Basic information

2013/2020(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Human rights situation in the Sahel region **Subject** 6.10.09 Human rights situation in the world 6.40.07 Relations with African countries	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	TANNOCK Timothy Charles Ayrton (ECR)	27/11/2012
	Shadow rapporteur ROATTA Jean (PPE) ARLACCHI Pino (S&D) WEBER Renate (ALDE) KIIL-NIELSEN Nicole (Verts/ALE) VERGIAT Marie-Christine (GUE/NGL) MEYER Willy (GUE/NGL)	

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
DEVE Development	ROATTA Jean (PPE)	22/01/2013
FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	GABRIEL Mariya (PPE)	06/03/2013

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
11/03/2013	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
24/09/2013	Vote in committee		
08/10/2013	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0325/2013	Summary
21/10/2013	Debate in Parliament		

22/10/2013	Decision by Parliament	T7-0431/2013	Summary
22/10/2013	Results of vote in Parliament		
22/10/2013	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2013/2020(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/7/11930

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE510.774	21/05/2013	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE514.662	04/07/2013	
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE513.183	04/09/2013	
Committee opinion	DEVE	PE510.830	23/09/2013	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0325/2013	08/10/2013	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0431/2013	22/10/2013	Summary

Human rights situation in the Sahel region

2013/2020(INI) - 08/10/2013 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Charles TANNOCK (ECR, UK) on the situation of human rights in the Sahel region.

Members recalled that the Sahel is one of the poorest regions of the world, which confronts grave problems regarding human rights, the rule of law, security and armed conflict, as well as economic and social development. The countries identified by the EU Sahel Strategy are Mauritania, Mali, Niger and relevant parts of Burkina Faso and Chad.

The report emphasised the important role played by the **EU, as the world's largest aid donor**, in addressing the development challenges faced by the Sahel region and stressed the importance of engaging other international actors in efforts such as eradicating poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality and reducing child mortality rates.

Human rights in armed conflict situations: Members attached particular urgency to the human rights situation in Mali and urged the EU and the Sahel countries to implement fully the following UN Security Council resolutions. They deplored the grave violations and brutal acts of violence perpetrated against children in Mali. They called on all the Sahel countries to embark on a policy of prevention and protection aimed at ensuring that children will not be recruited by force by armed groups.

Welcoming the French military operation 'Serval' and the role played by the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Members called for strengthen aid in this country. They also stressed that efforts to **tackle impunity**, including in connection with gender-based violence in conflicts, which is an affront to women's dignity, are key to restoring stability and building lasting peace.

The report called on the EU, the Sahel countries, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the African Union and ECOWAS to coordinate their refugee policies in order to provide assistance to refugees, guarantee human security for the most vulnerable groups and establish self-sufficiency programmes.

Accountability and reform of governmental, judicial and security institutions: Members considered that the current human rights challenges in the Sahel cannot be disaggregated from a **general crisis of governance**, encompassing widespread corruption in public office, weak provision of basic services, poor implementation of social and economic rights, and particularly in the vast and often sparsely populated Saharan regions, profound challenges in upholding the rule of law and maintaining effective border controls.

They expressed particular alarm at the 'trafficking highways', which, helped by the porousness of the borders, stretch across Africa from west to east, and south to north from the West African coast, facilitating the transport of firearms, narcotics, cigarettes, oil, counterfeit medicine and people. Members called for a **comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy**, including the collection and analysis of data, the prosecution and punishment of traffickers, and measures for the rehabilitation and social integration of all those, mostly women and girls, who are victims of trafficking.

The report condemned the increased incidences of kidnapping and hostage-taking in the region and warned against a **perceived spread of extremism in the Arab Spring countries**. They invited the VP/HR to provide leadership in the process of cooperation with these countries' governments, institutions and civil society organisations in such a way as to support truly democratic transition processes.

Members considered it crucial to encourage the reform of institutions responsible for the judiciary, security and basic services in the Sahel countries, in order to help restore the rule of law and create better conditions for democratic transition, human rights, sustainable development and institutional legitimacy. They encouraged Sahel governments to continue the process of **decentralisation**, to transfer more power and resources to local authorities and to boost their capacity, legitimacy and accountability. Moreover, they pointed to the imperative in Mali, in particular, of ensuring adequate human and financial resourcing of the Ministry of Justice, as well as the professional training of its staff. They also called on the Sahel countries to cooperate with the International Criminal Court (ICC), cease all arbitrary arrests and improve living conditions for prisoners.

