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P8\_TA(2016)0128

**Pakistan, in particular the attack in Lahore****European Parliament resolution of 14 April 2016 on Pakistan, in particular the attack in Lahore (2016/2644(RSP))**

(2018/C 058/16)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Pakistan,
- having regard to the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, of 27 March 2016 on the attack in Lahore, Pakistan,
- having regard to the statement by the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, of 29 October 2014,
- having regard to the statements by the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, of 27 March 2016 on the bombing in Pakistan and of 21 January 2016 on the Bacha Khan University attack,
- having regard to the UN Security Council statement of 28 March 2016 on terrorist attacks in Lahore, Pakistan,
- having regard to the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief,
- having regard to the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Rita Izsák-Ndiaye, on 'Hate speech and incitement to hatred against minorities in the media', of 5 January 2015,
- having regard to the statement by Nobel Peace Prize winner and Sakharov Prize winner Malala Yousafzai of 27 March 2016,
- having regard to the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Gabriela Knaul, of 4 April 2013, and the report of the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances of 26 February 2013 on its mission to Pakistan,
- having regard to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on the death penalty, as revised on 12 April 2013,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on Pakistan of 20 July 2015,
- having regard to the EU-Pakistan five-year Engagement Plan of March 2012, which contains priorities such as good governance and dialogue on human rights, as well as the closely related second EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue of 25 March 2014,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief,

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- having regard to its resolution of 17 December 2015 on the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2014 and the European Union's policy on the matter <sup>(1)</sup>,
  
- having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
  
- A. whereas on 27 March 2016, at a playground in Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park in Lahore, a suicide bomb attack caused the deaths of more than 73 people and injured more than 300, including many women and children; whereas the terrorist Islamist group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar has claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that they intentionally targeted Christians; whereas, however, most of those wounded and killed were Muslims and all of them were Pakistanis;
  
- B. whereas, at the time of the terrorist attack, violent demonstrations were taking place in Islamabad, where supporters of Mumtaz Qadri, the convicted murderer of Governor Salman Taseer, were demanding the execution of Asia Bibi, a woman accused of blasphemy and sentenced to death, whose case Governor Taseer had defended; whereas tens of thousands of people attended Qadri's funeral after he was hanged, celebrating him as a hero, and pictures were circulated on social media; whereas the judge who first convicted Qadri had to flee the country after receiving death threats;
  
- C. whereas some extremist groups are allowed to develop their ideology and activities unhampered, such as certain student unions at the universities and the Khatm-e-Nubuwwat Lawyers' Forum, which is reportedly the driving force behind the rise in prosecutions for blasphemy charges in the Pakistani courts and is against any attempts by legislators to reform the relevant law;
  
- D. whereas Christians and other minorities face not only persecution by extremists, but also legal discrimination, in particular through Pakistan's blasphemy laws, which are discriminatory and are widely misused by those with personal and political motives; whereas Muslims themselves continue to be charged under these laws;
  
- E. whereas for years terrorism and Islamist extremism have taken their toll of the Pakistani people, in particular of religious minorities, women and children; whereas, since the adoption of Parliament's latest resolution on Pakistan of 15 January 2015 <sup>(2)</sup>, some dozens of other terrorist and violent attacks against religious minorities have taken place in a context of discriminatory laws and insufficient enforcement;
  
- F. whereas several terrorist groups in Pakistan target religious minorities such as Ahmadis, Christians, Shia and Hindus, as well as Sunni with diverging opinions; whereas, in its Annual Report 2015, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan observed that in most cases the perpetrators enjoyed impunity;
  
- G. whereas child suicide bombers are reportedly still being used by extremist groups; whereas the government has failed to pass legislation establishing the National Commission on the Rights of the Child, an independent body to protect and enforce children's rights;
  
- H. whereas, after the school massacre by Taliban insurgents in December 2014, the Government of Pakistan reintroduced the death penalty after a six-year moratorium, first only for terrorist activities but later for all capital crimes; whereas by the end of 2015 Pakistan had executed 326 people — the highest number ever recorded and the third highest in the world;

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<sup>(1)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0470.

<sup>(2)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0007.

