

P7_TA(2012)0090

Situation in Nigeria

European Parliament resolution of 15 March 2012 on the situation in Nigeria (2012/2550(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the statements by Vice-President/High Representative Ashton of 26 December 2011 on the Christmas Day bombings and of 22 January 2012 on the bombings in Kano, Nigeria,
 - having regard to the statement by the UN Security Council of 27 December 2011 on attacks in Nigeria,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, ratified by Nigeria on 29 October 1993,
 - having regard to the second revision of the Cotonou Agreement 2007-2013, ratified by Nigeria on 27 September 2010,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981, ratified by Nigeria on 22 June 1983,
 - having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief of 1981,
 - having regard to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and in particular its provisions on the protection of freedom of religion in its Chapter IV – Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion,
 - having regard to the Nigeria-EU Ministerial Meeting of 8 February 2012 in Abuja,
 - having regard to the UN Commission on Human Rights resolution E/CN.4/RES/2005/69 asking the 'Secretary-General to appoint a special representative on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises',
 - having regard to the UNEP report recommendations to establish an Ogoniland Environmental Restoration Authority,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Nigeria,
 - having regard to Rule 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas it is appalled by the latest waves of gun and bomb attacks committed by the terrorist Islamist sect Boko Haram, which killed at least 185 people in Kano on 20 January 2012, and largely targeted police posts; whereas Boko Haram warned Kano residents, in a leaflet distributed around the city overnight, that their strikes against security services

would continue and urged perseverance as the group fights to install an ‘Islamic system’;

- B. whereas human rights organisations have documented the involvement of the Boko Haram Islamist group in attacks on police stations, military facilities, churches and banks, as well as in a suicide bomb attack at the UN headquarters, which killed at least 24 people and injured more than 100 others;
- C. whereas, in response to the Boko Haram violence, the Nigerian police and military have carried out extrajudicial executions of numerous suspected members of the group;
- D. whereas Boko Haram has targeted Christians, notably on Christmas Day, when dozens were killed in a series of bombings, the deadliest of which claimed 44 lives outside a Catholic church near the capital Abuja; and whereas Boko Haram has vowed to wage a religious war on Christians and drive them from the country’s majority-Muslim north;
- E. whereas, on 3 January 2012, Boko Haram issued an ultimatum and gave Christians in northern Nigeria three days to leave; whereas at least 8 Christians attending a prayer service in Gombe were killed on 5 January 2012 and 20 Christian mourners were killed in Mubi on 6 January 2012;
- F. whereas, on 26 February 2012, two suicide bombers from Boko Haram detonated explosives in a car outside a church in the town of Jos, killing three people and wounding 38; and whereas, on 21 February 2012, extremists detonated a bomb outside a church in the city of Suleja, injuring five people;
- G. whereas, on 4 March 2012, Boko Haram announced it would launch a series of coordinated attacks in order to annihilate the entire Christian community living in the northern parts of the country;
- H. whereas the freedoms of religion, belief, conscience and thought are fundamental and universal values and are essential elements of democracy; whereas the European Union has repeatedly expressed its commitment to the freedoms of religion, belief, conscience and thought, and has stressed that governments have a duty to guarantee these freedoms all over the world;
- I. whereas Boko Haram is blamed for the deaths of more than 900 people in roughly 160 separate attacks since July 2009; whereas several recent reports indicate a possible connection between Boko Haram and AQMI (Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb) which could pose a serious threat to peace and security in the Sahel region and western Africa;
- J. whereas in response to the upsurge in violence, President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in several states on 31 December 2011 and temporarily closed borders with Chad, Cameroon and Niger; whereas the President has admitted that Boko Haram has infiltrated state institutions and security forces, while corrupt officials have allegedly provided Boko Haram with weapons;
- K. whereas the problems in Nigeria stem from a lack of economic development and the tension is rooted in decades of resentment between indigenous groups vying for control of fertile farmlands with migrants and settlers from the Hausa-speaking Muslim north;
- L. whereas peaceful resolution of conflicts implies respect for human rights, access to justice

and an end to impunity, as well as fair access to resources and redistribution of revenues in an oil-rich country such as Nigeria;

- M. whereas although Nigeria is the world's eighth-largest oil producer, the majority of its 148 million inhabitants live below the poverty line;
- N. whereas the Nigerian Government spends approximately USD 8 billion a year on fuel subsidies; whereas in countries that are rich in resources and with a huge divide between rich and poor such as Nigeria, subsidised gas is one of the few benefits trickling down from an infamously corrupt government that has mismanaged oil profits;
- O. whereas at the beginning of this year, violent public protest and a week-long general strike forced President Goodluck Jonathan to partially reinstate the fuel subsidy; whereas international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund argue that subsidies could be better used to fund education, health and other services;
- P. whereas the ruling elite's mismanagement and misuse of the country's vast natural resources – namely oil – continues largely unabated; whereas, moreover, successive oil spills from multinational oil operations, sabotage of pipelines, theft of crude oil and widespread gas flaring have led to heavy pollution of the Niger Delta; whereas, according to a UN report, the environmental restoration of Nigeria's Ogoniland oil region could turn out to be the world's most wide-ranging and long-term oil clean-up exercise if contaminated drinking water, land, creeks and other ecosystems are to be brought back to full health;
- Q. whereas the Minister for Women's Affairs and Social Development, Hajia Zainab Maina, has spoken out against the high incidence of rape and sexual violence against women in the country and stated that, in order to address this worrying development, it is imperative that the 'violence against persons' bill be passed into law;
- R. whereas, under Nigeria's federal criminal code, homosexual conduct carries a sentence of up to 14 years in prison; whereas in certain states which implement Sharia law, consensual male homosexual conduct is punishable by death, and, in the case of women, by flogging and six-month prison sentences; whereas federal legislation was also recently introduced which criminalises same-sex unions, making them punishable by sentences of up to 14 years in prison; whereas the National Assembly twice attempted to introduce such legislation but was prevented from doing so by international and domestic human rights activists;
- S. whereas Nigerian labour activists and human rights defenders Osmond Ugwu and Raphael Elobuike are being detained in Enugu Federal Prison in south-east Nigeria on charges of the attempted murder of a policeman following their arrest at a workers' rally on 24 October 2011; whereas, according to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, there is no evidence in the prosecution's case against them;
- T. whereas the EU is a major financial donor to Nigeria; whereas, on 12 November 2009, the Commission and the Federal Government of Nigeria signed the Nigeria-EC Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme for 2008-2013, under which the EU will fund projects whose aims include peace and security and human rights;
- U. whereas, under Article 8 of the revised Cotonou Agreement, the EU engages in regular political dialogue with Nigeria on human rights and democratic principles, including ethnic,

