

Resolution on Pakistan, in particular the murder of Shahbaz Bhatti

2011/2612(RSP) - 10/03/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Pakistan, **strongly condemning the brutal murder** on 2 March 2011 of Shahbaz Bhatti (Minister for Minorities in the Government of Pakistan).

The resolution was tabled by the S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA, EPP, ECR and GUE/NGL groups.

Parliament applauds his courage and proven commitment to interfaith dialogue and freedom of religion in Pakistan, in addition to his concern over Asia Bibi, the Christian woman and mother of five children condemned to death for blasphemy, despite continuous threats and the enormous personal risks involved.

Members note that, contrary to the weak public reaction to Governor Salman Taseer's assassination, there has been broad public condemnation of Minister Shahbaz Bhatti's assassination across the political divide, in the media and across the religious spectrum of Pakistan's society. They urge the Pakistani authorities to **conduct a thorough investigation** into all aspects of Shahbaz Bhatti's murder and bring all perpetrators of this crime rapidly to justice.

Parliament calls on the competent EU institutions to insist that the Government of Pakistan **uphold the democracy and human rights clause enshrined in the Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Pakistan**. Members call on the European External Action Service (EEAS) to present a report on the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement and the democracy and human rights clause. In addition, they call on EU institutions 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;
- continue with 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;
- investigate the possibility of using the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in order to finance actions supporting the fight against religious intolerance, extremism and discriminatory laws worldwide;
- encourage Pakistan to re-establish a separate Ministry for Human Rights as well as a meaningful, independent and impartial National Human Rights Commission;

Members feel that the way the blasphemy laws are currently implemented is in clear breach of Pakistan's obligations as a signatory state of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. They ask the EEAS to take this into account during the examination of a **possible application of the GSP+ scheme** to Pakistan from 2013 onwards, and report back to Parliament on the matter.

In addition, Parliament suggests that the EU invite the Government of Pakistan to an annual joint round-table meeting on the situation of Pakistan's minorities and to include the European Parliament in the preparation and realisation of such an event.

Members are deeply concerned about the climate of intolerance and violence and urge the Government of Pakistan to prosecute those inciting violence in Pakistan, in particular those calling for and, in some cases, offering rewards for the deaths of individuals and groups with whom they disagree. They call on the Pakistani Government to:

- enforce existing legislation such as Article 137 of the Penal Code, which makes hate speech a crime;
- step up measures to ensure the security of cabinet ministers and persons under concrete threat from religious extremists and terrorists, such as former Information Minister Sherry Rehman and lawyers defending cases related to blasphemy accusations;
- not to let voices in favour of religious tolerance and respect for universal principles of human rights in the country be silenced by extremists;
- appoint without delay a new minister for minorities and affirms its position that this person should be a strong and impartial minority representative;
- support the Ministry for Minorities in continuing the work and vision of Shahbaz Bhatti, in particular the national-level dialogue between religious leaders and the grassroots project on District Interfaith Harmony Committees;
- with all political parties, civil society and the media to stand united and fight the extremist onslaught.

Lastly, Parliament reiterates its call on the High Representative to develop a **permanent capacity within the human rights directorate** of the EEAS to monitor the situation of governmental and societal restrictions on freedom of conscience and related rights.