Resolution on Nigeria, notably the recent terrorist attacks

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Nigeria, notably the recent terrorist attacks.

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

Terrorist activities on the rise

Parliament recalled that the security situation in Nigeria had deteriorated sharply in recent years, posing a serious threat to regional and international security. Violent extremism, and terrorist activities in particular, are on the increase, and jihadist groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) are growing in power and influence. In the list of 163 countries compiled by the Global Terrorism Index, Nigeria is the third most affected by terrorism, after Iraq and Afghanistan.

ISWAP claimed responsibility for the execution of 11 people in a video released on 26 December 2019. The group claimed all those killed were Christians, and that the attack was in retaliation for the death of IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in Syria. These killings are part of a wider series of terrorist acts, including an attack on 24 December 2019 on a Christian village near Chibok, which resulted in the death of seven villagers and the abduction of a teenage girl, the killing of three civilians near Biu and the killing of seven civilians in Nganzai.

According to the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, over 6 000 Christians have been murdered since 2015 by jihadist groups or have perished as a result of the ‘your land or your blood’ policy carried out by Fulani militants. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has ruled that there are reasonable grounds to consider that crimes against humanity have been committed in Nigeria by Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces, including murder and persecution.

Condemnation of human rights violations

Parliament deplored the terrorist attacks that have taken place in the country. It strongly condemned the repeated violations of human rights, international law and humanitarian law, whether based on religion or ethnicity, and in particular the recent upsurge in violence against ethnic and religious communities.

Members urged the Nigerian authorities to ensure respect for human rights in the country and to protect the civilian population against terrorism and violence, in line with the country's international obligations. They stressed the need to continue to promote inter-religious dialogue and the peaceful coexistence of citizens, irrespective of their religion, by engaging in dialogue with all stakeholders, including the Nigerian Inter-religious Council. They recalled that education and economic opportunities are powerful tools against radicalisation.

Protecting children and women

The resolution deplored the fact that children are increasingly being recruited by terrorist groups and used as child soldiers or suicide bombers.

Members called on the Nigerian authorities to end the military detention of children and to adapt the counter-terrorism strategy and the judicial and law enforcement framework to protect the rights of the most vulnerable populations, especially children. They also called for better support, including psychological assistance, for Nigerian women who are victims of widespread sexual and gender-based violence.

Combating impunity and preventing radicalisation

Stressing that the fight against impunity is fundamental to the stability of the country and the building of lasting peace, Parliament called on the Nigerian authorities to conduct investigations in order to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice and to take measures to strengthen the capacity and independence of the Nigerian judicial system.

Given that military intervention alone is not sufficient to effectively combat terrorism, the resolution called on the Nigerian government to develop a comprehensive strategy to address the root causes of terrorism, focusing on prevention to reduce opportunities for recruitment and radicalization and to stop the financing of terrorism.

Fighting terrorism

Members called on the European Union, the African Union and the international community to step up their efforts to combat terrorism in Nigeria and to maintain their political and security assistance in the country and in the region as a whole.

They called for increased donor support and coordination for displaced populations in Nigeria and called for measures to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers. Lastly, they reiterated that responding to the climate emergency is essential to ensure economic stability and peace in the region.