Resolution on Bangladesh

2006/2663(RSP) - 16/11/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted by 60 votes to 1, with 1 abstention, a resolution on Bangladesh.

The resolution was tabled by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL and UEN groups.

The resolution recalls that, in 2006, three journalists were killed and at least 95 others were attacked, and 55 press correspondents were the targets of intimidation because of articles considered to be "non-Islamic", and more than 70 journalists were forced to flee the country following threats, according to reports of "Reporters sans Frontières" on press freedom in Bangladesh.

The Parliament deplores recent acts of violence and strongly condemns the physical attacks on journalists, NGO staff, trade unionists and others, and the violence related to the forthcoming general election and the transitional arrangements. It calls for a strong and decisive caretaker government, which will counteract instability and instil confidence in free and fair parliamentary elections, with the participation of all parties and within the planned timeframe.

The Bangladeshi Caretaker Government is called upon to:

- take immediate steps to reconstitute the Election Commission;
- create a climate in which all members of the electorate will feel genuinely free to use their right to vote, notably by disarming supporters of Islamist groups engaged in actions and propaganda characterised by religious intolerance;
- put an end to the climate of impunity and to bring to justice the perpetrators of violence and harassment directed towards journalists in Bangladesh;
- guarantee media balance during the election campaign.

The Parliament reaffirms its commitment to Bangladesh's unique tradition of religious tolerance and secularism. It calls on the Council and the Commission to monitor carefully the human rights situation, the political situation and press freedom in Bangladesh and to draw up programmes in the framework of EU-Bangladesh cooperation to promote freedom of the press and freedom of speech.

The Parliament also welcomes the Commission's decision to send an EU Election Observation Mission to observe the forthcoming general election, and urges the rapid establishment of a short-term political Election Observation Mission by Parliament.