Thursday 7 April 2011

Situation in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen

P7_TA(2011)0148

European Parliament resolution of 7 April 2011 on the situation in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen

(2012/C 296 E/11)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to its previous resolutions on Syria and Yemen,

— having regard to its resolution on European Union relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council of 24 March 2011 ([1]),

— having regard to its resolution containing the European Parliament's recommendation to the Council on the conclusion of a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Syrian Arab Republic, of the other part, of 26 October 2006 ([2]),

— having regard to the statement by European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek on the deadly attack against protesters in Syria of 23 March 2011,

— having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,

— having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966, to which Bahrain, Syria and Yemen are parties,

— having regard to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 1975, to which Bahrain, Syria and Yemen are parties,

— having regard to the conclusions of the European Council of 24 and 25 March 2011,

— having regard to the Council conclusions on Bahrain and on Yemen of 21 March 2011,

— having regard to the statements of the High Representative/Vice-President of the Commission on Bahrain of 10, 15 and 17 March 2011, on Syria of 18, 22, 24 and 26 March 2011 and on Yemen of 10, 12 and 18 March 2011 and of 5 April 2011,

— having regard to the Joint Communication by the High Representative and the Commission on 'A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean' of 8 March 2011,

— having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders of 2004 as updated in 2008,

— having regard to Rule 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

([1]) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0109.
([2]) OJ C 313 E, 20.12.2006, p. 436.

Thursday 7 April 2011

A. whereas, following similar developments in other Arab countries, demonstrators in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen have expressed legitimate democratic aspirations and strong popular demand for political, economic and social reforms aimed at achieving genuine democracy, fighting corruption and nepotism, ensuring respect for the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, reducing social inequalities and creating better economic and social conditions,

B. whereas the respective governments have reacted by increasing violent repression, declaring a state of emergency and applying counterterrorism laws to justify serious crimes, including extrajudicial killings, abductions and disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture and unfair trials,

C. whereas the excessive use of force against protestors by security forces in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen has resulted in serious loss of life, injuries and imprisonments, and violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which these countries are parties,

D. whereas demonstrations in Syria began in the southern city of Daraa before spreading across the country; whereas the Syrian authorities have repressed demonstrations using live bullets to disperse peaceful gatherings, arrested hundreds of civilians and mobilised pro-regime demonstrators in Damascus and other cities; whereas the Syrian Government resigned on 29 March 2011 and Mr Adel Safar has been appointed to form a new government; whereas the speech given by President Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian Parliament on 30 March 2011 failed to meet expectations and satisfy hopes for significant reforms,

E. whereas Syria has been under emergency law since 1963; whereas the emergency law is effectively limiting citizens in the exercise of their civil and political rights while allowing ongoing control by the Syrian authorities over the judicial system,

F. whereas Syria's government has made a number of public statements committing it to freedom of expression and political participation (the lifting of the emergency law, the abolition of Article 8 of the Syrian Constitution, which states that the Ba'ath Party leads the state and society, solution of the problems caused by the 1962 census in al-Hasaka governorate, which resulted in hundreds of thousands of Kurds being deprived of their passports and registered as foreigners) but has failed to deliver tangible progress on these issues; whereas the prominent Syrian human rights activist and government critic Haitham al-Maleh was released from jail in March 2011 and has called on the international community to exert pressure on the Syrian regime to respect its international obligations with regard to human rights,

G. whereas the Association Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Syrian Arab Republic, of the other part, has still to be signed; whereas the signing of this Agreement has been delayed at Syria's request since October 2009; whereas respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms constitutes an essential part of this Agreement,

H. whereas demonstrations started in Bahrain on 14 February 2011, the demonstrators calling for political reforms such as a constitutional monarchy and an elected government as well as an end to corruption and to the marginalisation of Shiites, who represent over 60 % of the population; whereas the situation in Bahrain remains tense, with between 50 and 100 people reported missing over the past week; whereas, according to reports, medical personnel, human rights defenders and political activists have been detained in Bahrain and hospital wards have been taken over by security forces,

I. whereas, at the request of the Government of Bahrain, Gulf Cooperation Council security forces from Saudi Arabia, United Emirates and Kuwait have been deployed in Bahrain,

J. whereas millions of citizens have been demonstrating largely peacefully in Yemen since January 2011 and close to one hundred people have allegedly been killed, mainly by the security forces using live ammunition to fire on crowds, while hundreds have been wounded; whereas in Yemen ambulances taking wounded anti-government protesters to hospital were hindered by security forces,

K. whereas President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has been ruling the country for 32 years, has promised to step down in Yemen; whereas, however, the President has not taken any serious steps to fulfil his promises of a peaceful democratic transition so far,

L. whereas members of the Gulf Cooperation Council have decided to invite Yemeni government and opposition representatives to talks in Riyadh to resolve the impasse on some specific issues,

M. whereas Yemen is the poorest country in the Middle East, with widespread malnutrition, dwindling oil reserves, a growing population, weak central government, growing water shortages and little investment in the country's economy; whereas there is serious concern for the disintegration of the Yemeni state, a fragile truce having been in force since February with the Shiite rebels in the North, a secessionist movement existing in the South and many al-Qaeda fighters reportedly using Yemen as a base,

N. whereas in Bahrain and in Yemen a state of emergency has recently been declared; whereas the declaration of a state of emergency in any country does not absolve the nation's government of its essential obligation to uphold the rule of law and its international human rights commitments,

1. Strongly condemns the violent repression by security forces of peaceful demonstrators in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen, and extends its condolences to the families of the victims; expresses its solidarity with the people in those countries, applauds their courage and determination, and strongly supports their legitimate democratic aspirations;

