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[Publication](#) | 10.03.2015

Recent attacks and abductions by Daesh in the Middle East, notably of Assyrians

Greens/EFA motion for resolution

*Tabled by **Bodil Ceballos, Alyn Smith, Ernest Urtasun, Michèle Rivasi, Michel Reimon, Barbara Lochbihler, Davor Škrlec** on behalf of the Greens/EFA Group*

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Iraq, Syria, Libya and Egypt, and in particular those of 9 October 2013 on the recent cases of violence and persecution against Christians, of 19 September 2014 on the situation in Iraq and Syria and the ISIS offensive including the persecution of minorities, and of 12 February 2015 on the humanitarian crisis in Iraq and Syria, in particular in the IS context,
- having regard to the statements by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on Libya, Iraq and Syria, and in particular of 16 February 2015 on the beheading of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya,
- having regard to the EU guidelines on international humanitarian law, on human rights defenders and on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief,
- having regard to statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the murder of 21 Christians in Libya on 17 February 2015,
- having regard to the statement by the Director General of UNESCO on the destruction of the Mosul Museum artefacts and of the ancient cities of Nimrud and Hatra,
- having regard to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols and to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. Whereas the so-called Islamic State (hereafter IS) has committed a wide range of abuses, violations and crimes against populations in northern Iraq and Syria, and most recently in eastern Libya; whereas these grave acts include mass executions and ethnic cleansing amounting to acts of genocide against specific ethnic and religious groups, forced conversions, forcible displacements, stoning and amputation, enforced disappearance and torture; whereas the UN has also reported systematic sexual and physical violence and enslavement of women and children and recruitment of children for suicide bombings;

B. Whereas IS has particularly targeted ethnic and religious groups such as Assyrians (also called Chaldeans and Syriacs), Yazidi communities and Shia Muslims; whereas the majority of the victims of IS are reportedly Sunni Muslims from the North and East of Syria;

C. Whereas war crimes and other violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by the other conflicting parties in the region, including by Government forces, notably that of the Assad regime, continue to be reported daily and on a massive scale;

D. whereas Shia militias, acting alongside the Iraqi Government in its fight against IS, have been held responsible for kidnappings, summary executions, torture, and mass displacements of thousands of families; whereas the Iraqi government has not held anyone accountable for the abuses by these militias or its own forces;

E. Whereas on 23 February 2015, around 20 villages mostly inhabited by Assyrians in north-eastern Syria (Khabour region) were attacked by IS, 10 of which were emptied of their inhabitants; whereas it is estimated that around 3,000 persons were displaced; whereas more than 220 Assyrians, including 30 children and several dozen women, along with civilian men and fighters were captured during this attack; whereas only 23 hostages have been released to date; whereas dozens of Assyrians were killed during the IS assault; whereas IS reportedly issued a declaration in February 2015 requesting Assyrian villages in the Syrian Hasaka Province to pay the jizya, a tax on non-Muslims dating to early Islamic rule and abolished in 1856 across the Ottoman empire, to convert to Islam or else be killed;

F. whereas the Syriac Military Council, which has been fighting IS alongside the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), has called for the US-led coalition to intervene in the area and to supply them with heavy weapons; whereas the US-led coalition struck targets in the region shortly after the mass abduction in February;

G. Whereas Assyrian Christians have been living in this region since ancient times; whereas this group has been victim of massacres during the Ottoman period in 1915, and during the Iraqi kingdom in the 1930s; whereas thousands had to flee the Nineveh Province in northern Iraq following IS advances last year; whereas other Christian communities have been attacked by IS in the region, including Copts;

H. Whereas as part of a deliberate policy of cultural and religious cleansing, IS has reportedly destroyed 119 churches in Iraq, and 6 churches in Syria, as well as a number of Shia mosques in Iraq; whereas in February 2015, IS fighters deliberately publicised their destruction of statues and other artefacts in the Mosul Museum dating back to the ancient Assyrian and Akkadian empires; whereas IS subsequently bulldozed the ancient Assyrian city of Nimrud and most recently, it reportedly destroyed the UNESCO World Heritage site of Hatra; whereas the Syrian regime has reportedly shelled churches in opposition neighbourhoods, for example in Homs in 2012 and Idlib in 2013;

I. Whereas Egyptian authorities under the rule of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces reportedly massacred nearly 30 Copts who were protesting against the regime in front of Egypt's state TV building on October 9, 2011, with no independent investigation completed to this day;

J. Whereas in its latest report to the UN Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human

Rights has reported summary executions and abductions by armed groups belonging to or allied with Libya Dawn, from Warshafana and Zintan, as well from armed groups affiliated with Operation Dignity; whereas this UN report also detailed attacks against Egyptian Coptic Christians and other religious minorities, including the Sufi community;

