Resolution on security and human trafficking in Sinai

2014/2630(RSP) - 13/03/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 52 votes to 0 with 1 abstention a resolution on security and human trafficking in Sinai. The resolution was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA, and ECR groups.

Parliament condemned the recent terrorist attacks against security forces and civilians in Sinai, and expressed its deep concern regarding the reported cases of human trafficking there, noting that thousands of people had been kidnapped in eastern Sudan, taken to Egypt and tortured in Sinai, more than 4 000 of whom have died since the beginning of 2008. It was believed that around 1 000 African refugees are currently being held in captivity.

Members stressed the **responsibility of the Egyptian and Israeli governments** to combat human trafficking in this area. Noting that the Egyptian interim Government seemed unable to bring the security crisis in Sinai under control, Parliament called for intensified efforts. It also underlined the importance of **coordinated regional action** in restoring security and combating human trafficking in Sinai, and called for **increased international support and more cooperation in this field among the governments of Egypt, Israel, Libya, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan,** as well as with relevant organisations, including the UN Multinational Force and Observers. Members **called on the VP/HR and the Commission to**:

- make this a high-priority topic on the agenda of political dialogue with Egypt, Israel and Sudan;
- actively work with the UNHCR to set up an action group with states involved in the various stages of the trafficking chain, including sources, transit, and destination;
- emphasise respect for human rights in its relations with the Eritrean Government, noting that up to 3 000 people flee from there every month, according to the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea.

Parliament emphasised once again the EU's offer to assist the authorities in improving the quality of the assistance and protection offered to asylum seekers and refugees residing on, or transiting through, their territory. In this respect it welcomed the Sudanese Government's recent call for EU support.

The resolution also stressed the importance of **assistance to Sinai survivors**, and called for full access of UN agencies and human rights organisations to the areas affected. It noted, in this connection, that the Egyptian authorities did not allow the UNHCR access to asylum seekers and migrants arrested in Sinai and did not attempt to identify potential trafficking victims among them. Members recalled also **Israeli law of 10 December 2013, which allowed for indefinite detention of asylum seekers**. Destination countries' authorities were asked to treat asylum-seekers in line with international refugee and human rights law.

Parliament was also very concerned about reports from Europol that several EU Member States have had reports of **blackmailing within the EU** on behalf of Bedouin organised criminal groups in Sinai, noting that many of the families of the victims live in Member States. It called on EU Foreign Ministers and Ministers of Justice to take appropriate measures, and also on the EU institution to put pressure on Israel and Egypt to take steps to tackle trafficking in Sinai and to drive forward the implementation of Europol's forthcoming recommendations.

Lastly, Members recalled that one of the root causes of the crises was the **marginalisation of the Bedouins in Sinai**, and considered that any possible solution to the crisis should include a comprehensive development programme aimed at improving the socioeconomic status and conditions of the local Bedouin population, urging the EU to continue funding NGO-led projects in the region.