



Plenary sitting

B9-0331/2020

6.10.2020

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 Eritrea, notably the case of Dawit Isaak
(2020/2813(RSP))

Michael Gahler, David Lega, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Željana Zovko, Lefteris Christoforou, Loukas Furlas, Lóránt Vincze, Tomáš Zdechovský, David McAllister, Leopoldo López Gil, Inese Vaidere, Vangelis Meimarakis, Krzysztof Hetman, Romana Tomc, Magdalena Adamowicz, Ivan Štefanec, Peter Pollák, Maria Walsh, György Hölvényi, Vladimír Bilčík, Paulo Rangel, Benoit Lutgen, Sandra Kalniete, Francisco Millan Mon, Gabriel Mato, Eva Maydell, Janina Ochojska, Ludek Niedermayer, Jiří Pospíšil, Stanislav Polčák, Stelios Kypouropoulos, Antonio López-Istúriz White
on behalf of the PPE Group

B9-0331/2020

European Parliament resolution on Eritrea, notably the case of Dawit Isaak (2020/2813(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Eritrea, in particular that of 6 July 2017
 - having regard to the report of 11 May 2020 of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea,
 - having regard to the Statement of 30 June 2020 by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea at the 44th session of the Human Rights Council,
 - having regard to the UN Human Rights Council resolutions on the situation of human rights in Eritrea,
 - having regard to the UN Security Council resolutions 2444 (2018), terminating with immediate effect all UN sanctions against Eritrea (arms embargo, asset freezes and travel bans),
 - having regard to the European Council Decision 2018/1944 of 10 December 2018 repealing Decision 2010/127/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against Eritrea,
 - having regard to case 428/12 (2012) filed to the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights on behalf of Dawit and other political prisoners,
 - having regard to the Final Declaration of the 66th session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights of 22 May 2017,
 - having regard to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
 - having regard to the Constitution of Eritrea adopted in 1997, which guarantees civil liberties, including freedom of religion,
 - having regard to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
 - having regard to the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement (the Cotonou Agreement), as revised in 2005 and 2010, to which Eritrea is a signatory,
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Dawit Isaak, a dual citizen of Eritrea and Sweden, journalist and owner of the newspaper Setit, was arrested in September 2001, by the Eritrean authorities, alongside 21 other persons;

- B. whereas the imprisonments occurred after the publishing of an open letter condemning the regime and calling the President Isaias Afwerki for democratic reforms; whereas on the day of the arrests the government announced the ban of all independent media; whereas the detainees have not been charged with a crime;
- C. whereas Dawit Isaak's family have been in distress and uncertainty for years, having little knowledge of his well-being; whereas reports came out of Eritrea this July that Dawit Isaak is still alive;
- D. whereas in July 2018 Eritrea and Ethiopia signed an historic peace agreement, ending twenty years of conflict; whereas the July 2018 peace agreement opened new prospects for the country's socio-economic development, linked with the advancement of regional economic integration in the Horn of Africa.
- E. whereas the Eritrean regime since two decades uses the national service as the main tool to control all aspects of citizens lives, despite the 2018 Peace agreement, essentially forcing many citizens into a situation of slavery, where all their life is under control;
- F. whereas the African Commission on Human and People's Rights ruled that journalists arrested in September 2001 in Eritrea, which includes Dawit Isaac, were being held in arbitrary and unlawful detention, thus urging the Eritrean authorities to release or at least to hold a fair trial;
- G. whereas Eritrea is ranked 182th out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index for 2019, according to the UNDP Human Development Report of 2019;
- H. whereas the EU is an important donor for Eritrea in terms of development assistance; whereas following the 2018 Peace Agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia, a new Development Cooperation Strategy for 2019/20 was agreed upon by the EU and Eritrea allocating €175 million;
- I. whereas the autocratic government tries to control also the Eritrean diaspora by means of a 2 % expat income tax, and by targeting relatives who remain in Eritrea;
1. Deplores the fact that Dawit Isaak have not yet regained his freedom and have had to spend 19 years as a prisoner of conscience in prison conditions giving serious concern for his life and health; urges his immediate and unconditional release and that of all prisoners of conscience in Eritrea;
 2. Demands that, given the current COVID-19 health crisis, the poor sanitary conditions in Eritrean prisons and the high risk of infection for detainees, adequate food, water, and medical care is promptly provided; demands furthermore that EU and EU Member States' representatives be given access to Dawit Isaak in order to establish his needs in terms of health care and other support;
 3. Expresses its strong concern about the systematic human rights violations being perpetuated by the Eritrean government; finds it striking that such gross breaches to fundamental rights are still occurring in 2020; strongly condemns the arbitrary incarceration of the opposition, journalists, religious leaders and innocent civilians; strongly condemns the lack of cooperation from the Government of Eritrea calls on it to

address the situation;

4. Welcomes the efforts of the African Union, the United Nations, the regional and international human rights organizations and the entire international community that have campaigned and raised awareness on the unlawful detention of these journalists, including Dawit Isaak;
5. Deplores that Eritrea provides no space for independent human rights defenders, members of political opposition and independent journalists; calls, therefore, on the Eritrean Government to open civic space for independent civil society and allow the creation of other political parties in the country;
6. Urges the Eritrean government to cease using its citizens as forced labour through the national service;
7. Calls on the Commission to ensure that any form of financing projects in Eritrea does not benefit the Eritrean Government but strictly respond to the needs of the Eritrean people for development, democracy, human rights, good governance, security, freedom of speech, press and assembly, and to evaluate tangible outcomes regarding human rights resulted from the EU Eritrea strategy and the so called “dual track approach”;
8. Appeals to the African Union, as a partner to the EU with an explicit commitment to the universal values of democracy and human rights, to step up its activity in relation to the regrettable situation in Eritrea and to work together with the EU to secure the release of Dawit Isaak and other political prisoners;
9. Condemns the use by the Eritrean Government of the extraterritorial ‘Diaspora tax’; urges the government to respect freedom of movement and the ‘guilt-by-association’ policies that target family members of those who evade national service, seek to flee Eritrea or fail to pay the 2 % income tax imposed by the government on Eritrean expatriates, including EU citizens;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the African Union, the President of Eritrea, the UN Human Rights Council, and the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.