

Friday 26 October 2012

Discrimination against girls in Pakistan, in particular the case of Malala Yousafzai

P7_TA(2012)0401

European Parliament resolution of 26 October 2012 on the discrimination against girls in Pakistan, in particular the case of Malala Yousafzai (2012/2843(RSP))

(2014/C 72 E/05)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2011 on the situation of women in Afghanistan and Pakistan ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on human rights and democracy in Pakistan, in particular those of 20 January 2011 ⁽²⁾ and 20 May 2010 ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 18 April 2012 on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World and the European Union's policy on the matter, including implications for the EU's strategic human rights policy ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the statement of 10 October 2012 by the spokesperson of the High Representative on the shooting of a young human rights defender in Pakistan,
- having regard to the statement of 10 October 2012 by the Executive Director of UN Women condemning the attack on Malala Yousafzai,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on intolerance, discrimination and violence on the basis of religion or belief, adopted on 21 February 2011,
- having regard to the EU-Pakistan five-year engagement plan of March 2012, containing priorities such as good governance, cooperation in the field of women's empowerment and dialogue on human rights,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on Pakistan of 25 June 2012, reiterating the EU's expectations regarding the promotion of and respect for human rights,
- having regard to the Commission Communication entitled 'A special place for children in EU external action' (COM(2008)0055),
- having regard to Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 18 December 1979 and the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women of 20 December 1993,

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0591.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 136 E, 11.5.2012, p. 90.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 161 E, 31.5.2011, p. 147.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0126.

Friday 26 October 2012

- having regard to UN Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security, and to UN Security Council resolution 1888 (2009) on sexual violence against women and children in situations of armed conflict, which emphasises the responsibility of all states to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes, including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls,

- having regard to Rules 122(5) and 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas on 9 October 2012 Malala Yousafzai, a 14-year-old girl from the Swat Valley, was singled out in the school bus on her way home, shot in the head and neck and severely wounded, while two other girls also sustained wounds in the attack;

- B. whereas Malala Yousafzai had become a national symbol of resistance against the Taliban's efforts to deprive girls of an education through blogs she wrote since the age of 11, receiving in December 2011 the National Youth Peace Prize, which has been renamed in her honour the National Malala Peace Prize;

- C. whereas the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have claimed responsibility for the attack and issued a statement after the attacks, claiming it was obligatory to kill anyone leading a campaign against Islamic law and announcing that the movement would attempt to kill Yousafzai again if she recovers from her injuries;

- D. whereas in Pakistan and many other Muslim countries protests have taken place in admiration of and solidarity with Malala Yousafzai and in condemnation of the brutal attack by the Taliban;

- E. whereas the security forces have reacted by arresting many suspects of the crime, and whereas the Pakistani Parliament has debated a motion condemning the attack, which has, however, met with resistance from the main opposition party, the Pakistan Muslim League-N;

- F. whereas the attack on Malala Yousafzai has been preceded in the last 12 months by the killing of human rights defenders Farida Afridi and Zarteef Afridi, allegedly for their work for women's welfare and education;

- G. whereas in recent months Pakistan has continued to experience attacks by armed groups using terror tactics and influenced by and/or associated with the Taliban or Al-Qaida, including the TTP and those attacks have often targeted government sites, schools and civilians, including children, in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and urban centres;

- H. whereas, in 2011, 11 incidents were reported of children being used by armed groups to carry out suicide attacks, children continued to be victims of indiscriminate attacks, including by improvised explosive devices and suicide bombings, a total of 57 children were killed during the reporting period by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, bomb blasts, shelling and targeted attacks and, on 13 September 2011, TTP allegedly attacked a school bus in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, killing four children;

- I. whereas, according to government figures, in 2012, 246 schools (59 girls' schools, 187 boys' schools) were destroyed and 763 damaged (244 girls' schools, 519 boys' schools) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province as a result of the conflict with the Taliban, depriving thousands of children of access to education;

Friday 26 October 2012

- J. whereas, from 2009 to the present, girls' schools have continued to be directly targeted by armed groups in bomb and improvised explosive device attacks, resulting in 152 incidents of partial or complete destruction of school facilities in the FATA and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in 2011; whereas the attacks were reportedly intended to avenge military operations in the region and were in opposition to secular and girls' education; whereas the most recent attack on a girls' school was perpetrated on 25 September 2012 in the Charsadda district;
- K. whereas the situation remains extremely serious for many women and girls in Pakistan, and whereas Pakistan is labelled the third most dangerous place in the world for women by the Global Gender Gap Index;
- L. whereas the Unesco's Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report of 16 October 2012 revealed that Pakistan had reduced the amount it spent on education to less than 2,3 % of the Gross National Product (GNP), despite having the second-largest number of out-of-school girls in the world;
- M. whereas girls often continue to be victims of domestic violence, trafficking and forced marriages or are traded in settlement of disputes;
- N. whereas, in most cases, the perpetrators of violence against women and girls remain unprosecuted;
- O. whereas, although there are a number of discriminatory laws against women in Pakistan, in 2011 and 2012 the Government of Pakistan introduced new legislation to tackle discrimination and violence against women more effectively, including laws against forced marriage, harassment of women at the workplace and at home, and acid attacks; whereas these laws are still awaiting implementation and enforcement;
- P. whereas the rise of Taliban control in certain territories is having negative consequences for women and girls, hindering them in the exercise of their rights;
- Q. whereas, in its five-year engagement plan of March 2012, the EU reaffirmed its commitment to building a strong long-term partnership based on mutual interests and shared values with Pakistan, supporting Pakistan's democratic institutions and civilian government, as well as civil society;
- R. whereas, while the EU is prepared to pursue cooperation, it is counting on Pakistan to respect its international commitments, in particular in the field of security and human rights, including women's rights;
- S. whereas on 5 June 2012 the EU and Pakistan announced that a Steering Committee on Counter-Terrorism was being set up with a view to closer cooperation in combating terrorism;
- T. whereas Article 3(5) of the Treaty on European Union states that the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights and civil liberties are fundamental principles and aims of the European Union and constitute common ground for its relations with third countries; whereas EU assistance in trade and development is conditional upon respect for human rights and minority rights;
1. Strongly condemns the violent attack on Malala Yousafzai and the serious injuries inflicted on two of her classmates, noting that the assault constitutes a severe violation of the Rights of the Child, as well as an assault on both basic human values and all human rights defenders in Pakistan;

