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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0244/2019**

17.12.2019

## **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 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on Afghanistan, notably the allegations of sexual abuse on boys in the Logar Province  
(2019/2981(RSP))

**Kati Piri, Robert Biedroń**  
on behalf of the S&D Group

**B9-0244/2019**

**European Parliament resolution on Afghanistan, notably the allegations of sexual abuse on boys in the Logar Province (2019/2981(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Afghanistan, notably that of 14 December 2017;
- having regard to its resolution on Children rights in occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 26 November 2019;
- having regard to the statements by the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), of which the European Union is a member, regarding allegations of sexual abuse of boys in Logar province and subsequent actions against human rights defenders of 3 December 2019;
- having regard to the Afghan Law on Protection of Child Rights, ratified on 5 March 2019;
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989;
- having regard to Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts of 8 June 1977, and in particular of Article 77(1) thereof;
- having regard to the UNICEF report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child at a crossroads of November 2019;
- having regard to the Reports of the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council on Conflict-related sexual violence of 23 March 2018 and of 29 March 2019;
- having regard to the EU-Afghanistan Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development signed on 18 February 2017;
- having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure.

- A. Whereas the sexual abuse, rape and exploitation of boys, a practice known as *bacha bazi* that constitutes child sex slavery, is prevalent in several provinces of Afghanistan; whereas in November 2019 child advocacy group the Logar Youth, Social and Civil Institutions in Afghanistan reported the abuse of 546 boys at six schools in Logar Province; whereas at least seven boys have been killed after over 100 videos documenting the abuse appeared on social media, of whom five were murdered by their families; whereas the recurring problem of *bacha bazi* in other areas of the country has been frequently documented by other advocacy groups, media and representatives of international organisations, including the UN;
- B. whereas the Logar Youth Social and Civil institution is investigating the situation in other schools in the region; whereas thousands more boys in the province are believed to be a victim of *bacha bazi*;
- C. whereas alleged perpetrators include school teachers, government officials, family members and other authority figures, who singled out students from impoverished families due to their particular vulnerability; whereas victims were subjected to blackmail to perform criminal activities to avoid footage of their abuse from being released;
- D. whereas several victims of child sexual abuse have alleged they were further abused and raped by police officers after reporting the original crimes; whereas impunity for sexual violence is common due to the power often held by the perpetrators, disbelief within their families and communities, and a value system that places family honour above the individual interest of the child;
- E. whereas in the capital of Logar province, Pul-i-Alam, demonstrations took place to protest the allegations; whereas the governor of Logar province, Mohammad Anwar Isaqzai, has rejected the allegations and threatened to punish the Logar Youth, Social and Civil Institution for ‘spreading false information’ and the spokesperson for the Ministry of Education, Nooria Nazhat, denounced the allegations as ‘inaccurate’;
- F. whereas children in Afghanistan who suffer rape and sexual exploitation have very limited access to justice or support; whereas on the contrary reports indicate children who report sexual abuse often face further abuse, stigma, ostracism and even death at the hands of the perpetrators, the authorities, militia leaders and their own families, resulting in further physical and psychological trauma;
- G. whereas Mohammad Musa Mahmudi and Ehsanullah Hamidi, members of the Logar Youth, Social and Civil Institution advocacy group supporting the victims were subsequently detained by the Afghan National Directorate of Security on 21 November 2019 while on their way to a meeting with the EU permanent representative and later handed over to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission; whereas a confession denouncing their research was extracted under coercion;