2. Urges the authorities of Bahrain, Syria and Yemen to refrain from the use of violence against protestors and to respect their right to freedom of assembly and expression; condemns the interference by the authorities in Bahrain and Yemen in the provision of medical treatment and the denial and limiting of access to health facilities; stresses that those responsible for the loss of life and injuries caused should be held accountable and brought to justice; calls on the authorities to immediately release all political prisoners, human rights defenders and journalists and all those detained in relation to their peaceful activities in the context of the protests;

3. States that the use of violence by a state against its own population must have direct repercussions on its bilateral relations with the European Union; reminds the EU High Representative/Vice-President of the Commission that the EU can use numerous tools to deter such actions, such as asset freezes, travel bans etc.; recalls however that the people at large should never be affected by such a review of bilateral relations;

4. Calls on the European Union and its Member States to take into full consideration recent and ongoing events and further developments in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen in bilateral relations with these countries, including the suspension of further negotiations over the signing of the still pending Association Agreement between the EU and Syria; is of the opinion that the conclusion of such an agreement should depend on the capacity of the Syrian authorities to carry out the expected democratic reforms in tangible form;

Thursday 7 April 2011

5. Calls on the European Union and its Member States to support calls for independent investigations into the attacks against protestors in those countries, with special regard to an independent investigation to be carried out by the United Nations (UN) or the International Criminal Court into the attack on protestors on 18 March 2011 in Sana'a, Yemen, where 54 people were killed and more than 300 were injured; calls on the EU to immediately take the lead in convening a Special Session of the HRC to address abuses committed in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen during the crackdown on demonstrations and repression of dissent;

6. Calls on the governments of Bahrain, Syria and Yemen to engage in an open and meaningful political process and dialogue without delay or preconditions, with the participation of all democratic political forces and civil society, aimed at paving the way for genuine democracy, the lifting of the state of emergency and the implementation of real, ambitious and significant political, economic and social reforms, which are essential for long-term stability and development;

7. Calls on the Bahraini, Syrian and Yemeni authorities to respect their international commitments to human rights and fundamental freedoms; calls on the authorities in those countries to immediately lift the state of emergency, immediately release all political prisoners, human rights defenders, journalists and peaceful demonstrators, enshrine freedom of expression and of association in law and in practice, step up measures to fight corruption, guarantee equal rights for minorities, ensure access to means of communication, such as the internet and mobile telephony, and ensure access to independent media;

8. Takes note of the resignation of the Government of Syria on 29 March 2011, but believes that this will not be enough to counter the growing frustrations of the Syrian people; calls on President Bashar al-Assad to put an end to the policy of repression of political opposition and human rights defenders, to genuinely lift the state of emergency that has been in place since 1963, to promote the process of democratic transition in Syria and to establish a concrete agenda for political, economic and social reforms;

9. Calls on the Government of Bahrain and other parties to engage in a meaningful and constructive dialogue without delay or preconditions, in order to bring about reforms; welcomes the UN Secretary-General's announcement that the UN stands ready to provide support to nationally-led efforts, if requested to do so;

10. Expresses its concern at the presence of foreign troops under the GCC banner in Bahrain; calls on the GCC to use its resources as a regional collective player to act constructively and mediate in the interests of peaceful reforms in Bahrain;

11. Calls on President Saleh of Yemen to take concrete steps towards the implementation of his pledge to 'transfer power peacefully through constitutional institutions'; calls on all parties, including the opposition, to act responsibly, to engage in an open and constructive dialogue without delay, in order to achieve an orderly political transition, and to include all parties and movements representing the Yemeni people in this dialogue;

12. Expresses its grave concern over the level of poverty and unemployment and the growing political and economic instability in Yemen; insists that the delivery on the ground of the pledges from the donor conference 2006 must be accelerated; additionally calls on the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council to make a particular effort to provide financial and technical support as soon as President Saleh is ready to give way to a democratically established government;

13. Calls on the European Union and its Member States to support the peaceful democratic aspirations of people in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen, to review their policies towards those countries, to respect the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports, and to stand ready to assist, in case of a serious commitment by national authorities, in the implementation of concrete political, economic and social reform agendas in those countries;

14. Calls on the Commission to make full and effective use of the existing support given through the ENPI, EIDHR and IfS, and to urgently draw up concrete proposals on how future EU financial assistance can better assist the countries and civil societies in the Middle East and in the Gulf in their transition towards democracy and respect for human rights;

15. Stresses the commitments by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commission in the Joint Communication on a Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity within the Southern Mediterranean to further support democratic transformation and civil society in response to the current historic developments in the region; calls for EU assistance to democratic processes in the Mediterranean and Gulf regions to ensure full participation of all citizens – particularly women, who have played a crucial role in the demands for democratic change – in political life;

16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Government and Parliament of the Syrian Arab Republic, and the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Yemen.

Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

P7_TA(2011)0149

European Parliament resolution of 7 April 2011 on the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

(2012/C 296 E/12)

The European Parliament,

— whereas in 1971 the UN recognised the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) as the 'poorest and weakest segment' of the international community,

— having regard to the criteria established by the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP) to identify LDCs,

— having regard to the Paris Declaration for the Least Developed Countries adopted in September 1990,

— having regard to the UN Secretary-General's report on 'Implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the decade 2001-2010' (A/65/80),

— having regard to the results of the UN High-Level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) held in September 2010,

— having regard to the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA) for the LDCs adopted at the Third UN Conference on the LDCs (LDC-III) held in Brussels in May 2001,

— having regard to the decision taken in 2008 by the UN General Assembly to convene the Fourth UN Conference on the LDCs (LDC-IV),