Resolution on recent attacks on Christian communities

2010/2512(RSP) - 21/01/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on recent attacks on Christian communities.

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

It stresses that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a fundamental human right guaranteed by international legal instruments, and strongly condemns all kinds of violence, discrimination and intolerance, based on religion and belief, against religious people, apostates and non-believers. It discusses recent incidents in Egypt and Malaysia and calls on the Council, the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in the framework of EU relations and cooperation with the countries concerned, to pay particular attention to the situation of religious minorities, including Christian communities.

Parliament expresses its concern about the **recent attacks against Coptic Christians in Egypt** and its solidarity with the families of the victims. It recalls that on 6 January 2010 a drive-by shooting killed seven individuals – six Coptic Christians and a policeman – and injured others when worshipers were leaving a church after midnight mass on Coptic Christmas Eve in the city of Nagaa Hammadi in Upper Egypt. Furthermore, in recent weeks, further clashes involving Coptic Christians and Muslims have broken out and have been qualified by the Egyptian Government as individual incidents. Parliament calls on the Egyptian Government to ensure the personal safety and physical integrity of Coptic Christians and of members of other religious minorities in the country. It welcomes the efforts made by the Egyptian authorities to identify the authors and perpetrators of the 6 January 2010 attack. It calls on the Egyptian Government to ensure that all persons responsible for that attack, as well as for other violent acts against Coptic Christians or other religious or other minorities, are brought to justice and tried by due process. The Egyptian Government is asked to guarantee that Coptic Christians and members of other religious communities and of minorities enjoy the full range of human rights and fundamental freedoms – including the right to choose and change their religion freely – and to prevent any discrimination against them.

Members also expresses concern about the **recent attacks against churches and places of worship in Malaysia** and its solidarity with the victims, and they call on the Malaysian authorities to carry out thorough investigations and to bring those responsible to justice. Parliament recalls that on 31 December 2009, the Malaysian High Court ruled that Christians in Malaysia have the constitutional right to use the word "Allah" to refer to God and that the word is not exclusive to Islam. In 2009 the Government had confiscated more than 15 000 copies of the Bible in the Malay language, in which the word "Allah" was used to refer to God, and it has not, to date, returned them. Members note that the Malaysian Government accepts the use of the word "Allah" by the Christian communities in Sahah and Sarawak states, while questioning it in other regions of the country, thus generating additional discrimination among the whole Christian community in Malaysia. They consider that the action of the Malaysian Ministry of Home Affairs constitutes violation of the freedom of religion, and they are especially worried that the Malaysian Government has acted outside the law and that its interference has contributed to mounting tensions among religious groups in the country. Parliament welcomes the ruling by Malaysia's High Court and calls on the Malaysian authorities not to seek to reinstate the ban on use of the word "Allah" but to try to defuse the resulting tensions and to refrain from further actions that might upset the peaceful coexistence between the dominant and minority religions, as stipulated in the Constitution of Malaysia.

Lastly, Parliament deplores incidents of religiously motivated violence on European soil, including the murder of Marwa al-Sherbini, and expresses its solidarity with the families of the victims.