- H. whereas both activists were released on 27 November 2019 and provided protection from the Ministry of Interior at the express request of President Ashraf Ghani, who stated he “disagreed with the approach” of the NDS; whereas their safety remains fragile, they continue to receive threats and have been forced to change residence, and the situation for human rights defenders throughout the country is extremely volatile;
- I. whereas successive Afghan governments have failed to seriously and comprehensively address the issue of child sexual abuse; whereas Afghanistan explicitly outlawed *bacha bazi* and related offences in law in May 2017 and updated its penal code in 2018; whereas Chapter V of the revised Criminal Code stipulates a maximum of 7 years imprisonment for perpetrators abusing one boy, up to 15 years imprisonment for perpetrators that are members of the Afghanistan National Security Forces, and life imprisonment for those keeping multiple boys under the age of 12; whereas President Ashraf Ghani on 26 November 2019 instructed the Ministry of Education to conduct an investigation into the situation in Logar province; whereas prosecutions under the law have been rare and the practice remains widespread;
- J. whereas the conflict in Afghanistan has continued for 18 years since the Taliban were removed from power, whereas the incidence of *bacha bazi* has spiked since the start of the conflict in 2001; whereas half of the population of Afghanistan is under 15 years old; whereas in 2018 around 927 children were killed and 2135 injured in the Afghan conflict; whereas children have suffered bereavement, coercion, abuse, malnutrition, lack of access to education, and have been recruited throughout the country as child soldiers;
- K. whereas the EU has committed to implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals including SDG 16.2 to “end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children”;
- L. whereas in November 2019 the European Commission allocated an additional €40 million in emergency assistance in the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan; whereas this brings the total EU humanitarian assistance in relation to Afghanistan to €77 million in 2019;
1. Strongly condemns the widespread and ongoing sexual abuse and slavery of boys, known as *bacha bazi*, in Afghanistan; expresses its full support for and solidarity with the victims; expresses its serious concern regarding the prevalence of generational practices of sexual abuse against boys, the impunity of the perpetrators and the vulnerable position of the victims;
  2. Reiterates that the safety, security and welfare of children is paramount; recalls the national and international protections and commitments which Afghanistan has undertaken to protect and support children and young people, and calls for an

intensification of efforts to uphold these commitments; recalls furthermore that the best interests of the child should be the primary consideration in all decisions taken regarding children;

3. Urges the Afghan authorities to acknowledge the extent of the problem and cooperate fully with international organisations and civil society to document and address this serious issue; calls on the Afghan authorities to end the impunity of teachers, government officials, members of the Afghan National Security forces, and others engaged in the practice of *bacha bazi*;
4. Reiterates the need for a comprehensive and inclusive peace agreement between all fighting parties, including the Afghan government; believes a long-term peace agreement is a prerequisite for the full implementation of the rule of law, in particular Chapter V of the Criminal Code, and for the development of economic opportunities for young people;
5. Welcomes the call from President Ashraf Ghani and the Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission for the Afghan authorities to investigate the allegations in Logar province; recalls that given that allegations have also been levelled against individuals in the national authorities, the investigation should be conducted in cooperation with international bodies including the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and in full transparency;
6. Insists that any investigation must provide protection for the safety of the alleged victims, witnesses and advocacy groups, which includes adequate child protection standards, measures to protect the identity of victims and members of civil society, and restorative justice for those involved; underlines in particular the need for a safe, accessible and recognised reporting mechanism to be operational throughout the country;
7. Stresses the absolute necessity of providing medical and psychological support for children in conflict areas, including tailored services for victims of child sexual abuse; calls on the European Commission and EEAS to intensify support for rehabilitation and reintegration programmes in conjunction with the UN, Afghan authorities, local groups, religious leaders and civil society organisations;
8. Expresses serious concern at the treatment of human rights and children's rights defenders in Afghanistan; calls for the immediate release of those detained and insists the authorities take all measures to prevent intimidation, arrest, torture and ill-treatment of individuals and organisations protecting the safety and security of children;
9. Calls on the European Commission and EEAS to robustly address the global shrinking space for civil society, including stepping-up guidance to governments, political parties, parliaments and administrations to support the development of an appropriate legal,

administrative and political environment to enable the efficient work of civil society organisations;

10. Urges the Afghan government to intensify education, awareness and prevention strategies and work with local communities to address widespread generational practices of abuse and sexual slavery throughout the country; calls on the Afghan authorities, local groups and religious leaders to reach a common position on the need to combat this problem through education development within society; stresses that only with a mix of law enforcement and education development on the issue will it be possible to achieve the cultural change necessary in Afghan society to end this practice; insists that these efforts prioritise the de-stigmatisation of the victims of *bacha bazi* practices and prevent their ostracism by their communities, expulsion from their families, and killing;
11. Urges the Afghan Government to immediately and fully implement the Law on Protection of Child Rights, including developing action plans and allocating appropriate budget provisions; calls on donor governments to work with the Afghan authorities to provide support and technical assistance for its implementation;
12. Expresses concern at reports indicating the United States military has taken little action to address evidence of prevalent sexual abuse against boys by the Afghan security forces it is training; calls on Member State national governments to increase training to military personnel on procedures for responding to and reporting suspected cases of abuse both within its own ranks and when training third country armed forces;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and the Government and Parliament of Afghanistan.