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B6-0595/2006 }
B6-0599/2006 }
B6-0601/2006 }
B6-0605/2006 }
B6-0608/2006 }
B6-0612/2006 } RC1

JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure, by

- Thomas Mann, Charles Tannock and Bernd Posselt, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group
- Pasqualina Napoletano, Neena Gill and Robert Evans, on behalf of the PSE Group
- Frédérique Ries and Marios Matsakis, on behalf of the ALDE Group
- Gérard Onesta and Jean Lambert, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group
- Vittorio Agnoletto and Esko Seppänen, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group
- Roberta Angelilli, on behalf of the UEN Group

replacing the motions by the following groups:

- GUE/NGL (B6-0595/2006)
- ALDE (B6-0599/2006)
- PSE (B6-0601/2006)
- PPE-DE (B6-0605/2006)
- UEN (B6-0608/2006)
- Verts/ALE (B6-0612/2006)

on Bangladesh

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PE 381.826v01-00}
PE 381.830v01-00}
PE 381.832v01-00}
PE 381.836v01-00}
PE 381.839v01-00}
PE 381.843v01-00} RC1

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European Parliament resolution on Bangladesh

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh, in particular its resolution of 14 April 2005 on the human rights situation in Bangladesh,
 - having regard to the visit to Dhaka by the European Union Troika of Regional Directors from 23 to 25 January 2006,
 - having regard to the declaration of 16 March 2006 by the Presidency on behalf of the EU welcoming the arrest of two terrorist leaders by the Bangladeshi authorities,
 - having regard to the statement of 30 October 2006 by the United Nations Secretary-General on Bangladesh,
 - having regard to the Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and the People's Republic of Bangladesh on partnership and development,¹
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. noting that a caretaker government has been formed, entrusted with the task of preparing for Bangladesh's next parliamentary elections, but noting with concern that many of the necessary preconditions in terms of the neutrality of electoral preparations have yet to be met,
- B. welcoming the fact that Bangladesh is a very important partner to the EU, which has made progress in its economic performance; noting, however, that the country continues to suffer from serious political difficulties, massive corruption, poverty, widespread popular discontent and Islamist militancy,
- C. whereas, under the Constitution, consideration should have been given to a range of neutral legal figures or 'qualified citizens' before the President qualified for the position of Chief Adviser; noting that the appointment of President Iajuddin Ahmed in the run-up to the January 2007 elections was marked by violent protests, which still continue,
- D. noting that so far talks between the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the opposition Awami League (AL) have failed to yield progress on the Awami demands for electoral reform, notably the replacement of the election commission, which is accused of being biased towards the government,
- E. whereas the compilation of the electoral register has been heavily criticised by domestic and international observers; according to an estimate by the EU Commission, 13 million invalid names have been added to the register,

¹ OJ L 118, 27.4.2001, p. 47.

