

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Session document

9.7.2008

B6-0356/2008 }
B6-0360/2008 }
B6-0361/2008 }
B6-0364/2008 }
B6-0365/2008 }
B6-0366/2008 } RC1

JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

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

- Charles Tannock, Thomas Mann, Bernd Posselt and Eija-Riitta Korhola, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group
- Pasqualina Napoletano and Robert Evans, on behalf of the PSE Group
- Johan Van Hecke, Marios Matsakis, Renate Weber, Marielle De Sarnez, Mariela Velichkova Baeva and Frédérique Ries, on behalf of the ALDE Group
- Jan Tadeusz Masiel, Ryszard Czarnecki, Ewa Tomaszewska, Wiesław Stefan Kuc and Mieczysław Edmund Janowski, on behalf of the UEN Group
- Jean Lambert, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group
- Roberto Musacchio, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

replacing the motions by the following groups:

- UEN (B6-0356/2008)
- Verts/ALE (B6-0360/2008)
- ALDE (B6-0361/2008)
- GUE/NGL (B6-0364/2008)
- PPE-DE (B6-0365/2008)
- PSE (B6-0366/2008)

on Bangladesh

RC\733971EN.doc

PE410.733v01-00}
PE410.737v01-00}
PE410.738v01-00}
PE410.741v01-00}
PE410.742v01-00}
PE410.743v01-00} RC1

EN

EN

European Parliament resolution on Bangladesh

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh, in particular those of 16 November 2006 and 4 September 2007,
 - having regard to the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development between the European Community and the People's Republic of Bangladesh,
 - having regard to the state of emergency which was decreed by the caretaker government of Bangladesh on 11 January 2007,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the EU has good, long-standing relations with Bangladesh, including through the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development,
- B. whereas on 11 January 2007, amid violence in the election run-up, the caretaker government of Bangladesh imposed a state of emergency and shortly afterwards adopted Emergency Power Rules giving the army and the paramilitary forces the same arrest powers as the police; whereas the EU Election Observation Mission then suspended its operations on 22 January 2007,
- C. whereas the imposition of the Emergency Power Rules was accompanied by the suspension of a series of civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Bangladesh, and whereas the application of the death penalty was also extended,
- D. whereas the suspension of these rights has led to an alarming number of recent rulings by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court with serious implications for individual rights and the principle of legality,
- E. whereas, under the Emergency Power Rules, on 11 June 2008 a new Counterterrorism Ordinance was adopted without public input, violating fundamental freedoms and basic fair trial rights and introducing an overly broad definition of 'terrorist acts', which now includes mere property crimes as well as attacks against individuals; whereas this definition is contrary to the recommendations of the United Nations; whereas this new 'anti-terrorism' ordinance is contributing to the creation of a climate of fear in Bangladesh society; and whereas human rights organisations and lawyers' associations have expressed concern that the ordinance will be employed for the purposes of political persecution,
- F. whereas according to international human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International the number of people reportedly arrested since the introduction of the state of emergency 18 months ago has risen to well over 300 000, most of whom have subsequently been released; whereas, since the right to seek release on bail is restricted

RC\733971EN.doc

PE410.733v01-00}
PE410.737v01-00}
PE410.738v01-00}
PE410.741v01-00}
PE410.742v01-00}
PE410.743v01-00} RC1

under the Emergency Power Rules, the ongoing wave of mass arrests may put serious pressure on the prison system,

- G. whereas a large number of those arrested have allegedly been severely tortured, and whereas increased incidences of extrajudicial killings have been reported by Odhikar, the Bangladesh national human rights organisation,
 - H. whereas it has consistently called for a moratorium on the death penalty in all countries and under all circumstances,
 - I. welcoming the recent relaxation of the ban on political activities, the agreement between the government and the Awami League to enter into negotiations on planned national elections in December and the fact that other parties are to engage in this process,
 - J. whereas in the course of the new wave of mass arrests since 28 May 2008 more than 12 000 people have been arrested, including local party activists; whereas the government has rejected suggestions that the arrests are politically motivated, claiming that they were part of a planned sweep against criminals,
 - K. whereas, citing the need for a comprehensive voters' list, the caretaker government has so far ignored appeals from political parties, civil society organisations and the Election Commission to pave the way for the speedy holding of national elections and is sticking to the absolute deadline which has been set at 21 December 2008,
 - L. whereas the hardship faced by Bangladesh's general population has been compounded by the fact that prices of basic food items such as rice have increased by a third or more in recent months, and whereas for a large part of the population food expenses already accounted for over 60% of their budget before the price explosion,
 - M. whereas an elected government would make it easier to deal with the effects of climate change; whereas as much as a quarter of Bangladesh's territory faces the threat of being permanently submerged by rising levels of sea water in the Bay of Bengal; whereas climate scientists warn that Bangladesh may have 20 to 25 million climate refugees by 2050,
- 1. Calls on the Bangladesh Government to lift the state of emergency as the most important step required in order to prepare for the holding of the country's next parliamentary elections and so that local council elections can take place in August 2008;
 - 2. Calls on the Bangladesh Government to ensure that its new Anti-Terrorism Ordinance meets internationally recognised legal standards on combating terrorism, such as recommended by the UN Special Rapporteur on Counterterrorism and Human Rights;
 - 3. Calls on the Bangladesh Government to abolish the death penalty;
 - 4. Calls on the Bangladesh Government to immediately put an end to the recent wave of mass

RC\733971EN.doc

PE410.733v01-00}
PE410.737v01-00}
PE410.738v01-00}
PE410.741v01-00}
PE410.742v01-00}
PE410.743v01-00} RC1

arbitrary arrests and the harassment of political opponents or journalists under the state of emergency and expresses concern at reports of torture by the authorities; calls on the government to guarantee all detainees their basic right to due process and those charged a fair trial; urges the authorities to either charge the thousands detained on the basis of credible evidence or release them;

5. Congratulates the caretaker government on the progress in preparing for the parliamentary elections and on making essential progress with the reform of the electoral process and the drawing-up of an accurate electoral register by the authorities; calls on the government to make sure that members of Bangladesh's ethnic and religious minorities are in a position freely to cast their votes; is concerned about press censorship and calls for freedom of the press in the pre-electoral period in Bangladesh;
6. Welcomes the release of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on humanitarian grounds;
7. Calls on the European Commission and the Council to play a more proactive role and to impress on the Bangladesh Government the need for a speedy and complete lifting of the state of emergency and of all regulations adopted under its auspices;
8. Calls for free and fair elections conducted in accordance with international standards, with the participation of all parties; calls for the EU Election Observation Mission to resume its activities as soon as this is feasible and advisable; calls on EU Member State missions and the Commission Delegation in Bangladesh to monitor the human rights and political situation in Bangladesh carefully;
9. Calls for the armed forces to withdraw from involvement in the political process;
10. Calls on the Bangladesh Government to provide maximum scope for a large-scale mobilisation of all sections of society, environmental and other non-governmental organisations, journalists and scientists in order to prepare the country for the forthcoming climate change-induced disasters and considers emergency rule as an alarming obstacle to achieving this goal;
11. Believes that the G8 Summit has an enormous responsibility to avert further acceleration in climate change and increase the number of catastrophes that threaten the lives of millions of people in Bangladesh and elsewhere by adopting effective and far-reaching measures to curb CO₂ emissions;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the SAARC member states and the Bangladesh Government.