

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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2004

Session document

14 May 2003

B5-0239/2003 }
B5-0242/2003 }
B5-0244/2003 }
B5-0253/2003 }
B5-0255/2003 }
B5-0256/2003 }

RC1

JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 50(5) of the Rules of Procedure by

- Hartmut Nassauer, Hanja Maij-Weggen, Bernd Posselt and Thomas Mann, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group
- Richard Corbett and Margrietus J. van den Berg, on behalf of the PSE Group
- Bob van den Bos and Graham R. Watson, on behalf of the ELDR Group
- Patricia McKenna, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group
- Jonas Sjöstedt, Luisa Morgantini and Marianne Eriksson, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group
- Bastiaan Belder, on behalf of the EDD Group

replacing the motions by the following groups:

- ELDR (B5-0239/2003),
- Verts/ALE (B5-0242/2003),
- PPE-DE (B5-0244/2003),
- PSE (B5-0253/2003),
- EDD (B5-0255/2003),
- GUE/NGL (B5-0256/2003),

on freedom of expression and religion in Vietnam

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European Parliament resolution on freedom of expression and religion in Vietnam

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions, and those of 15 November 2000 and 4 July 2001 in particular,
 - having regard to the 1995 Economic Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Article 1 of which lays down respect for human rights and democratic principles as the basis for such cooperation,
 - having regard to the EC-Vietnam Framework Cooperation Agreement of July 1995,
 - having regard to the EC-Vietnam Strategy Paper 2002-2006,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Vietnam signed up in 1982 and under which it has given an undertaking to the international community and its citizens to uphold and promote human rights,
- A. whereas, as a party to the ICCPR, Vietnam is obliged to uphold the freedoms of speech, association, religious belief and worship,
- B. concerned at the legal and policy restrictions on religious freedom and the withholding of official recognition of certain religious bodies such as the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), the Protestant ‘house churches’ and the dissenting Hoa Hao and Cao Dai groups,
- C. concerned at the isolation and restriction on the movements of the Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, the Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, who has been living under conditions resembling house arrest since 1982, and of the Venerable Thich Quang Do, the UBCV’s second-ranking leader, who has been confined to his living quarters under guard since June 2001,
- D. concerned at the fate of the 75-year-old Venerable Thich Quang Do, the second-ranking leader of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and a Nobel Peace Prize nominee in 2003, who remains under ‘administrative detention’ at his Thanh Minh Zen monastery in Ho Chi Minh City for having launched an appeal for democracy in Vietnam,
- E. concerned at the continuing arrests, harassment and detentions of indigenous Montagnard Christians by the government of Vietnam,
- F. concerned at the imprisonment of Father Nguyen Van Ly since May 2001 and the fate of others who are imprisoned or detained for having expressed their religious faith peacefully,

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- G. concerned at Decree 31/CP, which imposes administrative probation without trial on persons who commit offences against national security,
- H. alarmed at the arrest in Ho Chi Minh City on 17 March 2003 of the dissident Nguyen Dan Que on suspicion of intent to send information abroad by e-mail,
- I. noting that this arrest is one aspect of wider moves to crack down on and stifle freedom of expression in Vietnam,
- J. recalling in this regard the arbitrary arrests on 29 and 30 December 2002 of former colonel Pham Que Duong and researcher Tran Khue for their pro-democracy and anti-corruption initiatives and stances, as well as the recent unfair trials of so-called cyber-dissidents, whose activities in legitimately exercising their freedom of expression have been labelled as espionage,
- K. alarmed at the introduction of a draft law placing restrictions on the right to protest following non-violent demonstrations by smallholders against abuses of power and corruption, which have resulted in dozens of convictions,
- L. saddened that, in spite of Vietnam's openly stated desire to establish the rule of law, the government has been and is introducing laws and decrees that violate the right to freedom of expression and of religion enshrined in the ICCPR, including offences classified in the penal code relating to the catch-all concept of 'national security' and Decree 31/CP of 1997 on 'administrative detention' (detention without trial),
- M. concerned at the continuing arrests, harassment and imprisonment of peaceful dissidents and journalists by the government of Vietnam,
- N. concerned at the government's decree of 18 June 2002 banning Vietnamese citizens from watching foreign TV programmes beamed in by satellite,
 1. Draws attention to the fact that a state based on the rule of law requires clear and precise laws guaranteeing equality and legal certainty for all, and should not be built on laws that give rise to discrimination on grounds of race, religion or political views;
 2. Condemns, therefore, the improper recourse to classified offences relating to 'national security', such as espionage, or to those relating to 'abusing democratic rights to encroach upon the interests of the State' or to 'public disturbances' in order to suppress freedom of expression, religious freedom and press freedom;
 3. Calls on the Vietnamese authorities to respect the religious freedom of all religious groups and to re-establish the legitimate status of the UBCV and all other unrecognised churches;
 4. Welcomes the recent meeting between the Vietnamese Prime Minister, Phan Van Khai, and the head of the unofficial Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam; encourages the Vietnamese government to continue with this dialogue;

5. Calls on the Vietnamese government to release all prisoners of conscience, especially the Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, the Venerable Thich Quang Do and Father Nguyen Van Ly, and to guarantee them their full political and civil rights, including freedom of movement;
6. Calls on the Vietnamese government to stop the continuing arrests, harassment and detentions of indigenous Montagnard Christians;
7. Demands in this regard that the European Union and its Member States, which support legislative reform in Vietnam, urge the government to ensure that the reform and the laws to be reformed are compatible with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
8. Calls on the Vietnamese government to abolish Decree 31/CP and all other laws suppressing peaceful activities that are considered to be a threat to national security;
9. Calls on the Vietnamese government to stop the continuing arrests, harassment and imprisonment of peaceful dissidents and journalists;
10. Calls on the Vietnamese government to lift all restrictions on the free flow of information;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vietnamese government, the Secretary-General of the UN and the ASEAN Secretariat.

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