Resolution on Syria: situation in Palmyra and the case of Mazen Darwish

2015/2732(RSP) - 11/06/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Syria: situation in Palmyra and the case of Mazen Darwish.

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

Members strongly condemned the gruesome, systematic and widespread human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law committed by the al-Assad regime, terrorists belonging to IS /Da'esh and other jihadi groups in Syria, and the sentences and charges against political, civil and human rights activists, bloggers and journalists.

Palmtra: Palmyra condemned the **IS/Da'esh's seizure of Palmyra** on 21 May 2015 following a nine-day assault that cost many lives. It expressed its concern for the situation at the site of Palmyra and the thousands of Palmyra residents inside the city, including the women and children, noting IS/Da'esh's pattern of abducting, exploiting, and abusing women and children elsewhere, including rape, sexual abuse, forced marriage and forced child recruitment. The Council, the Commission and the High Representative were asked to make all necessary financial and human resources available to assist the refugees.

Cultural heritage: Parliament demanded an immediate halt to the destruction of the cultural heritage of Syria and Iraq, including religious sites and objects. It emphasised that no such acts committed by IS/Da' esh or other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities could be tolerated, and also called for the preservation of the cultural heritage of Iraq by protecting cultural and religious property and sites in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Members urged the EU and Member States to launch **awareness-raising campaigns in order to discourage the illicit purchase and sale of cultural goods** from the conflict areas, and to take practical steps to protect cultural, historical, religious and archaeological sites that are under threat in Palmyra and the Middle East as a whole.

Mazen Darwish: the resolution called on the Syrian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release and drop all charges against Mazen Darwish and all those detained, convicted and/or sentenced for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and association. It recalled that Mazen Darwish, a Syrian journalist and activist and president of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression, had been imprisoned since 2012, as have Hani Al-Zaitani and Hussain Ghrer, for their work defending freedom of expression and reportedly subjected to severe torture and ill-treatment and on 6 May 2015 was taken to an unknown location. Parliament urged the Syrian authorities to disclose the fate and the whereabouts of the three men immediately, and to ensure that they were protected from torture and ill-treatment. The European External Action Service (EEAS) and Member States were urged promote universal ratification and implementation of the **International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance** and to support the work of the UN Committee established under this Convention.

Lack of funding for UN appeals: Parliament expressed serious concern at the severe lack of funding for UN appeals in 2014, which had led to the temporary suspension of World Food Programme assistance to Syrian refugees. It urged the international community, therefore, to step up its funding and assistance in response to forthcoming appeals.

Lastly, it welcomed the **commitment to redouble collective efforts** to defeat IS/Da'esh made at the ministerial meeting of the international coalition against IS/Da'esh in Paris on 3 June 2015 and stressed the need to complement this strategy with strengthened cooperation with all regional state and non-state actors committed to fighting IS/Da'esh.