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- I. whereas the fighting between the Pakistani military and non-state armed groups has resulted in over a million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs);
- J. whereas women from Pakistan's religious minorities are abducted, forcibly married, and forcibly converted to Islam, a phenomenon largely ignored by the police and civil authorities;
- K. whereas Pakistan plays an important role in fostering stability in South Asia and should therefore lead by example in strengthening the rule of law and protecting human rights;
- L. whereas the EU remains fully committed to continuing its dialogue and engagement with Pakistan under the five-year Engagement Plan;
  1. Is deeply shocked by the attack which took place on 27 March 2016 in Lahore and strongly condemns these senseless acts of violence against so many innocent people;
  2. Expresses its deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims, and voices its solidarity with the people and Government of Pakistan;
  3. Underlines the absolute need to bring the perpetrators of the Lahore attack to justice; calls on the Pakistani authorities, in particular the local and provincial authorities, to ensure that these acts are effectively investigated and prosecuted;
  4. Expresses deep concern at the systemic and grave violations of freedom of religion and belief in Pakistan; stresses the importance of respect for the fundamental rights of all religious and ethnic minorities living in Pakistan so that they can continue to live in dignity, equality and safety, and practise their religion in complete freedom without any kind of coercion, discrimination, intimidation or harassment, in accordance with the founding principles of Pakistan;
  5. Welcomes the government's reform initiatives such as the bill to criminalise child marriage, and the act to protect women from violence and harassment, the unblocking of YouTube, the decision declaring Holi, Diwali and Easter as holidays for religious minorities, and the personal efforts of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to visit a Hindi religious event; urges the government to further increase its efforts to create a social climate which welcomes minorities and diversity of thought; recalls in this context the National Action Plan, the promised and urgently needed reforms of the madrassas, notably government action against hate speech, and the still outstanding police and judicial reform; notes that more ambitious measures should be taken in the future, in particular in the field of education (excluding negative biases and prejudices from curricula and textbooks) and in the prosecution of those inciting violence;
  6. Welcomes the Government of Pakistan's commitment to tackling the threat posed by religious extremism; encourages continuous dialogue, between the EU and Member States on the one hand and Pakistan on the other, on ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights, particularly in relation to their counter-terrorism efforts and through the implementation of security laws;
  7. Believes that, while the military operation announced in the Punjab is vital in the battle against terrorism, victory in the ideological war against extremism that will ensure a tolerant and progressive future for Pakistan is equally important;
  8. Calls on the Pakistani authorities to tackle social and economic exclusion, including that of a large majority of Christians and other religious minorities, who lead a precarious existence;

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9. Is concerned at the continued use of blasphemy laws in Pakistan and believes that this is heightening the climate of religious intolerance; calls, therefore, on the Government of Pakistan to review these laws and their application; calls on the authorities to ensure the proper and swift delivery of justice in all blasphemy cases; notes, in particular, the case of Asia Bibi and strongly encourages the Supreme Court to reach a decision on the matter;
  10. Calls on the Pakistani authorities to guarantee the independence of the courts, the rule of law and due process in line with international standards on judicial proceedings; calls, furthermore, on the Pakistani authorities to provide sufficient protection to all those involved in blasphemy cases, particularly the country's legal profession, and to protect the accused, the witnesses, their families and their communities from mob violence, including those who are acquitted but cannot return home; calls on the Government of Pakistan to ensure that appropriate legal and other remedies applicable under international human rights law are made available to the victims of targeted violence and persecution;
  11. Recalls its consistent opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances; notes with grave concern the dramatic increase in the use of the death penalty in Pakistan, including, highly regrettably, against child offenders, and calls for a moratorium on capital punishment to be reinstated with a view to abolishing the death penalty in Pakistan;
  12. Emphasises that, when combating terrorism and religious extremism, it is crucial to tackle its root causes by addressing poverty, ensuring religious tolerance and freedom of belief and guaranteeing the right and safe access to education for children, especially girls;
  13. Calls on the Government of Pakistan to extend an open invitation to the UN special rapporteurs, notably the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, and to support the work of the National Human Rights Commission in every way;
  14. Calls upon the Government of Pakistan to take the necessary measures to ensure that educational establishments, places of recreation and gathering points of minority communities in areas marked by insecurity and conflict are adequately protected, and to minimise the risk of recurrence of similar human rights violations and abuses;
  15. Encourages all regional actors to significantly improve counter-terrorism cooperation; reaffirms the importance of an unconditional international commitment to fighting terrorism, including disrupting all forms of financial support for terrorist networks, and ideological indoctrination fuelling extremism and terrorism;
  16. Welcomes Pakistan's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and commends the measures taken by the Pakistani authorities to address children's rights; calls on Pakistan to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and to set up the National Commission on the Rights of the Child;
  17. Calls on the Commission, Vice-President/High Representative Federica Mogherini, the European External Action Service and the Council to fully engage with the Government of Pakistan in tackling the threat posed by terrorism and to further assist the Government and people of Pakistan in continuing their efforts to eradicate terrorism; calls on Vice-President/High Representative Federica Mogherini to keep Parliament regularly informed of the progress made in these bilateral efforts;
  18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, 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, the Secretary-General of the UN, the UN Human Rights Council, the Presidency of the UN Security Council, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Government and Parliament of Pakistan.
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