Resolution on Eritrea, notably the cases of Abune Antonios and Dawit Isaak

2017/2755(RSP) - 06/07/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Eritrea, notably the cases of Abune Antonios and Dawit Isaak.

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

Members recalled that Eritrea has one of the worst human rights records in the world.

They pointed out that Dawit Isaak, a dual citizen of Eritrea and Sweden, was arrested on 23 September 2001, after the Eritrean Government outlawed privately owned media. He was last heard from in 2005 and today his incarceration has become an international symbol for the struggle for freedom of the press in Eritrea.

They also indicated that Abune Antonios, the Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church, the nation's largest religious community, has been in detention since 2007 for having refused to excommunicate 3 000 parishioners who opposed the government.

Members therefore called on the Eritrean government to put an end to the detention of innocent opponents, journalists, religious leaders and civilians and demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience in Eritrea, including Dawit Isaak And Abune Antonios.

They also called for a fair trial for the accused and the abolition of torture and other degrading treatment, such as restrictions on food, water and medical care.

EU funding to Eritrea: Members recalled that the EU's partnership with Eritrea is governed by the Cotonou Agreement. They therefore called on the EU to ascertain conditionality of its aid, including that the **Eritrean government respect international human rights obligations** and release political prisoners before any further EU aid is given to Eritrea.

They denounced the resumption of major EU aid to Eritrea and in particular the signing off of the NIP for Eritrea of EUR 200 million and called on the Commission to review its scrutiny arrangements with Parliament and to ensure that the **funding allocated does not benefit the Eritrean Government** but is strictly and transparently assigned to meeting the needs of the Eritrean people for development, democracy, human rights, good governance and security.

At the same time, Parliament called on the government to allow freedom of movement and to **stop collecting the diaspora tax from Eritreans living abroad**. It called on the Eritrean government to desist from using its citizens as forced labour and to stop allowing foreign companies to use such conscripts for a fee.

Eritrean refugees: Members stated that in 2016 Eritreans fleeing their country accounted for the fourth-largest number of people risking the perilous journey to Europe (after Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans). More than 400 000 Eritreans, or 9% of the total population, have fled the country and some 5 000 Eritreans leave the country each month.

Overall, Members called on the Member States not to return Eritrean asylum seekers to their homeland.

They reiterated their deep concern about the devastating climatic conditions currently affecting the Horn of Africa, including Eritrea, and the serious risk of food and humanitarian crises.

Lastly, they condemned the Eritrean government's policy of arbitrarily revoking citizenship.