religious and racial discrimination;

1. Strongly condemns the recent violence – in particular the attacks carried out by the terrorist Islamist sect Boko Haram – and the tragic loss of lives in the stricken regions of Nigeria, and extends its sympathies to the bereaved and the injured;
2. Urges all communities to exercise restraint and seek peaceful means to resolve differences between religious and ethnic groups in Nigeria;
3. Urges the government of Nigeria to end the violence as quickly as possible, and to guarantee the security and protection of its population and respect for human rights;
4. Calls upon the President of Nigeria to encourage inter-religious and inter-convictional dialogue and to enhance freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
5. Emphasises the importance of an independent, impartial and accessible judiciary system to put an end to impunity and to enhance respect for the rule of law and for the fundamental rights of the population;
6. Calls on the Federal Government to carry out an investigation into the causes of the most recent violence, as well as to ensure that the perpetrators of acts of violence are brought to justice; in particular, calls on the Federal Government to crack down on Boko Haram, which is boosting its strength by exploiting deep-seated religious tension in Nigeria;
7. Underlines the importance of regional cooperation for addressing the threat posed by a possible connection between Boko Haram and AQMI; encourages the countries in the region to deepen their cooperation, including through the relevant regional organisations, in order to prevent synergies between Boko Haram and AQMI; calls on the EU institutions and Member States to lend their support to these regional efforts;
8. Strongly condemns the killing of British citizen Chris McManus and Italian national Franco Lamolinara – two engineers working for an Italian construction company who had been held hostage by AQMI for 10 months in northern Nigeria – during a failed rescue attempt on 8 March 2012, and extends its condolences to the families of the victims;
9. Calls for a wider examination of the root causes of the conflict, including social, economic and ethnic tensions, and to avoid broad and simplistic explanations based only on religion that will not provide the basis for a long-term, lasting solution to the problems of the region;
10. Calls upon the Federal Government to protect its population and to address the root causes of the violence by ensuring equal rights for all citizens and by addressing problems involving the control of fertile farmland, unemployment and poverty;
11. Calls upon the Federal Government to fight corruption, poverty and inequality and to push for social, political and economic reforms in order to create a democratic, stable, secure, free state which takes human rights into account;
12. Appeals to the authorities to address the genuine grievances of citizens living in areas in the north of the country that are much poorer than some wealthier southern states, and prioritise the improvement of their dire living conditions, while not overlooking states with similar problems in the south;

13. Calls on the Nigerian authorities and foreign companies active in the Nigerian oil sector to help strengthen governance by improving transparency and accountability in the extractives sector, and calls on companies to abide by the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and publish what they pay to the Nigerian Government;
14. Stresses the need for the Nigerian authorities and multinational oil companies to do their utmost to bring ongoing contamination to an end, and to implement the United Nations Environment Programme's recommendations in order to address environmental damage that has resulted from oil pollution;
15. Strongly encourages the Nigerian authorities to ensure that the 'violence against persons' bill is passed into law and hopes that it will be instrumental in stemming the high incidence of sexual violence and other acts of violence against women;
16. Calls for the abolition of current legislation criminalising homosexuality, in some cases making it punishable by stoning; calls on the Nigerian Parliament to reject the 'Same Gender Marriage Prohibition Bill' which, if passed, would put LGBT people – both Nigerian nationals and foreigners – at serious risk of violence and arrest;
17. Calls on the government to release labour union leader Osmond Ugwu and union member Raphael Elobuike due to the lack of evidence in the prosecution's case against them;
18. Reiterates its concern regarding the full and effective respect of the right to freedom of religion for all religious minorities in a number of third countries; in this context stresses that freedom of worship is but one aspect of the right to freedom of religion, as the latter includes the freedom to change one's religion and to also manifest it in teaching, practice and observance at the individual, collective, private, public and institutional level; in this context underlines that the public element is central to religious freedom, and that to prevent Christian believers and others from expressing their faith publicly, while reducing their religion to a private phenomenon, gravely violates their right to religious freedom;
19. Underlines that obstacles still exist in many parts of the world that impede the free profession of faith or belief and calls on High Representative Ashton and on the Commission to insist on such issues in the context of its relevant initiatives concerning human rights;
20. Calls upon the High Representative, who is responsible for the European External Action Service, to undertake measures in Nigeria combining diplomacy with long-term development cooperation in order to achieve peace, security, good governance and respect for human rights;
21. Urges the EU to continue its political dialogue with Nigeria under Article 8 of the revised Cotonou Agreement, and in that context to address issues relating to universal human rights, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, and non-discrimination on any ground, as enshrined in universal, regional and national human rights instruments;
22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Federal Government of Nigeria, the institutions of the African Union and of ECOWAS, the United Nations Secretary-General, the United Nations General Assembly, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary

Assembly and the PAN-African Parliament (PAP).