitting*

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**B8-0467/2017**

4.7.2017

## **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 Eritrea, notably the cases of Abune Antonios and Dawit Isaak  
(2017/2755(RSP))

**Catherine Bearder, Nedzhmi Ali, Petras Auštrevičius, Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Dita Charanzová, Gérard Deprez, Martina Dlabajová, Fredrick Federley, Nathalie Griesbeck, Marian Harkin, Ivan Jakovčić, Petr Ježek, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Louis Michel, Urmas Paet, Maite Pagazaurtundúa Ruiz, Jozo Radoš, Marietje Schaake, Hannu Takkula, Pavel Telička, Ramon Tremosa i Balcells, Ivo Vajgl, Johannes Cornelis van Baalen, Hilde Vautmans, Cecilia Wikström, Filiz Hyusmenova, Valentinas Mazuronis**  
on behalf of the ALDE Group

**B8-0467/2017**

**European Parliament resolution on Eritrea, notably the cases of Abune Antonios and Dawit Isaak (2017/2755(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Eritrea, in particular those of 7 February 2002 , 18 November 2004, 15 September 2011 and 10 March 2016 on the human rights situation in the country,
  - having regard to UN Security Council resolution 2244 of 23 October 2015, which extended the arms embargo on Eritrea until 15 November 2016, and to the report of 19 October 2015 of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea,
  - having regard to the report submitted to the Human Rights Council on 19 June 2015 by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, Sheila B. Keetharuth,
  - having regard to the Cotonou Agreement, as revised in 2005 and 2010,
  - having regard to the declarations of 23 November 2011 and 25 June 2013 by the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly on the situation of human rights in Eritrea,
  - having regard to the debate in Parliament of 27 May 2015 on EU development aid to Eritrea in the light of documented human rights abuses,
  - having regard to the Constitution of Eritrea adopted in 1997, which guarantees civil liberties, including freedom of religion,
  - having regard to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights of 1981,
  - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
  - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
  - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. Whereas the EU has been supporting Eritrea since its independence from Ethiopia in 1993; whereas the initial promise of democracy and the rule of law following the country’s independence has been inhibited by the Government of Eritrea on the pretext of national defence and national service; whereas presidential elections planned for 1997 never took place, and whereas the constitution ratified in the same year providing for the existence of multi-party politics, has never been fully implemented;

- B. Whereas Eritrea is still one of the world's most secretive States and occupies a strategic area in the Horn of Africa, tensions with Ethiopia remain high and repression has been used by the Government of Eritrea to clamp down on society and hinder the development of democracy;
- C. Whereas according to a new report by the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea on 15th June 2016, reports Crimes against humanity have been committed in a widespread and systematic manner in Eritrean detention facilities, military training camps and other locations across the country over the past 25 years,
- D. whereas the report also describes crimes of enslavement, imprisonment, enforced disappearances, torture, persecution, rape, murder and other inhumane acts have been committed as part of a campaign to instil fear in, deter opposition from and ultimately to control the Eritrean civilian population;
- E. Whereas the former patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Eritrea lives under house arrest since 27th May 2007, Abune Antonios (89 years old) was deposed of its authority in 2006 by the Eritrean authorities for having criticized the regime; whereas Abune Antonios had opposed the closure of the church Medhanie Alem in Asmara and the communion of 3.000 people, as well as the arrest of three priests in November 2004;
- F. Whereas recent reports alleged that the patriarch was transported to a healthcare facility in Edaga Hamus area of Asmara in May 2017 on the pretext of receiving a medical examination, and was allegedly injected with a substance that caused him to fall gravely ill, his deterioration was reported to be very severe that the Eritrean Orthodox Church Diocese of North America, Europe and Middle East issued a call to prayer;
- G. Whereas the Eritrean authorities refuse to release news about Dawit Isaak imprisoned Eritrean-Swedish journalist who was arrested in a crackdown on the media in September 2001; has spent nearly 16 years in jail, without charge or trial;
- H. Whereas Dawit Isaak has been chosen to receive the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize 2017 dedicated to promoting press freedom in recognition of his courage, resistance and commitment to freedom of expression;
- I. Whereas international organisations have not been granted access to prison facilities, except for one overground prison in Asmara; whereas the other (more than 200) prison facilities across the country remain inaccessible, and reportedly prisoners, including women and children, are tortured, kept incommunicado, and held in dark underground locations or shipping containers in extremely inhumane conditions for long periods of time, having being detained following arbitrary arrests and with no access to any kind of independent court or fair trial;
- J. Whereas the EU remains an important partner for Eritrea in terms of development aid and assistance despite the absence of cooperation of the authorities; whereas EU development funding has the overall objective of directly benefiting the population with tangible results;

