



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Plenary sitting

15.4.2014

B7-0399/2014

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 122 of the Rules of Procedure

on Pakistan: recent cases of persecution
(2014/2694(RSP))

**Charles Tannock, Ryszard Antoni Legutko, Tomasz Piotr Poręba,
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on behalf of the ECR Group

**European Parliament resolution on Pakistan: recent cases of persecution
(2014/2694(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Pakistan,
 - having regard to Art 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
 - having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief of 1981,
 - having regard to the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief,
 - having regards to the statement of Amnesty International on the death sentence of a Christian man in Pakistan of 27 March 2014¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 11 December 2013 on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World and the European Union's policy on the matter, condemning the persecution of Christians and other religious minorities²,
 - having regard to the EU-Pakistan five-year engagement plan of March 2012, containing priorities such as good governance, and dialogue on human rights,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions on Pakistan of 11 March 2013, reiterating the EU's expectations regarding the promotion of and respect for human rights and condemning all violence including against religious minorities³,
 - having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas a Christian couple was sentenced to death by a lower court in Punjab on 4 April 2014 for allegedly sending a text message insulting the Prophet Mohammed; whereas the couple denied responsibility and declared that the originating phone was lost a while before the message was sent;
- B. whereas Sawan Masih, a Pakistani Christian, was sentenced to death on 28 March 2014 for blasphemy against the Prophet Mohammed; whereas the announcement of charges against Masih had led to riots with a 3,000-strong mob burning two churches and about 200 homes of Christians in Joseph Colony, Lahore, last year;

¹ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/pakistan-christian-man-sentenced-death-under-blasphemy-law-2014-03-27>

² <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2f%2fEP%2f%2fTEXT%2bTA%2bP7-TA-2013-0575%2b0%2bDOC%2bXML%2bV0%2f%2fEN&language=EN>

³ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/135946.pdf

- C. Whereas several other Christians are currently in prison on blasphemy charges; whereas Aasia Bibi, a Christian woman from Punjab, was arrested in June 2009 and received a death sentence in November 2010 on charges of blasphemy; whereas after several years her appeal has finally reached the High Court in Lahore; whereas for the first two hearings in January and March 2014 the presiding judges appeared to be on leave;
- D. whereas Christians, who represent about 1,6% of the population in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, suffer from prejudice and sporadic bouts of mob violence;
- E. whereas the majority of Pakistani Christians lead a precarious existence, often fearful of allegations of blasphemy, a subject which can provoke outbursts of public violence;
- F. Whereas three Hindu boys have been accused of blasphemy in Badin, Sindh Province, for having spray painted some signs on the occasion of Holi (the Hindu festival of colours); whereas the boys are currently under arrest;
- G. whereas Pakistan's blasphemy laws make it dangerous for religious minorities to express themselves freely or engage openly in religious activities;
- H. Whereas to date no death sentence based on blasphemy charges has been carried out, but several accused have been killed by mob violence; whereas there is tremendous pressure from certain religious leaders put on the Pakistani court system to uphold and carry out the death sentences, which are usually handed out by lower courts;
- I. whereas Pakistan plays an important role in fostering stability in South Asia and should therefore lead by example in strengthening rule of law and human rights;
- J. Whereas Pakistan continues to be plagued by deadly terrorist attacks, such as on 9 April 2014 in Islamabad, killing at least 21;
- 1. Is shocked and saddened by the recurring deadly terrorist attacks in Pakistan and expresses its sympathy and condolences with the victims and their families;
- 2. Expresses its deep concern that the controversial blasphemy laws are open to misuse that can affect people of all faiths in Pakistan; expresses its particular concern that the blasphemy laws, which were publicly opposed by the late Minister Shahbaz Bhatti and by the late Governor Salman Taseer, are increasingly used to disproportionately target Christians in Pakistan; notes that the blasphemy laws are at the heart of a climate of complete fear among religious minority groups and minority Muslim sects but also among majority Sunni Muslim believers;
- 3. Calls on the Government of Pakistan to carry out a thorough review of the blasphemy laws and their current application, in particular Sections 295 B and C of the Penal Code, which prescribe mandatory life sentences (295 B and C) or even the death penalty (295 C) for alleged acts of blasphemy, with a view to repealing or at the very least to put in place safeguards to prevent abuse of these harsh legal provisions;

4. Calls on the Pakistani authorities to guarantee the independence of the courts, rule of law and due process in line with international standards on judicial proceedings; calls furthermore on the Pakistani authorities to provide sufficient protection to all those involved in blasphemy cases, including by shielding judges from outside pressure, protecting the accused and their families and communities from mob violence and by providing solutions for those who are acquitted but cannot go back to their places of origin;
5. Is deeply concerned about the plight of minority women and girls which often suffer doubly, notably through the practice of forced conversion and targeted sexual violence; urges the Pakistani authorities to improve protection, prosecution and reparation;
6. Reiterates its condemnation of hate speech and inappropriate representation of minorities in curricula and in school textbooks; calls on the Pakistani authorities to revise such curricula and textbooks and calls on the European Commission to follow up on previous demands for revision of EU-financed textbooks containing hate speech;
7. Recalls that freedom of religion and minority rights are guaranteed by Pakistan's constitution; welcomes the positive measures taken in the interest of religious minorities by the Government of Pakistan since November 2008, such as establishing a five per cent quota for minorities in the federal job sector, recognising non-Muslim public holidays and declaring a National Minorities Day;
8. Urges, however, the Pakistani government, to further increase efforts for better inter-religious understanding and to actively address religious hostility by societal actors and combat religious intolerance, acts of violence and intimidation and to act against the perception of impunity;
9. Strongly condemns all acts of violence against religious communities, as well as all kinds of discrimination and intolerance on the grounds of religion and belief; stresses that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a fundamental human right; stresses furthermore that all Pakistanis irrespective of their faith and religion deserve equal respect, promotion and protection of their human rights;
10. Calls on the Government of Pakistan to intervene to protect victims of religiously motivated mob violence and encourages all Pakistanis to work together to promote and ensure tolerance and mutual understanding;
11. Reiterates its condemnation of the attack on the All Saints Church in Peshawar as well as the attacks on Christians which have taken place in the past; welcomes the widespread condemnation of the attacks by political players and parts of Pakistan's civil society; recalls on the Government of Pakistan to bring to justice those behind the attack on the All Saints Church;

12. Reiterates its concern about the exodus of Christians from various countries in recent years;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the European Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the UN, the UN Human Rights Council, and the Government and Parliament of Pakistan.