



Plenary sitting

B9-0264/2019

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 violations of human rights including religious freedom in Burkina Faso (2019/2980(RSP))

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European Parliament resolution on violations of human rights including religious freedom in Burkina Faso (2019/2980(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the African Charter on Human Rights,
- having regard to the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement (‘Cotonou Agreement’)
- having regard to Articles 2, 3(5), 21, 24, 29 and 31 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 10 and 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which commit the EU and its Member States, in their relations with the wider world, to upholding and promoting universal human rights and the protection of individuals, and adopting restrictive measures in case of grave human rights breaches,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief of 2013;
- having regard to the report of 21 November 19 of the Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief outside the European Union;
- having regard to the international legal protection of freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief guaranteed by Article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 18 of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief, Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Articles 10, 21 and 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the United Nations Human Rights Council’s Comment No 22 of 30 July 1993 on Article 18 of the 1948 UDHR and to its Resolution 16/18 of 12 April 2011 on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatisation of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief,
- having regard to the Treaty on European Union (TEU), in particular Articles 2 and 21 thereof,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 21 February 2011 on intolerance, discrimination and violence on the basis of religion or belief,
- having regard to the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, adopted on 25 June 2012 by the Council, and the 2015-2019 EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy,

- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 235/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a financing instrument for democracy and human rights worldwide(8),
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 May 2014 on a rights-based approach to development cooperation, encompassing all human rights, and to the Commission staff working document of 30 April 2014 entitled ‘Tool-box – A rights-based approach encompassing all human rights for EU development cooperation’ (SWD(2014)0152),
 - having regard to the Speech of the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament plenary debate on the security situation in Burkina Faso, of 17 September 2019.
 - having regard to the statement of the EEAS Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Spokesperson on the attacks in Burkina Faso, 7 November 2019.
 - having regard to Rule 122 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. Whereas a continued and dramatic deterioration of the security situation in Burkina Faso has occurred over the past months, resulting in a series of deadly attacks, notably from armed Islamist fighters and extremists who have exploited ethnic tensions;
 - B. Whereas on Wednesday 6 November 2019, 37 people were killed in a terrorist attack in the eastern region of Burkina Faso; whereas on 1 December 2019, a congregation attending a church service in Hantoukoura, a village in eastern Burkina Faso, was attacked, killing 14 people; whereas this attack brings the number of Christians killed to at least 41 in 9 reported jihadist attacks since the beginning of the 2019;
 - C. Whereas violence does not affect Christians exclusively, even though they tend to be specifically targeted; whereas for example, on 11 October 19, a mosque in the town of Salmossi, in northern Burkina Faso, was attacked during Friday prayers;
 - D. Whereas over the past months, daily attacks target not only civilians and the defence and security forces, but also the symbols of State authority, as demonstrated by the murder of the mayor of the municipality of Djibo and his companions on 3 November 2019;
 - E. Whereas “Aid to the Church in Need” reports that Muslim extremists are expelling Christians from their villages in the North;
 - F. Whereas the government declared a state of emergency in 7 administrative regions in an effort to contain the situation of escalating violence;
 - G. Whereas the growing insecurity in Burkina Faso has led to terrible crimes by both armed Islamists and state security forces; whereas according to Human Rights Watch report, armed islamist groups in Burkina Faso have executed suspected government collaborators, intimidated teachers, and spread fear among civilians throughout the

country; but whereas in response, Burkinabè security forces conducted counterterrorism operations in 2017 and 2018 that resulted in extrajudicial killings, abuse of suspects in custody, and arbitrary arrests; whereas the Burkinabè government promised to investigate these allegations;

