



Plenary sitting

B9-0255/2021

27.4.2021

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 Blasphemy laws in Pakistan, in particular the case Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Emmanuel
(2021/2647(RSP))

Reinhard Bütikofer, Hannah Neumann, Rosa D'Amato, Ignazio Corrao, Bronis Ropé, Yannick Jadot, Ernest Urtasun, Francisco Guerreiro
on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

European Parliament resolution on Blasphemy laws in Pakistan, in particular the case Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Emmanuel (2021/2647(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Pakistan,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 November 2018 on Pakistan,
 - having regard to the EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan,
 - having regard to the recommendations of the reports of the EU Election Observation Mission to Pakistan,
 - having regard to the EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief, on Human Rights Defenders and on the Death Penalty, and the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
 - having regard to the Constitution of Pakistan,
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas “blasphemy” accusations online and offline alarmingly increased in Pakistan in the last year; whereas many of these accusations target human rights defenders, journalists, artists and the most marginalised people in society; whereas Pakistan’s blasphemy laws are increasingly used for personal or political score-settling in violation of the rights to freedom of religion and belief and of opinion and expression;
- B. whereas the government of Pakistan failed to amend or repeal blasphemy law provisions and failed to ensure the security of the accused, the lawyers and the judges involved;
- C. whereas Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Emmanuel, who have been in prison since 2013, were convicted and sentenced to death in April 2014 under Pakistan’s blasphemy laws for sending ‘blasphemous’ texts to a mosque cleric; whereas their appeal has been delayed to-date for over six years; whereas Shafqat Emmanuel’s lower body is paralysed and his health is rapidly deteriorating;
- D. whereas there are regular attacks and killings of those accused of blasphemy such as in the case of Tahir Ahmad Naseem, who had been charged with blasphemy and was shot dead in court on 29 July 2020;

- E. whereas recent violent protests have been fuelled by blasphemy accusations;
- F. whereas journalist, women's and human's rights activist Marvi Sirmed faces regular attacks as well as blasphemy accusations based on a tweet commenting of political abductions in Pakistan;
- G. whereas the European Commission's "Joint Staff working document: The EU Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance ('GSP+') assessment of Pakistan covering the period 2018 – 2019" inter alia expresses concern about the deteriorating situation of freedom of expression in Pakistan;
- H. whereas human rights defenders and journalists are harassed by Pakistani authorities for criticising government policies; whereas political opponents and critics of the government have been detained without bail;
- I. whereas violence against ethnic and religious minorities in Pakistan worsened in 2020 including attacks on Christians and Pakistan's Ahmadiyya religious community, with at least four Ahmadis killed for alleged incidents of blasphemy;
1. Calls on the government of Pakistan to repeal laws that discriminate against minorities, including section 295(C) of the penal code (the Blasphemy Law) and other sections which target religious minorities; stresses the need, pending the repeal of the laws, to establish effective procedural and institutional safeguards at the investigative, prosecutorial and judicial levels to prevent the abusive use of these laws and to ensure the safety of all those involved in investigative, prosecutorial and judicial proceedings;
 2. Urges the government of Pakistan to immediately and unconditionally release those detained for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, and to drop charges against those of them that are awaiting trial under the blasphemy laws;
 3. Urges the government of Pakistan to immediately and unconditionally release Shafqat Emmanuel and Shagufta Kausar, who identify as Christians, from detention, to provide them and their lawyer adequate security now and upon their release, and to grant Shafqat Emmanuel unrestricted access to adequate health care as necessary;
 4. Notes the recent judgement of the Supreme Court of Pakistan to ban executions of prisoners with mental disabilities; calls for a moratorium on the death penalty;
 5. Reminds the government of Pakistan that as a party to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) it is under an international obligation to introduce a legislative framework to implement various provisions in this regard; stresses the relevancy for both houses of parliament to finalise the Anti-Torture Bill as soon as possible; calls on the relevant authorities to ensure compliance and transparency in arrest procedures, to prevent enforced disappearances, torture and custodial killings, and hold to account those responsible for violations;
 6. Is concerned that economic conditions often prevent minorities and marginalised groups from accessing justice;

7. Regrets harassment, intimidation and violence against media personnel; stresses the necessity to ensure appropriate prosecution of those committing abuses against members of the media including public officials and to lift any restrictions on the freedom of expression;
8. Believes that the government of Pakistan should guarantee adequate working conditions for international and domestic non-governmental organisations;
9. Recalls its strong support for all human rights defenders in Pakistan and their work; calls on the EU Delegation and Member States' representations in the country to strengthen their support for civil society in their engagement with Pakistani authorities, and to use all available instruments to increase their support for human rights defenders' work, and, where appropriate, to facilitate the issuing of emergency visas, and provide temporary shelter in the EU Member States;
10. Stresses that the rights of women and children need to be protected at all times; calls on the government of Pakistan to improve access to services for victims of gender-based violence and to ensure appropriate prosecution of those responsible for sexual abuse of children;
11. Urges the government of Pakistan to invite the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief and the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression to visit Pakistan; calls on the two Special Rapporteurs to raise the abusive use of the blasphemy laws with the government of Pakistan with a view to immediately establishing procedural safeguards on the application of these laws;
12. Regrets not only human rights violations against religious minorities, but also against ethnic minorities; expresses its concern about major human rights violations, for example against the Sindh and Baluch, as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor; highlights that human rights are central to the EU's connectivity strategy;
13. Reminds the government of Pakistan that during current discussions on the reform of the GSP system in general, all European institutions pay specific attention to the benefits granted by the GSP+ system and its positive impacts;
14. 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 governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of Pakistan.