Civic freedoms and democratic governance: Members considered it essential to create conditions conducive to the holding of free, fair and democratic elections, in keeping with international standards. They welcomed the use of an EU election observation mission (EOM) in the Malian elections but recalled the need for the EEAS to ensure adequate follow-up to the EOM recommendations.

Members deeply regret restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly and association in the Sahel. They expressed particular concern at reports in Chad of the harassment, intimidation and arrest of journalists, political opponents, etc.

Development, humanitarian aid and human rights: Members reiterated that human security and development in the Sahel countries are inextricably linked, as stated in the EU's 2011 Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel .They stressed that a stable security situation, economic and political stability, and stability as regards respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are necessary in this region.

They noted with due seriousness the extreme and pervasive poverty across the Sahel, particularly in Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso, but also in Mauritania. They acknowledged the **detrimental impact of poverty on the prospects of realising human rights** and the interdependence of development, democracy, human rights, good governance and security in the Sahel. They also reiterated that the **allocation of European development aid funding can be effective only if the Union is in a position to carry out proper scrutiny** of the way in which that funding is used, in order to satisfy itself that it is not being diverted from its intended purpose.

Members also called on the EU to support all measures being taken by Sahel countries, NGOs, and civil society to improve access to care, especially for the most vulnerable populations.

Members called on the governments of the Sahel countries to **address the root causes of the crisis** on the basis of a sustainable economic development strategy that takes account of their citizens' political, economic and social concerns, such as access to food, education, health care, employment and housing, wealth redistribution and decent living conditions. Members stressed the urgent need to grant EU humanitarian aid to help achieve the Millennium Goals. In order to alleviate the food crisis, the Commission is called upon to make optimum use of the funds earmarked for combating malnutrition (EUR 123.5 million in 2012) in order to meet the needs of the people concerned and support local capacitybuilding.

Measures have also been called to improve access to drinking water and strengthen the principle of universal access to education and improve basic infrastructures.

Human rights situation of women, children and minorities: Members condemned in the strongest terms the ongoing slavery, often by inheritance, in the Sahel region, and particular in Mauritania, where it reportedly affects a sizeable minority of the population. They expressed deep concern about evidence of child labour in Malian gold mines, agriculture, forestry and other sectors of the economy as well as child abduction for ransom and sale in Chad.

Members called on the Sahel states to promote access to education for all children, both boys and girls, and for nomad peoples, with no discrimination on the grounds of race, caste or ethnicity.

As regards women, Members called for measures to combat the discrimination faced by women and girls in much of this region, the manifestations of which include forced marriage, child marriage, sexual exploitation, under-education and widespread female genital mutilation. They called in particular for the adoption of general anti-discrimination laws in all of the countries concerned.

The report emphasised the need for human rights in Western Sahara and in the **Tindouf camps** to be addressed, even without anticipating any final political settlement or expressing a view on such a settlement.

To conclude, Members made a series of **proposed EU policy recommendations to**:

- address the plight of refugees and IDPs throughout the region,
- tackle the scourge of slavery, human trafficking and other forms of trafficking and smuggling, which have proved so detrimental to human rights and security in the region,
- improve the situation of women, children and minorities,
- channell aid in an effective and efficient manner, offering added support to governments on the 'more for more' principle,
- end the culture of impunity, including by supporting measures already being proposed or put in place in Mali and elsewhere,
- protect civic freedoms and improving democratic governance through inclusive electoral processes and credible representation, and by supporting civil society,
- protect cultural diversity and heritage.

Members also recommended that the EU consider the possibility of **targeted sanctions**, through asset freezes, visa bans or other instruments, of the most serious violators of human rights, both in Mali and elsewhere in the region.

Human rights situation in the Sahel region

2013/2020(INI) - 22/10/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation of human rights in the Sahel region.

Parliament recalled that the Sahel is one of the poorest regions of the world, which confronts grave problems regarding human rights, the rule of law, security and armed conflict, as well as economic and social development. The countries identified by the EU Sahel Strategy are Mauritania, Mali, Niger and relevant parts of Burkina Faso and Chad.