K. Whereas on 15th February, IS released a video showing the beheading of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians who had been kidnapped with 14 others in Libya in December 2014; whereas the following day, at least 15,000 Egyptians Copts residing in Libya returned to Egypt;

L. Whereas the UNHCR has appealed to states to make at least 130,000 places available for resettlement of Syrian refugees by 2016; whereas the EU Member States have pledged some 36,000 places;

M. Whereas UNHCR chief Antonio Guterres stated on 29 January 2015, that only two countries in Europe – Sweden and Germany – have so far responded at the level that was necessary to meet the needs of the Syrian people; whereas Mr Guterres has called for the EU to consider imposing a quota system in order to ensure a more equitable handling of asylum seekers;

N. Whereas so far, only 9 EU Member States have ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, namely Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain;

1. Strongly condemns the numerous grave abuses of human rights and violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by all parties involved in the ongoing conflicts in Libya, Iraq and Syria;

2. Condemns the series of attacks committed by IS against religious and ethnic communities across the Middle East, including most recently, the mass abduction of Assyrians in Syria, the beheading of Egyptian Copts in Libya as well as the eviction of a very substantial number of Christians from their historic homelands;

3. Denounces also the extremist ideology and the other atrocities committed by IS in areas under its control, including summary executions, the brutal subjugation of women and girls and the killing of hostages;

4. Denounces in the strongest terms the destruction of cultural sites and artefacts by IS in Syria and Iraq, which constitutes an attack against the cultural heritage of all inhabitants of these countries and of humanity at large;

5. Calls on the warring parties in the region to immediately cease all attacks against civilians, to release all detainees in arbitrary detention and to uphold the human rights of all, irrespective of faith, ethnicity or political affiliation;

6. Recalls that murdering captives or hostages is prohibited under international law;

7. Underlines the importance to hold accountable, in accordance with international standards, all parties responsible for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law and abuses of human rights; reiterates its call for the referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court and supports all initiatives in this direction;

8. Recognises that IS violence is one among many factors contributing to the humanitarian crisis in Syria, Iraq and the wider region; in that regard, calls on the EU and its Member States to actively contribute,

notably through the UN framework, to a political solution to these conflicts in order to alleviate the suffering of millions of people, from all religious and ethnic groups; underlines in this context, the importance of ensuring a safe haven for the Assyrians and others at risk in the Nineveh Plains;

9. Stresses that IS represents first and foremost the consequence rather than the cause of the current convulsion which is engulfing the Middle East and beyond; recalls that IS has emerged from a bedrock of protracted human rights violations and impunity, crony capitalism, pervasive corruption, sectarianism, marginalisation and discrimination against entire groups, including Arab Sunnis, as well as a long history of external manipulation and intervention by regional and Western actors; believes therefore that any effective response by the international community to the nefarious acts and nature of IS requires a collected, inclusive and strategic plan of action, couched in international legality;

10. Stresses that the emergence of IS as a major regional actor and as the prime focus of international attention since the summer of 2014 should not obfuscate the responsibility of other players in the current humanitarian catastrophe, including first and foremost the Assad regime, but also the former Iraqi government, as well as that of other local militias and non-jihadist warring parties, including in Libya;

11. Reiterates its condemnation, in the harshest terms, of the crimes perpetrated by the Assad regime on its population, including the use of chemical weapons, incendiary weapons, cluster bombs, barrel bombs and ongoing sieges against thousands of civilians across Syria;

12. Remains alarmed that the humanitarian needs of the populations in Iraq, Syria and Libya continue to outpace the international response; urges all donors, including the EU and its Member States, to fulfil their promises and to deliver assistance in a swift manner, including through local civil society groups in order to best reach out to the vulnerable groups in need;

13. Calls on the EU Member States to heed the plea of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for much stronger commitment to burden-sharing, allowing refugees fleeing the war zones, including due to persecution on religious or ethnic grounds, to find protection beyond the immediate neighbouring region through resettlement, humanitarian admission schemes, simplified family reunification or more flexible visa regulations; underlines the particular need to address those facing specific vulnerabilities, such as serious medical needs, sexuality, gender and disability;

14. Urges all EU Member States to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, as a matter of priority; calls on the EEAS and the Member States to promote universal ratification and the implementation of this very important human rights instrument and to support the work of the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, established under this Convention;

15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the Governments and Parliaments of the EU Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the United Nations Human Rights Council and all the parties involved in the conflict in Syria, Iraq and Libya.

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