



12.01.2011

Motion for a Resolution

pursuant to Rule 110 of the Rules of Procedure

tabled by Elmar Brok, José Ignacio Salafranca, Ioannis Kasoulides, Joseph Daul, Mario Mauro, Jaime Mayor Oreja, Ernst Strasser, Tunne Kelam, Doris Pack, Mario David, Francisco Millán Mon, Gay Mitchell, Filip Kaczmarek, Marietta Giannakou, Carlo Casini, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Hans-Gert Pöttering, Anna Zaborska, Traian Ungureanu, Cristiana Muscardini, Andrzej Grzyb, Constance Le Grip, Lena Kolarska-Bobinska.

on behalf of the EPP Group

on the situation of Christians in the context of freedom of religion

The European Parliament,

– having regard to its previous resolutions, and in particular that of 15 November 2007 on serious events which compromise Christian communities' existence and those of other religious communities, that of 21 January 2010 on attacks on Christian communities, that of 6 May 2010 on the mass atrocities in Joss, Nigeria, that of 20 May 2010 on religious freedom in Pakistan and that of 25 November 2010 on Iraq: the death penalty (notably the case of Tariq Aziz) and attacks against Christian communities,

– having regard to Article 3 paragraph 5 of the TEU,

– having regard to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

– having regard to Rule 110 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas statistics on religious freedom in the last years show that 75% of acts of religious violence are against Christians, as indicated in the 2009 report on Religious Freedom in the World prepared by the " Aid to the Church in Need" organization; whereas the number of attacks on Christian communities has risen worldwide in 2010 as well as the number of processes and sentences to death for blasphemy, which often affects women;

B. whereas the most recent attack on the Coptic Christian church in the Egypt city of Alexandria killed 23 people and injured hundreds more; whereas this attack was carried out by violent Islamic extremists which are most likely linked to the terrorist network Al-Qaeda,

C. whereas on 4 January 2011 in Islamabad, Salman Taseer, governor of the important Pakistani province Punjab, and famous for his harsh criticism of radical Islamists, was killed by a policeman,

D. whereas the massacre of 1 November 2010 at the Syrian Catholic Church of Our Lady of Deliverance in Baghdad, in which 52 people died, amongst whom women and children,

E. whereas such attacks by violent Islamic extremists are also attacks on the current regime of these states, aiming to create unrest and to start civil war between the different religious groups,

F. whereas inter-community dialogue is crucial to promoting peace and mutual understanding between peoples,

G. whereas the development of human rights, democracy and civil liberties is the common base on which the European Union builds its relations with third countries, and has been foreseen by the democracy clause in the agreements between the EU and third countries,

1. Expresses its condolences to the families of the victims of the recent attacks against religious denominations in Egypt, Pakistan and Iraq;

2. Strongly condemns the worldwide violence against and persecution of Christians;

3. Is concerned about the exodus of Christians from Islamic countries in recent years;

4. Welcomes the Egyptian public opinion reaction which vigorously condemned the terrorist act and rapidly grasped that the attack was plotted to undermine the deep rooted societal intractable bonds between Christians and Muslims in Egypt; welcomes the joint demonstrations by Coptic Christians and Muslims in Egypt to protest against the attack; welcomes also the public condemnation of the attack by the President of Egypt, Hosny Mubarak, the King of Jordan, Abdullah II., Grand Mufti of Egypt, Dr. Ali Gomaa, and some other Muslim leaders;

5. Urges the authorities of states with alarmingly high levels of attacks against religious denominations to take responsibility in ensuring normal and public religious practices for all religious denominations, to step up their efforts to provide reliable and efficient protection for the religious denominations in their countries and to ensure the personal safety and physical integrity of members of religious denominations in the country thereby complying with the obligations they have already committed themselves to within the international arena;

6. Expresses its concerns about the fact that the murderer of the governor in Islamabad was a policeman from his own protection detail; calls on the Pakistani government to eliminate the Islamic extremist forces in the Pakistani security forces and to ensure that the security forces abide by the constitution and the rule of law; is also concerned that the Pakistani blasphemy law, which was publicly opposed by the late Governor Salman Taseer, is still used to persecute religious denominations, including Christians such as Asia Noreen, a Christian mother of five sentenced to death, and that the murderer of Governor Salman Taseer is treated by large sections of Pakistani society as a hero;

7. Condemns the interruption by force of the Christmas Mass celebrated on Christmas Day by the remaining 300 Christians in the occupied part of Cyprus by the Turkish authorities;

8. Calls on the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, in the framework of EU relations and cooperation with the countries concerned, to pay particular attention to the situation of religious denominations, including Christian communities; and to incorporate the subject of religious freedom into European external policies by inserting in agreements with third countries a binding clause on respect for freedom of religion;

9. Calls on the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission to develop as a matter of urgency an EU strategy on the enforcement of the human right to freedom of religion, including a list of measures against states who knowingly fail to protect religious denominations;

10. Asks the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, in light of recent events and the increasing necessity for analyzing and understanding the evolution of cultural and religious developments in international relations and contemporary societies, to develop a permanent capacity for strategic research, policy development and training on religion and convictional matters in the European External Action Service;

11. Calls on the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, to integrate a chapter about religious freedom in its Annual Human Rights report,

12. Suggests that the *U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom*, which monitors the protection of religious freedom in the world by providing advice and policy proposals of the U.S. President and the U.S. Secretary of State, could be a good model for the European Union;

13. Supports all initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue, religious freedom and mutual respect between communities; calls on all religious authorities to promote tolerance and to take initiatives against hatred and violent and extremist radicalisation;

14. Calls on Muslim organisations in Europe to commit themselves unequivocally to active solidarity with Christian communities on the basis of equal respect for each denomination;

14a. Urges the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission to comply with the obligation to have a regular dialogue with Churches according to Article 17(3) TFEU, so as to ensure that the issue of the persecution of Christians is a priority issue which is discussed on a systematic basis;

15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.