- F. whereas in 2006 three journalists were killed and at least 95 others attacked, and 55 press correspondents were the targets of intimidation because of articles considered to be 'non-Islamic'; and whereas in the course of the year more than 70 journalists have been forced to flee the country following threats, according to 'Reporters sans Frontières' reports on press freedom in Bangladesh,
 - G. having regard to the particularly shocking case of the director of the Bangladeshi weekly *Weekly Blitz*, Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury, a journalist who advocates dialogue between religions and recognition of the State of Israel; he was arrested on 29 November 2003 and is in danger of being condemned to death at his trial for sedition, which is due to open on Monday, 13 November,
 - H. whereas harassment and crackdowns on NGOs continue; the arrest of 124 staff members of Proshika on 9 September represents only the best-known of the incidents; most of those arrested have been released in the meantime,
 - I. whereas violence perpetrated by paramilitary organisations with an Islamist orientation decreased as a result of steps taken by the former government in the latter part of its tenure,
 - J. whereas Bangladesh has had a longstanding tradition of secular democracy, including respect for human rights and women's rights, independence of the judiciary and freedom of the press; whereas, however, in recent years this has been put into reverse by Islamist extremism,
 - K. whereas the EU has welcomed the arrest of two suspected terrorist leaders, and considers this to be a significant achievement which demonstrates Bangladesh's commitment to the fight against terrorism,
 - L. whereas in the spring of 2006 the government took drastic measures to curb extremism, but whereas Islamist groups continue openly to target members of religious minority communities,
1. Deplores recent acts of violence and strongly condemns the physical attacks on journalists, NGOs, trade unionists and others, and the violence related to the forthcoming general election and the transitional arrangements;
 2. Recognises the importance of the elections and calls for a strong and decisive Caretaker Government which will counteract instability and instil confidence in free and fair parliamentary elections run in accordance with international standards, with the participation of all parties and within the planned timeframe;
 3. Calls on Bangladesh's Caretaker Government, led by President Iajuddin Ahmed, to take immediate steps to reconstitute the Election Commission, so as to ensure that the latter can perform, and is seen to perform, its work in a truly neutral manner;
 4. Calls on the Caretaker Government to create a climate in which all members of the electorate will feel genuinely free to use their right to vote, notably by disarming supporters of Islamist groups engaged in actions and propaganda characterised by religious intolerance;

5. Calls on the Election Commission, in cooperation with domestic and international experts, to improve the quality and accuracy of the voter register;
6. Calls on the BNP, the AL and all other political parties to reach agreement on all controversial electoral issues, to avoid political violence and instability and to develop political programmes which will improve the standard of the population's living conditions;
7. Calls for a review of the trial, and for the acquittal, of Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury, the charging of whom runs counter to all the standards of international law and the conventions against violations of press freedom;
8. Calls on the authorities to put an end to the climate of impunity and to bring to justice the perpetrators of violence and harassment directed towards journalists in Bangladesh;
9. Calls on the Commission and the Council to monitor carefully the human rights situation, the political situation and press freedom in Bangladesh and to draw up programmes in the framework of EU-Bangladesh cooperation to promote freedom of the press and freedom of speech;
10. Calls on the Caretaker Government to guarantee media balance during the election campaign;
11. Calls on the Bangladeshi authorities to stop politically motivated arrests of NGO members, to drop the charges against the staff of Proshika in particular and to allow access to foreign financial support for all NGOs, including the 'blacklisted' ones;
12. Calls on the Caretaker Government to comply with the key international conventions on respect for human rights and, in particular:
 - to put an end to the extrajudicial killings perpetrated by the Rapid Action Battalion and to investigate and punish adequately the numerous abuses;
 - to put an end to the practice of torture by police and security forces (2 297 victims in 2005, according to the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma Victims);
 - not to allow the justice system to be abused for the purpose of harassing political opponents and civil society activists;
 - to secure the rights of the indigenous communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, enshrined in the 1997 Peace Agreement; activate the promised Land Commission and hold elections for the Hill District Councils;
 - to protect religious minority groups, in particular the Ahmadi, Hindu and Christian communities, the last two of which are particularly vulnerable to violence during the election period;
 - to take measures against domestic violence and acid throwing and against the low

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conviction rates for rape;

- to eliminate child labour, which remains a persistent problem, and to take significant steps against trafficking in women and children;

13. Reaffirms the European Parliament's commitment to Bangladesh's unique tradition of religious tolerance and secularism, as enshrined in the country's longstanding cultural traditions and artistic heritage, and as endorsed in the European Parliament's previous resolutions;
14. Welcomes the recent conviction by a court of two Islamic militants for murdering a Christian convert, but condemns the imposition of a death penalty;
15. Welcomes the decision of the Commission to send an EU Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) to observe the forthcoming general election, and urges the rapid establishment of a European Parliament short-term political EOM;
16. Calls on the Commission to use its good offices with other donors and with the Bangladeshi government to promote the adoption of effective measures in line with the provisions of this resolution;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh, the Election Commission of Bangladesh and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.