

Resolution on Pakistan: blasphemy laws

2014/2969(RSP) - 27/11/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Pakistan: blasphemy laws.

The resolution adopted in plenary was tabled on behalf of the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE, Greens/EFA and EFDD groups.

Parliament is deeply concerned and saddened by the Lahore High Court's decision of 16 October 2014 to confirm the death sentence handed down to Asia Bibi for blasphemy. It called on the Supreme Court to start its proceedings on the case swiftly and without delay and to uphold the rule of law and full respect for human rights in its ruling.

It also called on the Pakistani courts also to proceed swiftly with the reviews of the death sentences of all other citizens currently on death row for allegedly violating the blasphemy laws.

Members expressed their deep concern that the **controversial blasphemy laws** are open to misuse that can affect people of all faiths in Pakistan and that they are increasingly used to target vulnerable minority groups, including Ahmedis and Christians, in Pakistan.

Recalling that freedom of religion and minority rights are guaranteed by Pakistan's constitution, Parliament strongly **condemned all acts of violence against religious communities**, as well as all kinds of discrimination and intolerance on the grounds of religion and belief. It called on the Pakistani Government to:

- carry out a thorough review of the blasphemy laws and their current application, with a view to repealing the laws;
- abolish the death penalty, including for blasphemy or apostasy, and to put in place safeguards to prevent abuse of legal provisions on blasphemy or apostasy;
- guarantee the independence of the courts, the rule of law and due process in line with international standards on judicial proceedings;
- provide sufficient protection to all those involved in blasphemy cases;
- increase efforts towards better inter-religious understanding, to actively address religious hostility by societal actors and combat religious intolerance, acts of violence and intimidation, and to act against real or perceived impunity;
- ensure that all Pakistanis deserve equal respect, and promotion and protection of their human rights;
- work with the UN bodies, including the UN Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, to address valid concerns about human rights problems.

Parliament called on the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission to:

- use any tools at their disposal, including as formulated in the EU Guidelines for the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief, to aid religious communities and to pressurise the Pakistani Government to do more for the protection of religious minorities;
- strictly monitor Pakistan's compliance with its commitments under the GSP+, and to promote and defend human rights in Pakistan;
- work with the Pakistani authorities in order to reform the way the blasphemy laws are used.