Resolution on the situation of two Christian pastors in Sudan

2015/2766(RSP) - 09/07/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 85 votes to 0, with 1 abstention, a resolution on the situation of two Christian pastors in Sudan.

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

Parliament called on the Sudanese authorities to **drop all charges against Pastor Michael Yat and Pastor Peter Yen Reith** and called for their immediate and unconditional release. It called on the Government of Sudan to ensure that pending their release the two pastors are not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment and that their physical and mental integrity is duly respected.

Pastor Michael Yat of the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church was taken into custody by the Sudanese National Intelligence Service (NISS) after preaching at the Khartoum North Church, a branch of the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church, during a visit to Sudan on 21 December 2014. Pastor Peter Yen Reith was arrested on 11 January 2015 after delivering a letter to the Sudanese Religious Affairs Office asking after Pastor Michael and wanting to know more about his arrest.

Both men were held incommunicado until 1 March 2015, and on 4 May 2015 both were charged with multiple offences under the Sudanese Penal Code of 1991, including amongst others, waging war against the state and espionage. These charges carry the death penalty in the event of a guilty verdict.

Parliament asked the EU Delegation to Sudan to **monitor the court proceedings** and provide assistance to the pastors. It also called on the EU to exercise leadership in highlighting and **condemning the serious and widespread violations of human rights** and international humanitarian law in the country.

Recalling the Sudanese authorities of their obligations at national and international level to protect freedom of religion and belief, Members called on the Sudanese Government to:

- repeal all legislation that discriminates on the grounds of religion and to protect the identity of minority groups, including those of all faiths;
- condemn the harassment of Christians and interference in church affairs;
- reform the country’s legal system, in accordance with international human rights standards.

Expressing grave concern about the increase in the **repression of members of the opposition**, Parliament expressed its support for the efforts being made, notably by the UN, the EU, the African Union and the troika (Norway, the UK and the US), to reach a negotiated solution to the situation in Sudan and support the endeavours of civil society and the opposition parties to promote an inclusive peace process.