Resolution on the situation in Laos and Vietnam

2009/2778(RSP) - 26/11/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation in Laos and Vietnam.

The resolution had been tabled by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, ECR, and Greens/ALE groups.

Parliament calls on the Council and the Commission to **carry out a detailed assessment of the implementation policies in the field of democracy and human rights** conducted both in Laos and Vietnam since the signing of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements and to report back to Parliament.

Vietnam: Parliament condemns the reported violent expulsion of more than 150 monks and nuns from monasteries and the fact that the increasingly tense situation following these actions against the peaceful Buddhist community is in clear contradiction of commitments to comply with internationally accepted standards on freedom of religion, especially when it comes to people trying to exercise their rights, which the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has undertaken to observe as a member of the UN Security Council and future Chair of ASEAN. Members ask the Commission and the Council, within the framework of the current negotiations on the new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Vietnam, to include a **binding and unambiguous clause on human rights and democracy**, together with a mechanism allowing for its implementation, in order to put an end to systematic violations of democracy and human rights.

The resolution calls for the cessation of all persecution and harassment, and for monks and nuns to be allowed to practice Buddhism according to the tradition of the Thich Nhat Hanh Buddhist bonze community in Bat Nha and elsewhere.

The Vietnamese Government is asked for the following:

- the unconditional release of Thich Quang Do and re-establishment of the legal status of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and of its dignitaries;
- an independent national human rights commission, to investigate allegations of torture or other abuses of power by public officials, including members of the security services, and to initiate proceedings to abolish the death penalty;
- to issue standing invitations to UN special rapporteurs, particularly those on freedom of expression, religious freedom, torture, human rights defenders and violence against women, and to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Parliament notes that Vietnam, which will assume the chair of ASEAN in 2010, should set an example by improving its human rights practices.

Laos: Members welcome the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by the Laotian Government, and call on the Laotian authorities to respect fully the terms of the Covenant. They reiterate their demand for the immediate release of the leaders of the "Student Movement of 26 October 1999", as well as of all the prisoners of conscience held in Laos, and they entrust the competent EU delegation in Vientiane with the responsibility for following up this matter.

Parliament also calls on the Thai authorities to put an immediate end to the detention of 158 Lao Hmong refugees and to allow them to resettle in Thailand or in the United States, Canada, the Netherlands or Australia, which have already agreed to take them in. It notes that Laos continues to persecute Hmong

communities because of a Hmong insurgency that dates back to the 1960s, subjecting Hmong living in areas of Laos suspected to be centres of insurgency to arrest, torture, sexual abuse and extrajudicial killing. The resolution also calls on the Thai Government to guarantee that all 5 000 Lao Hmong in the Huay Nam Khao camp have access to screening and status determination procedures if they wish to make an asylum claim. The Commission is asked to monitor closely the situation of the Lao Hmong community and the government's programmes for ethnic minorities.

Lastly, it notes that Laos has been ruled by a single party since 1975 and reiterates its demand to the Laotian authorities to implement all the reforms needed to bring democracy to the country, to guarantee the right to peaceful expression of political opposition and to ensure that internationally monitored multi-party elections take place soon.