Resolution on serious events which compromise Christian communities' existence and that of other religious communities

2007/2659(RSP) - 15/11/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a joint resolution strongly **condemning all acts of violence against Christian communities**, wherever they happen, and urged the governments concerned to bring to justice the perpetrators of these crimes on Christian communities. The resolution was adopted by 57 votes in favour to 2 against with 1 abstention.

Parliament cited the proliferation of episodes of intolerance and repression directed against Christian communities, particularly in the countries of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It recalled recent violent events in Iraq, including the kidnapping of two Catholic priests, similar violent events in Pakistan, including the assassination of the Protestant Bishop Arif Khan and his wife on 29 August 2007 in Islamabad, the murder in Gaza of Rami Khader Ayyad, owner of a Christian library, and the attacks on the Christian publishing house Zirve on 18 April 2007 in Malatya (Turkey) during which three Christians were murdered. It also recalled the murders of Hrant Dink and the Catholic priest Andrea Santoro in Turkey, the kidnapping of the Catholic priest Giancarlo Bossi in the Philippines, the seriousness of the situation of Christian communities in Sudan and the Assyrian Christian families living in the Dora neighbourhood in the south of Baghdad.

Parliament went on to point out that the exodus of Christians from Iraq was cause for serious concern. More than two million people have been internally displaced within Iraq, the vast majority of them belonging to Christian minorities, and are mainly moving to the Nineveh plains. It also pointed to the repression of the Catholic Church in China, and in Vietnam.

Members strongly **condemned all kinds of discrimination and intolerance based on religion** and belief and acts of violence against all religious communities. They urged the countries concerned to ensure that their constitutional and legislative systems provide adequate and effective guarantees of freedom of religion or belief as well as effective legal remedies for victims where the right to freedom of religion or belief is violated.

Parliament stated its support for any initiative to promote dialogue and mutual respect between religions, and called on all religious authorities to promote tolerance and to take initiatives against hatred and violent and extremist radicalisation. It urged the governments of the countries concerned to **improve the security situation of the Christian communities**, stressing that public authorities have a duty to protect all religious communities, including Christian communities, from discrimination and repression.

It moved on to call on the Commission and the Council to **raise the subject of the situation of the Christian communities in the framework of the political dialogue** with the countries where they are threatened, through the promotion of a strategic commitment from the countries concerned on the basis of the international treaties on human rights. The EU institutions and Member States must make further contributions to the strengthening of human rights and the rule of law using all the EU's foreign policy instruments. Particular attention should be devoted to the situation of religious communities, including Christian communities, in those countries where they are threatened, when drafting and implementing **development cooperation and aid programmes**. In addition, the EU and Member States were asked to **earmark more funds for the activities of the UNHCR** and for humanitarian aid managed by that organisation.

Lastly, Parliament recommended that its relevant committees consider the situation of Christian communities, notably in the Middle East.