Resolution on violations of human rights including religious freedoms in Burkina Faso

2019/2980(RSP) - 19/12/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on violations of human rights including religious freedoms in Burkina Faso.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and ECR groups.

Burkina Faso's population is predominately Mlik Sunni, with large Christian and indigenous religious minorities. Interreligious boundaries in Burkina Faso are fluid, as followers of all religions commonly engage in syncretic practices and religious tolerance is the norm. Both Sunni and Christian places of worship have recently been targets of guerrilla attacks by Salafi armed groups. This has contributed to increased interreligious tensions.

Burkina Faso has become vulnerable to instability, particularly as a result of Islamist radicalisation, which is plaguing the greater Sahel region. The growing insecurity has led to terrible crimes by both jihadists and other armed groups.

According to a Human Rights Watch report, these armed groups in Burkina Faso have executed suspected government collaborators, intimidated teachers and spread fear among civilians throughout the country.

Strong condemnation

Members strongly condemn any form of violence, intimidation and kidnapping of civilians, aimed at security services, religious sites and worshippers in Burkina Faso, in particular violence targeting specific religious communities, and the political instrumentalisation and misuse of religion to legitimise the persecution of Christians and other religious minorities.

In this regard, the Government of Burkina Faso is called on to:

- increase its support for and protection of Muslim, Christian and animist communities in order to maintain the long-lasting Burkinabè tradition of the peaceful co-existence of Islam and Christianity;
- provide additional support for victims of violence, particularly woman and children;
- immediately put an end to its abusive counter-insurgency strategy, notably the summary execution of suspects, which risks inflaming the conflict by driving more people into the hands of militant Islamist recruiters;
- deliver on its commitment to investigate alleged abuses by state forces, take concrete measures to prevent any further abuses and base its strategy for combating terrorism and violent extremism on the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights;
- step up efforts to reduce poverty, create better employment prospects, especially for young people, and empower and respect the individual, so as to eliminate at the source grievances and frustrations that could potentially be exploited by violent extremists;
- further intensify its cooperation with its neighbouring states, especially with regard to its northern regions and those states directly affected by the violence, such as Mali and Niger.

Increased international security

While commending the EU on its continued security and political assistance in the region, Parliament emphasised the need for more comprehensive and coordinated international security action in Burkina Faso, while fully respecting human rights. It also called for increased coordination between security and development and trade policies.

According to Members, the EU should be willing to engage even more with the whole region and integrate this in its new 'EU-Africa Strategy – a partnership for sustainable and inclusive development'.

The European External Action Service is called on to include the effective practice of interreligious dialogue as a tool in its strategy for communication with third countries and to encourage mediation in conflict situations with the aim of protecting religious minorities and the freedom of religion and belief.

Lastly, Parliament expressed particular concern over the impact of security threats on the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. It urged Member States and the international community to increase their humanitarian assistance to Burkina Faso, in particular through the provision of food, water and medical services.