

Friday 26 October 2012

Human rights situation in the United Arab Emirates

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European Parliament resolution of 26 October 2012 on the human rights situation in the United Arab Emirates (2012/2842(RSP))

(2014/C 72 E/04)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 24 March 2011 on EU relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC),
 - having regard to the visit by its Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula to the United Arab Emirates from 29 April to 3 May 2012,
 - having regard to Article 30 of the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates,
 - having regard to the Arab Charter on Human Rights, to which the United Arab Emirates is a party,
 - having regard to its annual human rights reports,
 - having regard to the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy,
 - having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders of 2004, as updated in 2008,
 - having regard to the Co-Chairs' statement at the 22nd EU-GCC Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting in Luxembourg of 25 June 2012,
 - having regard to the statement by the Vice-President / High Representative (VP/HR) following the EU-GCC Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting of 20 April 2011 and her remarks following the 22nd EU-GCC Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting of 25 June 2012,
 - having regard to the Cooperation Agreement of 25 February 1989 between the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council,
 - having regard to the Joint Action Programme (2010-2013) for the implementation of the EU-GCC Cooperation Agreement of 1989,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),
 - having regard to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) and the UN Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and on the Rights of the Child (CRC),
 - having regard to the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, of 12 April 2012,
 - having regard to Rules 122(5) and 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the government of the United Arab Emirates has accelerated its crackdown on human rights defenders and civil society activists in 2012, bringing the number of political detainees to 64;

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- B. whereas most of them are in incommunicado detention, there are allegations of torture, and they are being denied legal assistance;
- C. whereas the detainees include the vice-president of the Student Association of the United Arab Emirates, Mansoor al-Ahmadi, one sitting judge, Mohamed al-Abdoully, two former judges, Khamis al-Zyoudi and Ahmed al-Za'abi, and two prominent human rights lawyers, Mohamed al-Mansoori – a former president of the Jurists' Association – and Mohamed al-Roken;
- D. whereas employees of the Emirian lawyer who is offering the detainees legal assistance have allegedly been subjected to a systematic campaign of harassment and intimidation, including the deportation of three non-Emirian employees on grounds of national security; whereas lawyers who have travelled to the United Arab Emirates to offer legal assistance to the detainees have also been harassed;
- E. whereas human rights defenders and democracy activists have been subjected to harassment, travel bans, restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, arbitrary detention, revocation of nationality, deportation, and illegal imprisonment;
- F. whereas the authorities of the United Arab Emirates have insisted that their crackdown is a response to a foreign-inspired Islamist plot that aims to overthrow the government; whereas the detainees all have ties to al-Islah, a peaceful Islamist group that has operated in the United Arab Emirates since 1974; whereas the evidence indicates that national security is the pretext for a crackdown on peaceful activism designed to stifle calls for constitutional reform and reform on human rights issues such as statelessness;
- G. whereas a prominent human rights defender and blogger, Ahmed Mansoor, was attacked twice in recent weeks and has suffered constant intimidation and threats; whereas he spent seven months in jail in 2011 before his conviction in November for insulting the country's senior officials; whereas the authorities have retained his passport and arbitrarily barred him from travelling;
- H. whereas, together with other activists, Mansoor was accused of insulting political figures in the country after arranging for and signing a petition calling for greater political participation via an elected parliament with full legislative and regulatory powers;
- I. whereas on 15 July 2012, in his statement, the public prosecutor, announced that the detained group of political opponents would be investigated for plotting 'crimes against state security', 'opposing the UAE constitution and ruling system', and having ties to 'foreign organisations and agendas';
- J. whereas while freedom of speech and press freedom are constitutionally protected in the United Arab Emirates, its penal code allows the authorities to prosecute people for speech which is critical of the government; whereas at least one online discussion forum has been closed down, and access from the United Arab Emirates to several political websites has been blocked;
- K. whereas prominent internationally renowned non-governmental organisations promoting democracy in the region were closed in 2012 by the authorities of the United Arab Emirates, notably the Dubai office of the National Democratic Institute and the Abu Dhabi office of the German pro-democracy think tank Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung;
- L. whereas, according to the report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, trafficking in persons for labour exploitation continues to be widespread in the United Arab Emirates and victims of such trafficking remain unidentified;
- M. whereas the government made little progress in implementing the CEDAW Committee recommendation in early 2010;
- N. whereas death sentences continue to be imposed in the United Arab Emirates;

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1. Expresses great concern about assaults, repression and intimidation against human rights defenders, political activists and civil society actors within the United Arab Emirates who peacefully exercise their basic rights to freedom of expression, opinion, and assembly; calls on the authorities of the United Arab Emirates to halt the ongoing crackdowns immediately;
 2. Calls for the unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience and activists including human rights defenders and calls on the authorities of the United Arab Emirates to ensure that detainees deemed to have broken the law be brought before a judge, be charged with a crime and be provided with the legal assistance of their choosing;
 3. Calls on the authorities of the United Arab Emirates to conduct thorough and impartial investigations into the assault and public threats made against Ahmed Mansoor and all the other cases of harassment and assault;
 4. Calls for the respect of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, both online and offline, freedom of assembly, women's rights and gender equality, the fight against discrimination, and the right to a fair trial;
 5. Welcomes the accession of the United Arab Emirates on 19 July 2012 to the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and urges the UAE authorities to affirm its commitment to its assumed treaty obligations by conducting thorough, impartial and independent investigations into the allegations of torture as well as allegations that individuals have been forcibly disappeared;
 6. Calls on the United Arab Emirates to affirm its intent to 'uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights' in line with its bid for membership of the UN Human Rights Council for 2013 to 2015 by ratifying the ICCPR and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and their optional protocols and by issuing a standing invitation to visit to all UN special procedure mandate holders;
 7. Condemns the application of the death penalty under any circumstance;
 8. Welcomes the adoption of the new EU human rights package and urges the European institutions, including the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, to take concrete actions, together with the 27 Member States, to ensure a clear and principled EU policy vis-à-vis the United Arab Emirates that addresses the ongoing serious human rights violations, through démarches, public statements and initiatives at the Human Rights Council;
 9. Calls on the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union and the European institutions to place human rights at the centre of its relations with all third countries, including strategic partners, with special emphasis on the next EU-GCC Ministerial Meeting;
 10. Believes that it is crucial to continue the efforts to increase the cooperation between the EU and the Gulf region and to promote mutual understanding and trust; considers that regular inter-parliamentary meetings between Parliament and its partners in the region are an important forum to develop a constructive and frank dialogue on issues of common concern;
 11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Government and Parliament of the United Arab Emirates, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Commission, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the governments of the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council.
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