Resolution on Pakistan, in particular the murder of Governor Salmaan Taseer

2011/2522(RSP) - 20/01/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place on the same day, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on Pakistan, and in particular strongly condemning the brutal murder of Governor Salmaan Governor of Pakistan's Punjab province, on 4 January 2011.

The resolution had been tabled by the EFD, ALDE, ECR, EPP, S&D, GUE/NGL, and Greens/ALE groups. It urges the Pakistan authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into all aspects of the murder and bring all the perpetrators of this crime rapidly to justice.

Parliament expresses its consternation at the **amount of popular support, even among the legal profession, for religious intolerance and outright murder** manifested in the public backing for the killer. It calls on the Pakistan Government not to allow moderate voices in the country to be silenced by extremists, and expresses concern that sections of the military, the judiciary and the political class would tacitly or even openly support the appeasement of political and religious extremists in Pakistan. It deplores the fact that the two largest religious political parties in Pakistan have declared that Salmaan Taseer deserved to be killed for his views, thus further inciting fear and appeasing both political and religious terrorism and crime.

Members are further concerned that the **Pakistani blasphemy laws**, which were publicly opposed by the late Governor Taseer, are still being used to persecute religious denominations, including Christians such as Asia Bibi, the mother of five children, who has been sentenced to death. They note that the blasphemy laws – which can carry the death sentence in Pakistan and are often used to justify censorship, criminalisation, and persecution and, in certain cases, the murder of members of political, racial and religious minorities – are open to forms of misuse that affect people of all faiths in Pakistan. The Pakistani Government is asked to carry out a thoroughgoing review of the blasphemy laws and their current application, including the mandatory death penalty or life imprisonment prescribed by the Pakistan Penal Code, which prescribes a mandatory death penalty for anyone found guilty of blasphemy against the Prophet Mohammed, with a view to implementing amendments.

Parliament calls on the European External Action Service, and the Commission as appropriate, to:

- include the issue of religious tolerance in society in its political dialogue with Pakistan, this matter being of central importance to the long-term fight against religious extremism;

- insist that the Pakistan Government uphold the democracy and human rights clause enshrined in the Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Pakistan;

- present a report on the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement and the democracy and human rights clause;

- support the Pakistan Government in developing its Ministry for Human Rights and in establishing a meaningful, independent and authoritative National Human Rights Commission.

Members commend the efforts of Shahbaz Bhatti, the Minister for Minorities, who has introduced a bill seeking the abolition of the death penalty for the crime of blasphemy. They look to the Pakistani authorities to do their utmost to protect the lives of all who are threatened by Islamic radicals for their

secular or divergent views, especially lawyers, judges and human rights activists defending the rule of laws. They call on the Pakistani Government to:

- take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety of all judges in Pakistan, allowing them to fulfil their constitutional role without fear of intimidation, violence or harassment;

- withdraw the reservations on the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention against Torture (CAT) and to guarantee freedom of belief as enshrined in the UN Covenant, providing protection for their citizens in order to enable them to practise their faith freely;

- guarantee the human rights of minorities as laid down in the Constitution and the UDHR, which stipulates that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;

- supports all initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue and mutual respect among communities;

- implement the proposed reforms of the education system and to regulate and inspect madrasas;

- remove all propaganda promoting hatred, religious superiority and defamation of religion from the textbooks approved by the national curriculum department of the Ministry of Education.

Lastly, Parliament calls on Member States and the Commission to continue to **provide financial support for human rights organisations and defenders** and to outline practical measures to support the civil-society movement in Pakistan against the blasphemy laws and other discriminatory legislation.