



Plenary sitting

B9-0056/2020

14.1.2020

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 Nigeria, notably the recent terrorist attacks
(2020/2503(RSP))

Anna Fotyga, Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Joanna Kopcińska, Ryszard Czarnecki, Bogdan Rzońca, Angel Dzhambazki, Andrey Slabakov, Charlie Weimers, Adam Bielan, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Assita Kanko, Emmanouil Fragkos, Evžen Tošenovský, Veronika Vrecionová, Alexandr Vondra, Raffaele Fitto, Ruža Tomašić, Carlo Fidanza, Jan Zahradil, Beata Kempa, Patryk Jaki

on behalf of the ECR Group

B9-0056/2020

European Parliament resolution on Nigeria, notably the recent terrorist attacks (2020/2503(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Nigeria,
 - having regard to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in particular the provisions on the protection of freedom of religion contained in Chapter IV on the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recognizes a wide range of fundamental rights to which Nigeria is internationally committed to respect;
- B. whereas religion plays a key role in the Nigerian society: the two major religions are Christianity and Islam, both representing almost half of the population; whereas a historic rivalry between the predominantly Muslim north and Christian south has dramatically intensified with the spread of radical Islam; whereas an estimated 30 million Christians live in northern Nigeria, forming the largest religious minority in the predominantly Muslim region;
- C. whereas peace and stability in northern Nigeria have been threatened by the continuing attacks, murders and kidnappings perpetrated by the Islamist groups Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) since 2009; whereas over 20.000 people have been killed and more than 2 million displaced, including to neighbouring countries, since Boko Haram began its attacks; whereas women and girls have been enslaved, raped, radicalised and forced into ‘marriages’;
- D. whereas over the past year, Boko Haram and ISWAP reportedly do seem to have been regaining both strength and territory; whereas observers say their weapons are coming mainly from Libya, possibly also from former IS strongholds; whereas late December 2019 ISWAP has released a video claiming to show the killing of 11 Christians in Nigeria; whereas on 2 January 2020 Christian leader Lawan Andimi was kidnapped by ISWAP in Adamawa State;

- E. whereas the International Criminal Court (ICC) has stated that there are reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity under Article 7 of the Rome Statute have been committed in Nigeria by Boko Haram, including murder and persecution;
- F. whereas the conflicts between predominantly Muslim Fulani herders and predominantly Christian farmers in Nigeria's Middle Belt have seen a sharp increase in number, spread and intensity in recent years and has become Nigeria's most serious security challenge; whereas during recent years thousands were killed, many communities destroyed and hundreds of thousands people were displaced while ethnic and religious divisions in the country intensified, also affecting national cohesion; whereas the increasing violence in the Middle Belt region is disproportionately targeting the farmer communities;
- G. whereas Fulani herders attacking farmer communities reportedly have access to military-grade weapons, like machine guns and AK-type rifles and on one occasion rocket launchers; whereas there was a rise in Fulani extremist attacks in the Kaduna state in 2019 after Christians were accused of a reprisal attack on a Fulani settlement in February 2019; whereas Christian pastors and community heads are often targeted in attacks, while hundreds of churches have been destroyed; whereas increasing frequency and apparent organization of the attacks has created doubts among Church leaders and analysts as to whether this is indeed a conflict over resources and grazing lands, or whether there were religious motivations as well;
- H. whereas the Nigerian Government's inadequate and uncoordinated response to the escalating crisis fosters impunity and heavily questions the Nigerian Security Forces (NSF) and its accountability; whereas there are many concerning reports of willful negligence, or complicity, by the NSF in deadly attacks against Christian farmer communities; whereas NSF officers reportedly abandoned villagers seeking protection from Fulani herders, ignored credible warnings of imminent attacks and did not arrest known attackers; whereas this leads to deepening mistrust and perception of authorities' bias and complicity in the violence;
- I. whereas in February 2016, the Nigerian Government established a Human Rights Desk for the army aimed at investigating and curbing human rights violations by NSF officials; whereas special focus has been given to violations by the Boko Haram insurgency, but not on alleged violations NSF committed in the herder-farmer conflict;
- J. whereas State Governors in Taraba and Benue states whose territory has been highly affected by the conflict, endeavored to respond with laws prohibiting open-grazing for Fulani herders; whereas these laws have further strained herder-farmer relations and resulted in more violence as the affected parties were allegedly not consulted before enacting the laws;

