Resolution on Iraq: the death penalty (notably the case of Tariq Aziz) and attacks against Christian communities

2010/2964(RSP) - 25/11/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 23 November 2010, the European Parliament adopted by 66 votes to 1, with 1 abstention, a resolution on Iraq: the death penalty (notably the case of Tariq Aziz) and attacks against Christian communities.

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

The death penalty (including the case of Tariq Aziz): recalling that on 26 October 2010, the Iraqi Supreme Court sentenced to death former Iraqi deputy premier Tariq Aziz, aged 74, together with Sadoun Shakir, former Interior Minister, and Abed Hamoud, former Private Secretary to Saddam Hussein. Parliament reiterates its long-standing opposition to the death penalty in all cases and under all circumstances, including for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, and emphasises once again that abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and the progressive development of human rights. It deeply regrets, therefore, the decision of the Iraqi Supreme Court to sentence Tariq Aziz, Sadoun Shakir and Abed Hamoud to death. It underlines, however, the importance of holding accountable those who violate human rights, including (former) politicians, in the framework of the rule of law and due process. The Iraqi authorities are asked to reconsider their decision and not to carry out the death sentence pronounced by the Supreme Court. Parliament welcomes the announcement by President Talabani that he would not sign the execution order.

It encourages the Iraqi Government to sign and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights concerning the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances, and calls for an immediate moratorium on executions, and points out that the full abolition of the death penalty remains one of the main objectives of EU human rights policy.

Attacks against Christian communities: Parliament expresses its grave concerns over – and strongly condemns – the recent attacks on Christian and other religious communities in Iraq and the abuse of religion by the perpetrators of those acts. It notes that, on 22 November 2010, two Iraqi Christians were killed in Mosul, and that on 10 November, a series of bomb and mortar attacks targeting Christian areas killed at least five people in Baghdad, these attacks coming after Islamist militants had seized a Syriac Catholic cathedral in Baghdad on 31 October 2010, leaving more than 50 worshippers dead. Members call on the Iraqi authorities radically to increase their efforts to protect Christian and other vulnerable minorities, to step up action against interethnic violence and to do their utmost to bring the perpetrators of crimes to justice. They call on the Council and the Commission, in particular the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, in view of the preparation of the first Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Iraq, to address the problem of Christians‘safety within Iraqi borders as a priority issue.

Parliament reaffirms its full support for the population of Iraq and calls on all Iraqi political entities to work together against the threat of violence and terrorism. It deplores the deliberate targeting of locations where civilians congregate, including places of worship, strongly condemning all acts of violence against churches and all places of worship. Members urge the EU and the international community to step up the

fight against terrorism. They call on the specialised authorities and all security forces to stand firm against any attempts to separate Iraqi citizens on a sectarian or racial basis, and to provide protection for Iraqi citizens and safeguard religious practice.