



Plenary sitting

B8-0634/2017

14.11.2017

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 Freedom of expression in Sudan, notably the case of Mohamed Zine El Abidine
(2017/2961(RSP))

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on behalf of the ECR Group

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European Parliament resolution on Freedom of expression in Sudan, notably the case of Mohamed Zine El Abidine (2017/2961(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Sudan, including that of 6 October 2016;
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948;
- having regard to the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights of 1966;
- having regard to the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index 2017;
- having regard to the Universal Periodic review on Sudan of 2016;
- having regard to the Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan of 2016;
- having regard to the Cotonou Agreement and its subsequent revision;
- having regard to The Interim National Constitution of the Republic of Sudan;
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure;

A. whereas journalist Mohamed Zine El Abidine received a three-year suspended sentence in October 2017 for “violating the journalism code of ethics’ and threatening public order for an article in the privately owned daily *al-Tayar* that accused the family of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir of corruption;

B. whereas his editor Osman Mirgani was jailed for six months for the same offence;

C. whereas Sudan was ranked 174th out of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index 2017;

D. whereas according to The Freedom House report 2017, Sudan is considered to be a state where the press and internet is "not free”;

E. whereas in December 2015 the President of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, openly criticised his government’s inability to ‘control the media’ and warned that he personally would take ‘decisive measures’;

F. whereas Sudan’s National Intelligence and Security Service has repeatedly been accused of hounding journalists, censoring the media, closing down newspapers, and confiscating entire editions as they come off the press;

G. whereas in May 2016 five separate editions of the independent daily newspaper Al-Jarida were confiscated by National Intelligence and Security Service officers without explanation;

H. whereas Sudanese authorities use their powers to block the spread of information about corruption, university protests, the national dialogue, negotiations in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa aimed at ending conflict between Sudanese forces, the conflict in South Sudan, a nationwide doctors' strike, the weak economy and declining value of the Sudanese currency, power outages, an outbreak of cholera, the security services, and government action in conflict areas;

I. whereas the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights has accused the Sudanese government of creating an "oppressive atmosphere" in which wide-ranging powers granted to the authorities are undermining media freedoms and threatening individual journalists;

J. whereas the Republic of Sudan is bound by the human rights clause of the Cotonou Agreement and by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

K. whereas the Interim National Constitution of the Republic of Sudan, adopted on 6 July 2005 provides for freedom of thought, expression, and of the press;

L. whereas the 2009 Press and Publications Act allows for restrictions on the press in the interests of national security and public order, and contains loosely defined provisions relating to bans on the encouragement of ethnic and religious disturbances and the incitement of violence; whereas several other laws have been used against the press and media in Sudan, thereby limiting media freedoms and freedom of expression;

M. whereas the Sudanese Parliament adopted a Freedom of Information Law in January 2015 which journalists and other critics argue centralises executive control over public information;

N. whereas according to the Committee to Protect Journalists Prison Census, some 259 journalists were jailed worldwide in 2016, a significant rise on the previous year;

O. whereas the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Omar Hassan Ahmad Al Bashir on 4 March 2009 and on 12 July 2010;

P. whereas according to Reporters Without Borders, so far in 2017 some 48 journalists, five citizen journalists, and eight media assistants have been killed around the world;

1. Calls on the Government of Sudan and the Sudanese authorities to protect the rights and safety of journalists, and the right to freedom of the media and of expression;

2. Calls on the Sudanese authorities to end its arbitrary confiscation of newspapers, harassment and imprisonment of journalists, and forced closure of media outlets, and reasserts its belief that the media has an essential role in informing the public;

3. Encourages the Government of Sudan to reform the country's legal system, in accordance with international human rights standards, in order to protect fundamental human rights including freedom of expression;

4. Supports the independence of the media both on and offline in exposing corrupt and/or illegal activities and insists that journalists, bloggers, and other media are able to conduct their work without the fear or intimidation, prosecution, imprisonment, violence, or death;
5. Promotes the values of an open and secure internet and a free, independent media, in raising awareness of corrupt practices by individuals, organisations and governments, and expresses concern that those seeking to restrict online and media freedoms do so in order to avoid accountability;
6. Encourages the increased transparency of government budgets, tax information, and procurement to deter tax evasion and expose the theft or misuse of public money; supports measures to make it easier for people to report corruption without fear of reprisal;
7. Strongly supports the #journalismisnotacrime campaign in order to protect media freedoms worldwide;
8. Strongly condemns the sentencing of Mohamed Zine EL Abidine and imprisonment of Osman Mirgani and demands that these convictions be reversed and all charges against them are immediately and unconditionally dropped;
9. Underlines that the national dialogue aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation will only succeed if carried out in an atmosphere in which the freedoms of expression are fully guaranteed;
10. Restates its demands that Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir complies with international law in accordance with the conventions and treaties to which it is party, and supports the role of the International Criminal Court in pursuing the charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide against him;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the EEAS, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the African Union, and the President and Government of the Republic of Sudan.