



Plenary sitting

B9-0064/2020

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))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

B9-0064/2020

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

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Nigeria, most recently on 16 January 2018,
 - having regard to the Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General on Nigeria of 24 December 2019,
 - having regard to the report of 25 November 2019 of the Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief outside the European Union,
 - having regard to the end of visit Statement of 2 September 2019 of the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on her visit to Nigeria,
 - having regard to the UN Security Council Press Statement on Acts of Terrorism in North-East Nigeria of 31 July 2019,
 - having regard to the Statement of 29 July 2018 by the Spokesperson of the HR/VP on the Boko Haram terrorist attack in Borno, North East Nigeria,
 - having regard to the Human Rights Watch World Report 2019 on Nigeria,
 - having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief,
 - having regard to the EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief of 2013,
 - having regard to the 2019 Global Terrorism Index,
 - having regard to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in particular its provisions on the protection of freedom of religion in Chapter IV – Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion,
 - having regard to the Cotonou Agreement,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the security situation in Nigeria has significantly deteriorated over the last years, posing a serious threat to regional and international security; whereas human rights violations, violence, criminality, and mass killings are widespread and constantly reported, notably in the North-Eastern region of the country;

- B. whereas violent extremism and terrorist activities, in particular, are in the rise with jihadist groups, namely Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), growing in power and influence;
- C. whereas Nigeria ranks third out of 163 countries on the Global Terrorism Index behind Iraq and Afghanistan, making it the third country most affected by terrorism;
- D. whereas the security situation is aggravated by an escalation of religious and ethnic violence in some parts of the country, including the conflict between Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Christian farmers in the north-east;
- E. whereas ISWAP is increasingly using hostage taking as a bargaining tool for ransom or in exchange for prisoners; whereas it is believed that the group currently holds dozens of captives, including Christian leaders, security forces and aid workers;
- F. whereas Nigeria's population, the biggest in Africa, is equally split between Muslims and Christians; whereas the country is home to the region's largest Christian community with nearly 30 million Christians living in northern Nigeria;
- G. whereas on 26 December 2019, ISWAP released a video showing the execution of eleven Christian hostages as a claim of revenge for the death of Islamic State's leaders caused by a US raid in October;
- H. whereas this horrific killing is part of a wider series of terrorists acts including the attack on 24 December 2019 of a Christian village near Chibok that resulted in the death of seven villagers and kidnapping of a teenage girl, the killing of three civilians outside Biu on 23 December 2019, and the killing of seven civilians in Nganzai on 22 December 2019;
- I. whereas according to the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, over 6,000 Christians have been murdered since 2015 by jihadist groups or due to the "your land or your blood" policy carried out by the Fulani militants; whereas in the Sharia States, Christians are facing constant discrimination and are often considered as second-class citizens;
- J. whereas in a statement, Rev. Samson Ayokunle, President of the Christian Association of Nigeria, called on the government and its international partners to deploy all available resources to ensure that all Christians in the captivity of Boko Haram and ISWAP are freed;
- K. whereas although President Muhammadu Buhari has condemned the killings and urged the population not to be divided by religious lines, these attacks have been carried in total impunity, with perpetrators rarely held to account;
- L. whereas HRW reported that the Nigerian military has detained over 3,6000 children, half of them being girls, suspected to be involved with Islamist and non-state armed

groups, often with little or no evidence; whereas many detainees have suffered abuse, including sexual violence, and have died in detention from disease, hunger, dehydration or gunshot wounds; whereas the military has constantly denied access to the detention facilities to verify the conditions in which children are held;

