Resolution on Afghanistan, notably the allegations of sexual abuse of boys in the Logar Province

2019/2981(RSP) - 19/12/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Afghanistan, notably the allegations of sexual abuse of boys in the Logar Province.

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

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported that 136 Afghan boys in at least six schools in Logar province have been sexually abused by a paedophile ring. Sexual abuse, rape and exploitation of boys, a practice known as *bacha bazi* that constitutes child sex slavery, is prevalent in several provinces of Afghanistan.

The bachas, typically boys between 10 and 18 years old, are bought or kidnapped from impoverished families by influential members of the elite in rural areas, including politicians and army officers. Head teachers, teachers and local authorities from the Logar province have been implicated.

Impunity for sexual violence is common due to the powerful positions often held by the perpetrators, disbelief within victims' families and communities, and a value system that places family honour above the individual interest of the child.

Parliament expressed its serious concern about the prevalence of deeply-rooted practices of sexual abuse against boys, the impunity of the perpetrators and the vulnerable position of the victims. Members acknowledged the recent reaction of the Afghan authorities and their move to investigate and prosecute those responsible and reminded the authorities that the protection of children and other vulnerable groups must be the core of any human rights protection policy.

Afghan central and local authorities are called on to continue active measures to eradicate the *bacha bazi* practice in the country.

The Afghan Government is specifically called on to:

- immediately suspend from their positions the persons allegedly implicated in cases of sexual abuse and violence until the investigation has been concluded;
- provide the victims and their families with the necessary medical, psychological and social support;
- immediately establish a protection and reporting mechanism for organisations and advocates that report and expose children's rights abuses;
- set up a national victim support helpline dedicated to children's rights abuses;
- make full use of national and international law on child rights protection;
- ensure that human rights defenders are able to carry out their human rights work free of threats, intimidation, or impediment;
- start a nationwide campaign to educate society about the prohibition of *bacha bazi* and the right of minors to be protected from such physical and sexual abuse.

The resolution stated that only through a combination of law enforcement and education on the issue will it be possible to achieve the cultural change needed in Afghan society to eliminate this practice.

Lastly, Parliament called on EU Member States with diplomatic missions in Afghanistan and their development agencies on the ground to assist the authorities and local civil society actors working to eradicate the *bacha bazi* practice from Afghan society.