Parliament emphasised the important role played by the **EU, as the world's largest aid donor**, in addressing the development challenges faced by the Sahel region and stressed the importance of engaging other international actors in efforts such as eradicating poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality and reducing child mortality rates.

Human rights in armed conflict situations: Parliament attached particular urgency to the human rights situation in Mali and urged the EU and the Sahel countries to implement fully the following UN Security Council resolutions, in particular, Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which calls for women's participation in all aspects and at all levels of conflict resolution and Resolution 1820 on sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. Parliament affirms that the EU must treat these situations as fundamental problems. They deplored the grave violations and brutal acts of violence perpetrated against children in Mali. They called on all the Sahel countries to embark on a policy of prevention and protection aimed at ensuring that children will not be recruited by force by armed groups. Parliament considers that these States should be condemned.

Welcoming the French military operation 'Serval' and the role played by the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Parliament called for strengthened aid in this country. It also stressed that to ensure lasting peace and stability in Mali, it is necessary to **tackle impunity** , providing redress to victims and prosecuting all perpetrators of serious human rights violations.

Parliament also deplored the large population displacements resulting from armed conflict and the fate of thousands of Darfuri refugees in eastern Chad. It called on the EU, the Sahel countries, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the African Union and ECOWAS to coordinate their refugee policies in order to provide assistance to refugees and to guarantee human security for the most vulnerable groups.

It encourages host countries to work with the UN and other actors to improve the situation of refugees and displaced persons so that, wherever possible, they can return to their home regions.

Accountability and reform of governmental, judicial and security institutions: Parliament considered that the current human rights challenges in the Sahel cannot be disaggregated from a **general crisis of governance**, encompassing widespread corruption in public office, weak provision of basic services, poor implementation of social and economic rights, and particularly in the vast and often sparsely populated Saharan regions, profound challenges in upholding the rule of law and maintaining effective border controls.

It expressed particular alarm at the 'trafficking highways', which, helped by the porousness of the borders, stretch across Africa from west to east, and south to north from the West African coast, facilitating the transport of firearms, narcotics, cigarettes, oil, counterfeit medicine and people. Parliament called for a **comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy**, including the collection and analysis of data, the prosecution and punishment of traffickers, and measures for the rehabilitation and social integration of all those, who are victims of trafficking.

Parliament also condemned the increased incidences of kidnapping and hostage-taking in the region and warned against a **perceived spread of extremism in the Arab Spring countries**. It invited the VP/HR to provide leadership in the process of cooperation with these countries' governments, institutions and civil society organisations in such a way as to support truly democratic transition processes.

Faced with these reports, Parliament considered it crucial to encourage the reform of institutions responsible for the judiciary, security and basic services in the Sahel countries, in order to help restore the rule of law and create better conditions for democratic transition, human rights, sustainable development and institutional legitimacy. It encouraged Sahel governments to continue the process of **decentralisation**, to transfer more power and resources to local authorities and to boost their capacity, legitimacy and accountability. Moreover, it pointed to the imperative in Mali, in particular, of ensuring adequate human and financial resourcing of the Ministry of Justice, as well as the professional training of its staff and that the governments of the Sahel countries respect the independence and the impartiality of the courts.

It also called on the Sahel countries to cooperate with the International Criminal Court (ICC), cease all arbitrary arrests and improve living conditions for prisoners.

Civic freedoms and democratic governance: Parliament considered it essential to create conditions conducive to the holding of free, fair and democratic elections, in keeping with international standards. It welcomed the use of an EU election observation mission (EOM) in the Malian elections but recalled the need for the EEAS to ensure adequate follow-up to the EOM recommendations.

It deeply regrets restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly and association in the Sahel. It called on these countries to cease all arbitrary arrests and intimidation campaigns aimed at the press and the media, human rights defenders, or opposition activists.

Development, humanitarian aid and human rights: Parliament reiterated that human security and development in the Sahel countries are inextricably linked, as stated in the EU's 2011 Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel .It stressed that a stable security situation, economic and political stability, and stability as regards respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are necessary in this region.

