

P7_TA-PROV(2012)0355

Persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Burma

European Parliament resolution of 13 September 2012 on the persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Burma/Myanmar (2012/2784(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Burma/Myanmar, and in particular that of 20 April 2012¹,
 - having regard to the progress report of 7 March 2012 by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 23 April 2012 on Burma/Myanmar,
 - having regard to the statement of 13 June 2012 by the spokesperson of High Representative Catherine Ashton on the crisis in northern Rakhine State in Burma/Myanmar,
 - having regard to the exchange of views on the Rohingya issue which took place in its Subcommittee on Human Rights on 11 July 2012,
 - having regard to the statement of 9 August 2012 by Commissioner Georgieva on humanitarian access to the Rohingya and other affected communities,
 - having regard to the statement of 17 August 2012 by the ASEAN foreign ministers on the recent developments in Rakhine State,
 - having regard to the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees of 1951 and the protocol thereto of 1967,
 - having regard to Articles 18 to 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948,
 - having regard to Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966,
 - having regard to the decisions allowing Burma/Myanmar to host the Southeast Asian Games in 2013 and to chair ASEAN in 2014,
 - having regard to Rules 122(5) and 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas since the new government of President Thein Sein took office in March 2011, it has taken numerous steps to expand civil liberties in the country, the majority of political prisoners have been released, with a number being elected to the Parliament in byelections, preliminary ceasefires have come into force with most armed ethnic groups, and many political dissidents have returned from exile in the hope of reconciliation;

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0142.

- B. whereas, however, discrimination against the Rohingya minority has intensified;
 - C. whereas on 28 May 2012 the rape and murder of a Buddhist woman set off a chain of deadly clashes between the majority Rakhine Buddhist population and the minority Rohingya Muslim community in Rakhine State;
 - D. whereas in the following days communal violence spread between the two communities, disproportionately involving Rakhine mobs and security forces targeting Rohingya, leaving dozens of people dead, thousands of homes destroyed and over 70 000 people internally displaced; whereas on 10 June 2012 a state of emergency was declared in six townships of Rakhine State;
 - E. whereas President Thein Sein had initially expressed the view that the only solution for the Rohingya was either to send them to refugee camps with UNHCR support or to resettle them in other countries;
 - F. whereas the Rohingya, many of whom have been settled in Rakhine State for centuries, have not been recognised as one of Burma/Myanmar's 135 national groups, and have thus been denied citizenship rights under the 1982 Citizenship Law, are perceived by many Burmese to be illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, and have been subject to systematic and severe discrimination, including restrictions in areas such as freedom of movement, marriage, education, healthcare and employment, as well as land confiscation, forced labour, arbitrary arrest and harassment by the authorities;
 - G. whereas in the face of persistent persecution an estimated 1 million Rohingyas have fled to neighbouring countries over the years; whereas 300 000 have fled to Bangladesh alone, in which country their long-term situation remains unresolved, while the Bangladeshi authorities have recently instructed the international humanitarian NGOs which provide basic health and nutrition services to unregistered refugees as well as to the local population in Cox's Bazar district to suspend their activities, and are now reportedly pushing Rohingya asylum seekers back;
 - H. whereas the Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) has allocated EUR 10 million to support for Rohingya refugees and the local host population in Bangladesh in 2012;
 - I. whereas on 17 August 2012 the Burmese government appointed an independent Investigation Commission, consisting of 27 representatives of civil society and political and religious organisations, to inquire into the causes of the outbreak of sectarian violence and make suggestions;
1. Is alarmed at the continuing ethnic violence in western Burma, which has caused large numbers of deaths and injuries, destruction of property and displacement of local populations, and expresses its concern that these intercommunal clashes may put at risk the transition to democracy in Burma/Myanmar;
 2. Calls on all parties to exercise restraint, and urges the Burmese authorities to stop arbitrary arrests of Rohingya, to provide information on the whereabouts of the hundreds of people detained since security operations in Rakhine State began in June 2012, and to immediately release those arbitrarily arrested;

3. Calls on the government of Burma/Myanmar, as a matter of urgency, to allow the UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs, as well as journalists and diplomats, unhindered access to all areas of Rakhine State, guarantee unrestricted access to humanitarian aid for all affected populations, and ensure that displaced Rohingya enjoy freedom of movement and are permitted to return to their place of residence once it is safe for them to do so;
4. Welcomes the creation of the independent Investigation Commission, but regrets the absence of a Rohingya representative;
5. Calls on the government of Burma/Myanmar to bring the perpetrators of the violent clashes and other related abuses in Rakhine State to justice, and to rein in the extremist groups who are instigating communal hatred, propagating threats against humanitarian and international agencies, and advocating expulsion or permanent segregation of the two communities;
6. Calls on the EEAS to support the Burmese government by all possible means in its efforts to stabilise the situation, implement programmes promoting reconciliation, design a broader socio-economic development plan for Rakhine State, and continue Burma/Myanmar's progress towards democracy;
7. Expresses its appreciation for those Burmese citizens who have raised their voice in support of the Muslim minority and a pluralist society, and calls on the political forces to take a clear stand in that sense; believes that an inclusive dialogue with local communities could be an important element in terms of attenuating the numerous ethnic problems in Burma/Myanmar;
8. Insists that the Rohingya minority cannot be left out of the newly developing openness for a multicultural Burma/Myanmar, and calls on the government to amend the 1982 citizenship law so as to bring it into line with international human rights standards and its obligations under Article 7 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, with a view to granting citizens' rights to the Rohingya and other stateless minorities, as well as ensuring equal treatment for all Burmese citizens, thus ending discriminatory practices;
9. Is concerned at the arrest of 14 international aid workers during the unrest, and calls for the immediate release of the five who are still in prison;
10. Urges the Burmese government to allow the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the country to conduct an independent investigation into the abuses in Rakhine State; calls on the OHCHR to establish an office in Burma/Myanmar with a full protection, promotion, and technical assistance mandate, as well as sub-offices in states around the country, including Rakhine State;
11. Encourages the Burmese government to continue implementing its democratic reforms, to establish the rule of law, and to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular freedom of expression and assembly (including on the internet);
12. Urges all countries in the region to come to the aid of refugees from Burma/Myanmar and to support the Burmese government in finding equitable solutions for the underlying causes;
13. Urges Bangladesh, in particular, to continue its acceptance of present donor support and any additional support measures, and to allow the humanitarian aid organisations to continue

their work in the country, especially in the light of the events in Rakhine State and the resultant additional flows of refugees in dire need of basic care;

14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Governments and Parliaments of Burma/Myanmar and of Bangladesh, the EU High Representative, the Commission, the Governments and Parliaments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of ASEAN, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, the UN Special Representative for Human Rights in Myanmar, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the UN Human Rights Council.