- K. whereas successive political leaders have postponed much-needed security sector reform, while corruption has become entrenched in the sector, sustaining an ineffective and abusive security apparatus; whereas a 2018 nationwide poll indicated that 65 per cent of Nigerians feel the country is not secure; whereas President Buhari's election campaign manifesto barely mentioned security at all; whereas failings range from strategic and operational mistakes, to gross human rights violations, endemic corruption – including widespread procurement fraud –, racketeering by deployed soldiers and police and lack of proper training and equipment of military and police;
- L. whereas Nigeria has a complex legal system, which combines common, customary and religious law and several tiers of government, which creates a challenging environment for the proper enforcement of human rights; whereas in 12 Muslim-majority northern Nigerian states, federalism has allowed the adoption of Islamic Shari'ah law in the criminal codes;
- M. whereas accountability, justice, the rule of law and the fight against impunity constitute essential elements underpinning peace and conflict resolution, reconciliation and reconstruction efforts;

1. Is deeply concerned by the increasing conflicts between herders and farmers in the Middle Belt region which have increased the security challenges already facing Nigeria, and regrets the lack of real progress in addressing these issues; is deeply worried about the ongoing violence, including kidnappings and killings, perpetrated by Boko Haram and ISWAP in the country;
2. Strongly condemns the increase in violence against Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, including the targeting of religious institutions and worshippers; calls on President Buhari and the Nigerian Government to increase their efforts to bring the violence to an end, defend Nigerians' right to worship freely and protect the rights of all their citizens more rigorously, in line with the country's laws and Constitution;
3. Urges the Government to focus on upholding human rights and dignity in all policies to ensure peaceful coexistence among citizens irrespective of their religion, beliefs and political affiliations;
4. Urges the Buhari Government to defend its citizens from terrorism, but insists that such actions must be conducted in full accordance with respect for human rights and the rule of law; calls on the government to acknowledge the significant threats posed by Boko Haram and ISWAP, to prioritize greater support to both military and non-

military efforts to counter the insurgency, and to protect the rights of the Nigerian press to report on the conflicts;

5. Urge the Nigerian President to continue his efforts to liberate the hostages held by Boko Haram and ISWAP, including young girls who are still held captive, and to create a position within the Government for the sole purpose of maintaining an active family liaison and an open and accessible channel of communication with the traumatized parents of the hostages;
6. Regrets that the government is still not doing enough to protect local communities from attacks; denounces the climate of impunity, which further fuels the spiral of violence; calls for the conduction of investigations into those who are responsible for any human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests and extortion-related abuses; stresses that more should be done to bring perpetrators to justice;
7. Urges the Nigerian Human Rights Desk for the army to investigate and prosecute violations from armed forces in the Middle Belt; emphasizes that training programs on international human rights standards, including religious tolerance, should be an integral part of the mandate and work of the Desk;
8. Urge the Nigerian Government to ensure the domestication of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons into national law and ensure its full and effective implementation;
9. Urges the Nigerian Government to negotiate a national policy framework that would protect the interests of both farmers and herders; encourage the Federal Government to review and update the existing regulations on corridors for passage of livestock under the current context and work with State Governors to create a cohesive body of federal and state laws to address the issue; encourage State Governors to create a monitoring mechanism that relays all information from top to bottom and vice versa to alert in the case of violations to the law or attempted threats to grazing areas or passage corridors; urges State Governors to include, when possible, consultations with all affected parties and endeavor to find a formulation that will be embraced by all parties;
10. Supports a holistic approach to ensure a process of deradicalization in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, supporting and funding community-focused programs of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the region aimed at targeting the socio-economic factors that contribute the spreading of extremist ideals; calls for reforms to educational programs and curricula aimed at providing inclusive education focused on inter-faith and inter-religious studies should be an essential focus of such programs;

11. Calls for improvements to the efficiency and independence of Nigeria's judiciary system to enable the effective use of criminal justice to combat violence, terrorism and corruption;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Chairperson of the African Union, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Pan-African Parliament and representatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).