- K. Whereas despite the gross and systematic violations by Eritrea of the essential and fundamental elements of the Cotonou Agreement regarding human rights, the EU has never initiated Article 96 consultations, despite calls to do so;
- L. Whereas Eritrea is one of the top refugee-producing countries in the world, whereas the country has since 2011 been hit by severe droughts and times of famine, whereas in 2015, 47,025 Eritreans applied for asylum in Europe, many making the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean in unsafe boats, exploited by smugglers in search of safety; whereas more than 21 000 refugees cross the Mediterranean in 2016;
1. Recalls Eritrea's obligations under the Cotonou Agreement to respect human rights, democratic values and the rule of law; urges the authorities to comply with its international obligations,
  2. Strongly condemns Eritrea's ongoing violations of these principles, including torture, extrajudicial killings, incommunicado detentions without trial or charges, a shoot-to-kill policy at its borders, and a slavery-like system of conscription;
  3. Reiterates its call to the Eritrean authorities to release immediately and unconditionally parliamentarians, journalists, including Swedish citizen Dawit Isaak, who has not been heard from since 2005, clerics, including Abune Antonios, and all political prisoners;
  4. Recalls that freedom of religion is a fundamental right, and strongly condemns any violence or discrimination on grounds of religion;
  5. Calls on the Eritrean authorities to show good faith by providing proof of life for Dawit Isaak and the 20 men arrested with him, 9 journalists and 11 politicians, all former members of the Central Council of the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) including former Foreign Minister Petros Solomon; recalls that until now the Eritrean authorities have refused to disclose their whereabouts or their health status to their families.
  6. Urges Eritrea to show transparency and good governance in respect of public finances; calls on the EU Delegation to monitor closely the humanitarian and political situation in the country in order to make sure that the continuation of EU development cooperation is dependent on substantial progress being achieved in the areas of human rights and democratisation, in particular freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of assembly; emphasises that a lack of broad-based economic development encourages emigration;
  7. Strongly condemns all the violence perpetrated, the breaches of human rights, arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions, in particular the instrumentalisation of the judicial system and the violence and intimidation faced by human rights defenders, political opponents and journalists; the violations of freedom of the press and freedom of expression;

8. Encourages the African Union to play a key role in the Eritrean accountability agenda bearing mind the importance of the stability on the region of the Horn of Africa; given that the African Union is the most important regional actor, according to article 4(h) of its Constitutive Act it has a duty to avert catastrophic political situations, including those involving crimes against humanity;
9. Calls on the Council to ensure that the allocated funding does not solely benefit the Eritrean Government but to comply with the conditionality of aid and therefore strictly assigned to meeting the needs of the Eritrean people, including its minorities, and for the purpose of development, democracy, human rights, good governance and security;
10. Calls on the Council to reassess the relationship between the EU and Eritrea as well as its development aid assistance to the country in response to the country's poor human rights record, and to publish the tangible outcomes resulting from aid programmes over the last years; calls on the UE and Members States to make to use of all available measures especially through the Cotonou agreement to make Eritrean authorities comply with their international commitments;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of the African Union, the Secretary General of the United Nations, and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.