Resolution on the case of the Afghan journalist Perwiz Kambakhsh

2008/2548(RSP) - 13/03/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate held in plenary on 13 March, the European Parliament adopted on the same date a resolution on the case of the Afghan journalist Perwiz Kambakhsh. The text adopted in plenary was tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, UEN, Greens/ALE and GUE/NGL groups.

Parliament recalls that on 22 January 2008, a regional court in the northern Afghan province of Balkh sentenced to death the 23-year-old Afghan journalist Sayed Perwiz Kambakhsh for circulating an article about women's rights in Islam, which he had downloaded from the Internet. The court ruled that the article constituted blasphemy and sentenced Mr Kambakhsh to death. Mr Kambakhsh was denied legal representation and sentenced without a proper hearing. Furthermore, he was allegedly beaten and threatened with execution until he signed a confession.

In its resolution, Parliament reaffirms its unconditional opposition to the death penalty and its commitment to respect for the rule of law. It condemns the arrest of Mr Kambakhsh and the decision by the primary court of Balkh province to sentence him to death on charges of blasphemy, and calls for Mr Kambakhsh to be released. Parliament urgently calls on the Afghan authorities to show their commitment to human and democratic rights by doing everything in their power to prevent his execution and to secure a review of his case. It also calls on President Hamid Karzai, in the event that the court of appeal should uphold the death sentence, to exercise his power to pardon Mr Kambakhsh. In this context, it recalls President Karzai's assurances concerning the safety of Mr Kambakhsh, which he gave to a delegation from the Afghan Independent Journalists' Association on 6 February 2008.

Members express their solidarity with all those fighting for independent journalism in Afghanistan. They call on the President and Parliament of Afghanistan to take appropriate steps to speed up the development of a functional penal and judicial system based on international standards and best practices, and they welcome the announcement by the Commissioner for External Relations at the Rome conference on 'The rule of law in Afghanistan' in July 2007 of immediate financial support to help Afghanistan strengthen the rule of law and reform its judiciary.

The Afghan Government is asked to respect the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the full and to ensure that freedom of expression is guaranteed and upheld for all citizens in Afghanistan.