Respect for human rights in the European Union in 1996

1996/2239(INI) - 17/02/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Adopting the report by Mrs Aline PAILLER (GUE/NGL, F) on respect for human rights in the European Union, the European Parliament insists on the need to ensure full respect for human rights in the Member States pointing out that human rights are the natural rights of each individual and are thus not tied to any obligation or preconditions. It reaffirms its wish that the European Union should accede to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and calls on the Governments of the Member States to set up in each country a consultative committee on human rights involving humanitarian organizations and charged with submitting an annual report on the development of the human rights situation. It also calls on the Member States to abolish capital punishment even for exceptional crimes. - Immigration and right of asylum: Parliament calls on the Member States to sign and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families adopted by the United Nations in 1990. It announces its intention of monitoring the process of regularizing the position of illegal immigrants already under way in certain Member States. It calls for immigrants from outside the Community to enjoy the same economic and social rights and to be granted the same civil, cultural and political rights, including the right to vote in local elections. It calls on the Member States to recognize the right of families to live together and grant a secure right of residence to under-age asylum seekers. It calls on the Member States to enable third country nationals who have secured the right of long-term residence and intend to remain in the EU to acquire nationality. Parliament calls for improvements regarding hygiene and food in centres where asylum-seekers are held and measures to ensure that they are treated humanely. It urges that no foreigners suffering from a serious illness be expelled or deported. It demands that female asylum-seekers and migrant workers enjoy their own rights independently of their marital status. It considers that there should be no recurrence of secret mass deportations and expulsions involving the prior administration of drugs to those concerned. It calls on the Schengen Member States not to deport illegal immigrants and refugees back to a country where they face torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment. Finally, it calls on the Member States to eliminate any possibility of 'dual sentencing', that is to say expulsion of non-Community residents who have completed prison sentences. - Racism and xenophobia: reiterating its condemnation of all kinds of racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism, Parliament calls on the Member States to treat racism as a crime and recommends that they set up an independent body charged with combating racism in each Member State. It proposes that 21 March be designated European Day for Combating Racism and that a media prize against racism should be awarded on 21 March every year. It condemns political leaders who encourage racism and xenophobia and calls on the political parties to suppress all racism propaganda in their electoral programmes. It instructs its Committee on the Rules of Procedure, the Verification of Credentials and Immunities to propose that the President be empowered to take disciplinary action in response to racist remarks made by Members of the European Parliament. - Economic and social rights: Parliament deplores that 52 million people in the European Union live in poverty and urges the Council to adopt without delay the Poverty IV programme and to make measures to combat poverty and social exclusion a political priority. It believes that an increased amount of EU budget should be earmarked for this purpose in connection with pilot projects. It calls on Member States to take decisive action regarding the right to work, social security, protection against poverty and social exclusion and the right to housing and other social rights. It advocates the drawing up at Community level of instruments laying down minimum guarantees in respect of income, social protection, the right to medical treatment and housing. It condemns those municipal authorities which have banned begging on their territory. Parliament also calls on the Member States to adopt a European legal framework to guarantee access to employment for people with disabilities and calls on them to respect the recommendations of the ILO (International Labour Organization) concerning non-discrimination as regards labour, concerning child labour and concerning trade union freedom. It calls on the Fifteen to comply with recommendations by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers

concerning the banning of forced labour, freedom of association and the right to strike. Trade union freedom should be recognized as a fundamental right in all the Member States. - Equal rights and non-discrimination: it is critical of the fact that Council of Europe texts on ethnic groups and minorities (the framework convention and minority languages charter) have still to be ratified by all EU Member States. It calls on Member States to recognize the specific situation of traveller minorities (SINTI and ROMA). It calls on all Member States to recognize equal rights for homosexuals, notably through the establishment of civil union contracts and measures to help combat the prejudices to which they are subject. They call on the Austrian Government to abrogate its anti-homosexual laws. With regard to women, it calls on the Member States to promote equality of treatment and opportunity for women and ensure their effective and equitable participation in public life and the decision-making process in all spheres. To achieve this, positive action is essential and it calls on the Member States to combat all sexism in the media, advertising and school textbooks and to give women positive role models. It proposes that 1999 be designated as European Year Against Violence to Women and calls on the Member States to ensure that all women in trouble are offered material, psychological and moral support, enabling them to make their own choices. It calls for measures to punish and prosecute those who carry out genital mutilation of women and girls. It calls on the Fifteen to revise any existing rules which permit forced sterilization and urges Member States to lay down measures to protect prostitutes and encourage their reintegration into society. With regard to children: Member States should take legislative measures to enable to prosecute on their territory the perpetrators of sexual abuse against children committed in third countries. It calls on the Member States to criminalize all violence against children and proposes that 20 November each year be designated European Day for Childrens' Rights. The situation of prisoners and persons under arrest: Parliament calls for the banning of and punishment of all forms of inhuman or degrading treatment and torture and is concerned that detention continues to be regarded exclusively as a form of punishment and not a means of readapting and rehabilitating prisoners. It calls for an improvement in prison conditions, pointing out that one of the objectives of penitentiary law should be to rehabilitate those who have been deprived of their freedom with a view to reintegrating them into society. It calls on Member States to set up family visit units in prisons and for these to be exempt from surveillance. It calls for improved access to health care and detention and the development of sports facilities. It calls on Member States, wherever possible, to apply alternatives to imprisonment, in particular by introducing administration and/or financial penalties for minor offences, encourage alternative punishment such as community service, establishing open or semi-open prisons and granting conditional discharge. It calls for special attention to be given to certain particularly vulnerable groups of prisoners, in particular women , immigrants, ethnic minorities and homosexuals. It calls on Member States to give the rehabilitation and education of minors who offend precedence over their imprisonment and never to impose normal prison sentences on children under 16 years of age. It calls for sex offenders to be held in preventive detention if the risk that they will be repeat their crimes cannot be entirely ruled out. Freedom of information, expression and creation: Parliament reaffirms the right of all persons to freedom of expression and calls on the Member States to recognize and promote regional languages and cultures, notably in teaching and the media. It condemns all forms of cultural censorship while stipulating that freedom of expression must not become a pretext for racial hatred in any form. It calls for rules to be adopted to guarantee the public and journalists right of access to Community documents and for a directive on combating media concentration in order to guarantee pluralism of information. - Political rights: Parliament calls on all the Member States to recognize the right of conscientious objection. It once more condemns the reference to religion on identity cards and is concerned at possible misuses of the Schengen information system data base which tends to criminalize foreigners and calls for such data bases to be required to respect the right to privacy. It condemns the practice of illegal phone tapping and calls on the Member States to adopt legislation which ensures that a balance is struck between the need to combat crime and the need to protect fundamental rights and freedoms. It calls for measures to combat the violation of individual rights by certain sects which should be refused the status of religious or cultural organizations and it very firmly condemns all acts of terrorism and calls on Member States to clamp down on them severely.