Resolution on attacks on hospitals and schools as violations of international humanitarian law

2016/2662(RSP) - 28/04/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on attacks on hospitals and schools as violations of international humanitarian law.

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

The international community has witnessed over the last few years a harrowing trend of attacks on hospitals and schools in armed conflicts around the world and there has been an unprecedented increase in denial of humanitarian aid.

International humanitarian law (IHL), also known as the Law of Armed Conflict, is intended to alleviate the effects of armed conflict by protecting those not taking part in conflict and by regulating the means and methods of warfare.

In this context, Parliament deeply regrets the **lack of respect** for international humanitarian law, and expressed its shock and grave concern at the deadly attacks against hospitals, schools and other civilian targets that are occurring at an increasingly alarming rate in armed conflicts around the world, with patients, students, medical and teaching staff, humanitarian aid workers, children and family members becoming targets and victims.

Parliament expressed its conviction that the preservation of health and educational facilities as **neutral, protected spaces** during armed conflict situations must be ensured by transparent, independent and impartial investigations into the brutal attacks that have occurred and by achieving genuine accountability for the crimes committed by all parties involved.

Condemning the use of hospitals and schools by parties to armed conflict, Parliament requested the EU and its Member States to call on the UN and the UN Security Council to guarantee the protection of both local and international humanitarian workers.

Stressing that the right to health is a human right, Parliament called for the parties involved in an armed conflict to guarantee the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of medical services during armed conflicts. It also called for a **global commitment** to ensure that women and girls are safe from the start of every emergency or crisis by addressing the risk of sexual and gender-based violence and eventual prosecution of the perpetrators of such violence.

Furthermore, the resolution underlined that **increased complementarity** between humanitarian and development aid is needed in order to address the issues of effectiveness and the humanitarian financing gaps. This should go hand in hand with increased development aid and humanitarian funding.

Deploring the fact that a number of partners of the EU and its Member States are engaged in **grave violations** of international humanitarian law, Parliament called for the EU to seize all bilateral tools at its disposal to effectively promote compliance with international humanitarian law by its partners.

The VP/HR is urged to launch an initiative aimed at **imposing an EU arms embargo** against countries that are responsible for serious breaches of international humanitarian law, in particular as regards the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure.

The Foreign Affairs Council and the VP/HR are called upon to:

- request that the EU Heads of Mission and appropriate EU representatives (heads of EU Civilian Operations, Commanders of EU Military Operations and EU Special Representatives) report on cases of serious violation of international humanitarian law;
- ensure that EU policies and actions related to IHL are developed in a coherent and effective way and that the implementation of IHL Guidelines falls primarily within the remit of the Council Working Group on Public International Law, chaired by the Council Presidency.

Parliament called for the EU and the Member States to provide more **detailed reporting** on the implementation of the EU Guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law in specific conflict situations, in particular in the EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy.

Lastly, Parliament reiterated its grave concern over the **use of armed drones** outside the international legal framework, and insisted on its call on the Council to adopt an **EU common position** on the use of armed drones.