Resolution on recent cases of violence and persecution against Christians, notably in Maaloula (Syria) and Peshawar (Pakistan) and the case of Pastor Saeed Abedini (Iran)

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on recent cases of violence and persecution against Christians, notably in Maaloula (Syria) and Peshawar (Pakistan) and the case of Pastor Saeed Abedini (Iran). The resolution was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, ECR and EFD groups.

Members recalled that the Union had repeatedly expressed its commitment to freedom of religion, freedom of conscience and freedom of thought, and had stressed that governments have a duty to guarantee these freedoms throughout the world. In this context, they **strongly condemned the recent attacks against Christians** and urged the countries of Africa, Asia and the Middle East to ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes and all persons responsible for the attacks, as well as for other violent acts against Christians or other religious minorities, were brought to justice and tried by due process.

Maaloula, Syria: regarding Christians in Syria, Members condemned the actions of Jabhat al-Nusra and associated militants in Maaloula and called for immediate support and humanitarian assistance to the nuns and orphans trapped in the Convent of St Tekla (Mar Takla). They stressed that all actors have a duty to protect all the different minorities present in Syria, including Shias, Alawites, Kurds, Druzes and Christians.

Peshawar, Pakistan: Parliament strongly condemned the attack on the All Saints Church in Peshawar and the other recent terrorist attacks. It urged the Government of Pakistan to do everything in its power to bring the perpetrators to justice and ensure the protection of victims of religiously motivated mob violence.

Members expressed their deep concern about the misuse of controversial **blasphemy** laws that could affect people of all faiths in Pakistan, and particularly that the use of the blasphemy laws, which were publicly opposed by the late Minister Shahbaz Bhattiand and by the late Governor Salman Taseer (who were assassinated), was on the rise to target Christians.

The case of Pastor Saeed Abedini, Iran: Members were deeply concerned about the fate of Pastor Saeed Abedini, who had been detained for over a year and was sentenced to eight years of prison in Iran on charges related to his religious beliefs. They called on the Government of Iran to exonerate and immediately release Saeed Abedini and to ensure that full and unconditional respect is shown for the right to freedom of religion or belief. At the same time, they supported all initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue and mutual respect between communities and called on all religious authorities to promote tolerance and to take initiatives against hatred and violent and extremist radicalization.