- H. Whereas increased bloodshed has forced people to flee their homes, igniting a fast-growing humanitarian crisis; whereas according to World Food Programme spokesperson, Marwa Awad, civilian deaths are four times the level they were for the whole of 2018, and close to half a million have been displaced, posing a serious challenge to the delivery of food, health or sanitation services, but also in terms of social cohesion;
- I. Whereas Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) is a fundamental right to which everyone should be entitled, everywhere, which should be subjected to no kind of discrimination, as enshrined by international and European founding texts, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; whereas, under Article 2 of the Treaty, the Union is founded on societies in which pluralism and tolerance prevail; whereas states must exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence, or the threat thereof, against persons based on their religion or belief, as well as ensuring accountability should such violations occur;
- J. Whereas Burkina Faso had a strong tradition of religious tolerance but has become vulnerable to the instability plaguing the greater Sahel region, which is facing a combination of escalating violence, displacement, hunger, poverty and climate change;
- K. Whereas the government of Burkina Faso currently holds the G5 Sahel Presidency to respond to the current challenges of security, stability and development in the Sahel;
- L. Whereas West African leaders meeting at ECOWAS in Burkina Faso in September 2019 announced a one-billion-dollar plan to combat rising insecurity in the Sahel region;
- M. Whereas Burkina Faso is one of the world's poorest countries; whereas around 45 percent of its rapidly growing population live on less than US\$1.25 a day; whereas access to sanitation and electricity is poor, while investment in education and infrastructure is insufficient;
- N. Whereas climate change, landscape degradation and slow economic development have all taken their toll on food security in Burkina Faso, resulting in chronically high rates of food insecurity and undernutrition; whereas mining and other human activities are causing rapid deforestation, with severe cycles of drought and flooding exacerbating the situation;
- O. Whereas agriculture represents about 80% of the working population of Burkina; whereas local milk production plays particularly an important role in food and nutritional security in Burkina Faso, including the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals, notably No poverty (SDG 1); Zero hunger (SDG 2) and Gender equality (SDG 5), as women are involved in milking cows, then processing and selling the milk;

- P. Whereas more than EUR 1 billion have been allocated to Burkina Faso for the period 2014-2020 under all the European Union's instruments; whereas in July 2017 the Government adopted a Sahel Emergency Programme to meet the security challenges in the region, which the European Union is strongly supporting with funding recently increased to EUR 105 million;
1. Strongly condemns terrorist attacks and all persecution and violations of the rights to life and physical integrity of individuals and communities based on religious, ethnic, national, racial or other grounds;
 2. Reaffirms that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivation, wherever and whenever and by whomsoever committed;
 3. Recalls that the fight against terrorism can only bear fruit if security forces respect the rule of law and human rights; against this background, urges the government to immediately stop abusive counterinsurgency strategy, notably the summary execution of suspects, which risks inflaming the conflict by driving more people into the hands of Islamist militant recruiters;
 4. Calls on the government to deliver on its commitment to investigate alleged abuses by state forces and to base its strategy for combating terrorism and violent extremism on the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights, in accordance with their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law;
 5. Reminds the European External Action Service and the Member States of their commitment, under the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy adopted in June 2012, to ensure that human rights are raised in all forms of counter-terrorism dialogues with third countries;
 6. Highlights that a dramatic human crisis is unfolding in Burkina Faso, where close to half a million people have been forced from their homes and a third of the country is now a conflict zone; furthermore, notes that according to Government data, the figure of displaced people is likely to reach 650,000 before the end of 2019;
 7. Highlights that jihadist groups are targeting both security forces and civilians, with a clear strategy to foster local antagonisms; against this background, calls on the government of Burkina Faso to step up its efforts to prevent religious extremism; stresses that freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) is a universal human right, which must be duly protected, promoted and safeguarded by all actors as well as enhanced through interreligious and intercultural dialogue, in line with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the values of the European Union as laid down in the TEU and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights; more broadly, calls for increased cooperation to prevent persecution of minorities on grounds of thought, conscience, religion or belief, to create conditions for peaceful coexistence in societies marked by diversity;