- M. whereas since 2015, the government has been criticized for its weak handling of Islamic insurgency across the country;
- N. whereas since its setting up in 2015, the Multinational Joint Task Force has driven terrorist groups out of many areas under their control, but the region remains highly unstable ; whereas the recent withdrawal of 1,200 Chadian soldiers, coinciding with a surge of violence in the north-east region, has caused concern among the population;
- O. whereas the situation in Nigeria has caused an unprecedented humanitarian crisis and led to the displacement of more than 2 million people in the North-East, according to UN OCHA; whereas many of the displaced persons have sought shelter in neighbouring countries or in refugee camps that are already congested;
- P. whereas, according to the World Report 2019 on Nigeria, over 35,000 internally displaced people returned to northeast communities in 2018 despite security concerns and lack of basic necessities, including food and shelter;
- Q. whereas nearly half of the Nigerian population live in extreme poverty; whereas it is estimated that over 7 million Nigerians are in urgent need of life-saving assistance;
- R. whereas there has been a shrinking of the humanitarian space in the country, with the kidnapping and killing of several aid workers; whereas security risks often impede aid delivery and have caused the departure of many humanitarian organisations;
- S. whereas in addition, the government has expelled a number of international aid agencies and charities, claiming they had been acting as money-launderers for Islamist groups; whereas in September 2019, the Nigerian Armed Forces requested the closure of Action Against Hunger and Mercy Corps without notice, leaving 400,000 people without access to aid;
- T. whereas under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement, the EU engages in regular political dialogue with Nigeria on human rights and democratic principles, including ethnic, religious and racial discrimination;
- 1. Deeply regret the continued deterioration of the human rights, security and humanitarian situation in the country, notably in the north-east region, and strongly condemns the repeated violations of human rights and international and humanitarian law, as well as the targeting of religious minorities and aid workers;

2. Condemns in particular the recent increase in violence against Christians communities, including the targeting of religious institutions and worshippers;
3. Extends its condolences to the families of the victims and expresses its solidarity with the Nigerian people, who have been suffering from terrorism in the region for over a decade;
4. Urges the Nigerian authorities to guarantee the respect for human rights in the country and to make all possible efforts to prevent further violence and to protect the civilian population from terrorism and violence; insists that such efforts must be conducted in full accordance with the respect for human rights and the rule of law, in line with the country's international obligations;
5. Recalls that women and children are most vulnerable to the effect of conflict, terrorism and violence in the country; deplores the fact that children are increasingly recruited by terrorist groups and used as child soldiers or suicide bombers;
6. Is deeply worried by the reports of ill treatment of children detained in military facilities in the Borno state; urges the Nigerian authorities to immediately release all children held in military custody and to investigate all allegation of abuse and violence in order to bring perpetrators to justice; insists that the counter-terrorism response as well as the judiciary and law-enforcement framework should be tailored to protect the rights of the most vulnerable population, including children;
7. Reminds the Nigerian authorities of their obligation to protect the rights of children and to ensure protection and care to those affected by terrorism or conflict, including by ensuring their access to education;
8. Stresses that the fight against impunity is fundamental to the stability of the country and the building of lasting peace; calls therefore on the Nigerian authorities to conduct immediate, thorough and transparent investigations to bring perpetrators to justice and to hold them accountable; further calls for improving the capacity and independence of Nigeria's judiciary system as a mean of effective use of criminal justice to combat violence, terrorism and corruption;
9. Reaffirms its support to the regional Multinational Joint Task Force and commend its efforts to effectively fight terrorism and restore stability in the Lake Chad region; recalls that terrorism knows no borders and calls on the countries of the region to continue to coordinate their efforts to make the entire region secure;
10. Stresses the interdependence of development, democracy, human rights, good governance and security in the country; believes that military action alone is not sufficient to combat terrorism effectively; that it should be coupled with improved

governance, notably in terms of law enforcement, anti-corruption strategies and improved service delivery;

11. Calls on the EU, the African Union and the international community to step up their efforts in supporting the fight against terrorism in Nigeria, and pursue continued political and security assistance in the country as well as the entire region; points to the fact that the international community as a whole need to take decisive measures to end international terrorist financing and cross border transfers of weapons;
12. Is deeply concerned by the impact of the security situation in the country on the effectiveness the humanitarian and development aid; calls on the EU to continue to pursue its humanitarian and development efforts in Nigeria, but also the entire region as a whole; welcomes the additional €50 million pledged by the EU in 2019 to support recovery and resilience in Nigeria;
13. Condemns all attacks on humanitarian aid personnel or facilities and urges on all parties to guarantee respect, protection and access for humanitarian organisations to deliver aid;
14. Urges the Nigerian Government to address the root causes of violence by ensuring equal rights to all citizens and no-discrimination legislation; insist in this regard on the necessity to further promote inter-religious dialogue, engaging with all relevant stakeholders including the Nigerian Interreligious Council;
15. 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 President and Parliament of Nigeria, the African Union, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, and the Pan-African Parliament.