Parliament noted with due seriousness the extreme and pervasive poverty across the Sahel, particularly in Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso, but also in Mauritania. It acknowledged the **interdependence of development, democracy, human rights, good governance and security** in the Sahel and reiterated its support for the human rights-based approach and democratic ownership in development co-operation, based on harnessing local participation and knowledge to achieve development goals on the ground.

Members also reiterated that the **allocation of European development aid funding can be effective only if the Union is in a position to carry out proper scrutiny** of the way in which that funding is used, in order to satisfy itself that it is not being diverted from its intended purpose.

Parliament also called on the EU to support all measures being taken by Sahel countries, NGOs, and civil society to improve access to care, especially for the most vulnerable populations.

At the same time, the governments of the Sahel countries are called on to **address the root causes of the crisis** on the basis of a sustainable economic development strategy that takes account of their citizens' political, economic and social concerns, such as access to food, education, health care, employment and housing, wealth redistribution and decent living conditions. Parliament stressed the urgent need to grant EU humanitarian aid to help achieve the Millennium Goals, especially for women.

Faced with **a new imminent food crisis in the Sahel**, Parliament called on the Commission to make optimum use of the funds earmarked for combating malnutrition (EUR 123.5 million in 2012) in order to meet the needs of the people concerned and support local capacitybuilding. Measures have also been called to improve access to drinking water and strengthen the principle of universal access to education and improve basic infrastructures.

Human rights situation of women, children and minorities: Parliament condemned in the strongest terms the ongoing slavery, often by inheritance, in the Sahel region, and particular in Mauritania, where it reportedly affects a sizeable minority of the population. It expressed deep concern about evidence of child labour in Malian gold mines, agriculture, forestry and other sectors of the economy as well as child abduction for ransom and sale in Chad.

In general, Parliament called on the Sahel states to promote access to education for all children, both boys and girls, and for nomad peoples, with no discrimination on the grounds of race, caste or ethnicity.

As regards women, Parliament called for measures to combat the discrimination faced by women and girls in much of this region, the manifestations of which include forced marriage, child marriage, sexual exploitation, under-education and widespread female genital mutilation. It called in particular for the adoption of general anti-discrimination laws in all of the countries concerned. It encouraged development partners to allocate financial support to projects which seek specifically to empower women in the region.

Western Sahara and the Tuareg people: Parliament reaffirmed its support for the UN resolutions on Western Sahara and called for full respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Sahrawi people.

It emphasises the need for human rights in Western Sahara and in the Tindouf camps to be addressed, even without anticipating any final political settlement or expressing a view on such a settlement. It recalled that Western Sahara remains one of the world's most-mined areas which represented a major obstacle to the resolution of the dispute. Consequently, Parliament called on Morocco to sign up to the Mine Ban Treaty. It stressed the opportunity deriving from the political and democratic reforms undertaken in Morocco and welcomed the Moroccan Government's endorsement of the National Council for Human Rights. The plenary moreover encouraged **the governments of Morocco and Algeria** to develop and enhance their political dialogue to improve regional dynamics and avoid increasing tensions, and for the benefit of the wider international community.

Parliament otherwise believed that a rights-based approach to the situation and development of the **Tuareg people**, which honestly addresses historic grievances, while bearing in mind the fact that the Tuareg people live in areas with other ethnic groups as well, is essential for peace and development in the Sahel region. In general, Parliament takes the view that all these peoples should once again be given the chance to live peacefully side by side, on the basis of a better dialogue involving them in the processes of decision-making.

To conclude, Members made a series of proposed **EU Policy recommendations for the Sahel**. These can be summarised as follows:

- address the plight of refugees and IDPs throughout the region;
- tackle the scourge of slavery, human trafficking and other forms of trafficking and smuggling in the region;
- improve the situation of women, children and minorities;
- channel aid in an effective and efficient manner, offering added support to governments on the 'more for more' principle;
- end the culture of impunity, including by supporting measures already being proposed or put in place in Mali and elsewhere;

- protect civic freedoms and improving democratic governance through inclusive electoral processes and credible representation, and by supporting civil society;
- protect cultural diversity and heritage.

Members also recommended that the EU consider the possibility of **targeted sanctions**, through asset freezes, visa bans or other instruments, of the most serious violators of human rights, both in Mali and elsewhere in the region.