8. Urges the EU and its Member States to continue to anchor their support of FoRB within a broader human rights framework based on principles of universality, non-discrimination and indivisibility; in particular, recalls that the EU and its Member States should encourage cooperation between human rights and religious actors and support interreligious collaboration as a policy tool to combat intolerance and discrimination and advance FoRB;
9. Calls on the EU and its Member States to step up its support to stop this escalation of violence in the Sahel region; calls for an EU security assistance policy whose main objective is security, safety and well-being of the local population and which focusses on democratic control of civilian and military security forces, accountability, transparency and efficiency; underscores that human security should be the guiding principle of EU security sector reform and assistance efforts in fragile countries and regions; deplors the fact that, according to the UN (MINUSMA), G5 Sahel security forces have committed war crimes in the region and underlines the urgent need for accountability at all levels, justice, mediation and reconciliation; also demands to review existing monitoring and control mechanism as regards IHL/IHRL compliance of partner countries' security forces and calls for robust operational guidelines and their implementation as regards the respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law (IHL/IHRL) in particular as regards support to the G5 Sahel;
10. Recalls that coordination between security and development policies is essential; calls on the Burkinabé authorities to address the root causes of radicalization and extremism;
11. Insists on a comprehensive approach towards anti-radicalisation and counter-terrorism which focuses on strengthening social cohesion and crime prevention; calls on the Burkinabé authorities to step up its efforts in reducing poverty, offering employment prospects, especially for youth people, and empowering and respecting the individual, so as to cut down at its roots grievances and frustrations that could potentially be exploited by violent extremists; reiterates that investment in education is essential for conflict prevention and to reconstruct peaceful and inclusive societies;
12. Notes with deep concern that the insecurity climate puts more pressure on already overstretched social services and is significantly affecting livelihood and market activities constraining food availability and access;
13. Encourages the EU and World Food Programme to further scale-up its use of cash-based transfers, notably for Internal Displaced Persons, as an important tool to face the humanitarian crisis and tackle extreme poverty;
14. Stresses the importance of climate change as a risk multiplier for conflict, drought, famine and migration;
15. Believes that building resilience in Burkina Faso requires to invest in priority in domestic food production, rather than being excessively dependent on imports to feed itself; urges the EU to scale up its assistance to this end, targeting its support to small-scale farmers, access to and control over locally-adapted seeds and natural resources; crop diversification, agro-forestry and agro-ecological practises, in line with the conclusions of the last IPCC Special Report on "Climate Change and land";

16. Recalls that livestock farming plays a key role in the economy of Burkina Faso, notably for food and nutritional security of rural and urban households; in particular, stresses that the local dairy sector is an important driver for sustainable development in West Africa, as local milk production makes it possible to valorise the economic potential of pastoral and agro-pastoral areas, create rural employment (nearly 80% of the population lives in the countryside), reduce poverty and the rural exodus, and reduce West Africa's food dependence;
17. Notes with concern that while the EU is the biggest provider of development aid to Sahel, European dairy policy is seriously damaging local dairy producers, notably women, who are at the heart of the local dairy system in West Africa; in particular, underlines that local milk producers in Burkina Faso are under pressure from growing milk powder exports from Europe, as EU dairy firms have been able to export their surpluses without limit and at very low prices since the abolition of the milk quotas in 2015, resulting in milk powder being about 3 times cheaper than local milk, and thus sold at a level that hinders the development of local milk; underlines that the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) encourage this trend to overproduce milk and increasingly export the surpluses.
18. Recalls that EU's priority of strengthening resilience, peace, security and governance in Africa entails to address the root causes of poverty and ensure that its policies are effectively in line with the principle of Policy Coherence for Development, as enshrined in article 208 of the TFUE;
19. Urges the EU and its Member States to frame its agricultural and development policy, with the view to be supportive of food security, which entails among others: to promote local milk production, while refrain from exporting subsidised dairy products which put at risk local investments in smallholder dairy supply chain of Burkina Faso; to support pastoralist communities and to conduct systematically ex ante and ex post impact assessment of the CAP's external effects;
20. Stresses equally the need to establish an EU trade policy framework that is supportive of food security and sustainability; in particular, stresses that EPA should allow sufficient policy space for developing countries to make use of trade instruments, such as tariffs and import quotas, to protect the interests of their domestic farmers and promote their rural development and to protect their population from the potentially destructive effects of cheap imports;
21. Stresses the need to develop investment in basic public services, to improve infrastructure, and diversification of the economy as well as to strengthen the rule of law, judicial systems, and human rights frameworks, which can help bring sustainable peace and development to the region; calls on the EU and its Member States to scale up its financial aid to these ends;
22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government of Kenya, the institutions of the African Union, the United Nations Secretary-General, the United

Nations General Assembly, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the PAN-African Parliament (PAP).