Friday 26 October 2012

2. Expresses its admiration at and acknowledgement of the courage and determination with which Malala Yousafzai has, since a very young age, engaged in the struggle for the rights of girls to receive education and has become a role model for many girls of her age; welcomes the swift medical action that was taken by Pakistani military medics and medics in the UK and strongly hopes that she will be able to fully recover from her serious injuries;
3. Welcomes the widespread condemnation of the attack by large sections of Pakistani society, Islamic scholars and most major political parties; calls on all political parties to clearly condemn the TTP as the ones who have claimed responsibility for the attack;
4. Expresses its support for all those Pakistani families who encourage the education of their daughters;
5. Calls on the Government of Pakistan to ensure the safety of Malala Yousafzai and her family and to bring to justice those responsible for the assault; calls on the Government of Pakistan to ensure the safety of other human rights activists – particularly women and girls who become active in society and politics – who have received threats from the Taliban and other extremist groups; expresses its concern about the reported threats against 17-year-old Hinna Khan and her family;
6. Is deeply concerned about the situation of women and girls and the repeated reports of violations of children's and women's rights in Pakistan, including reports of children being used by armed groups to carry out suicide attacks; stresses that closer international attention must be paid as a matter of urgency to the situation of women and girls in Pakistan;
7. Is deeply worried about the worsening trend of violent extremism, which constitutes a serious threat to women and girls, and the use of intimidation and violence, which has already led to the blowing up of girls' schools and the flogging of women in parts of the FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa;
8. Urges the Pakistani authorities to prosecute those individuals and groups inciting violence, in particular those calling for the killing of individuals and groups with whom they disagree;
9. Demands that much more be done by the Pakistani Government to trace the hundreds, if not thousands, of victims of enforced disappearance in Pakistan, including children, some of them girls as young as nine and ten years old; calls for the results of internal government investigations into the scale of this problem to be published;
10. Welcomes the child protection policy in the FATA, launched on 10 January 2012, which is seeking to implement a plan for protective services and child protection units in all FATA agencies;
11. Welcomes the fact that the Child Protection Act 2010, as already in force in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, is now to be extended to the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA), including Swat, with immediate effect; hopes that the effective application of this act will help to bring the PATA under the writ of law;
12. Urges the Government of Pakistan to use the current momentum to make real improvements to women's and girls rights, reviewing and reforming parts of the Hudood Ordinances and the Law of Evidence, the Child Marriage Restraint Act and other pieces of legislation that violate the status and rights of women, making them subordinate in law;

Friday 26 October 2012

13. Welcomes the introduction of new legislation by the Government of Pakistan in 2011 and 2012 in order to tackle discrimination and violence against women more effectively, and calls on the government to ensure the actual implementation and enforcement of these new laws;
 14. Urges the Government of Pakistan to work closely with the UN and the EU in delivering on the Millennium Development Goals, in particular Goal 2 which states that 'by 2015 all children, girls and boys, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling'; calls on the Pakistani Government to make it a priority to increase the number of girls receiving school education and to guarantee their safety while receiving education;
 15. Calls on the Government of Pakistan to increase funding for public schools and to take effective measures to impose a mandatory standard curriculum of basic education and an inspection regime on all privately or publicly owned madrassas, which are often the only source of education, especially in rural areas;
 16. Calls on the Commission to develop, jointly with the Government of Pakistan, education programmes aimed at improving the literacy and education of women in Pakistan as part of its development aid policy;
 17. Urges the Commission and the Council, as well as the international community, to significantly increase funds aimed at efforts to protect women and girls from rape, abuse and domestic violence and to support measures to enable civil society movements against discrimination of women and girls;
 18. Calls on the Commission to act upon its pledge to children in its communication 'A Special Place for Children in the EU External Action' and to ensure that the EU does all it can to promote and safeguard the rights of children;
 19. Insists that women's and children's rights should be explicitly addressed in all human rights dialogues, and in particular the issue of combating and eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, in particular forced marriage, domestic violence and femicide, and likewise insists that the invocation of any custom, tradition or religious consideration of any kind in order to evade the duty to eliminate such brutality should be rejected; believes that the prevention of the practice of child marriage is vital to ensure that the fundamental rights of adolescent girls in Pakistan are respected;
 20. Calls on the competent EU institutions to continue to emphasise the issue of religious tolerance in society in their political dialogue with Pakistan, given that this matter is of central importance to the long-term fight against Islamist extremism;
 21. Urges the competent EU institutions to insist that the Government of Pakistan must uphold the democracy and human rights clause enshrined in the cooperation agreement between the European Union and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; reiterates its call on the European External Action Service and the EU Special Representative for Human Rights in particular to regularly report on the implementation of the cooperation agreement and the democracy and human rights clause, including the exercise of women's and children's rights;
 22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the European External Action Service, the Vice-President of the European Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, UN Women, the UN Human Rights Council and the Government and Parliament of Pakistan.
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