

Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

RESOLUTION

ON THE GENOCIDE OF CHRISTIANS AND OTHER RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

15 December 2015 No XII-2177

Vilnius

The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, *having regard to*:

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stating that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance; the United Nations Human Rights Committee believes that pursuant to the principle of freedom of religion and belief, the protection of all beliefs, including theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, should be ensured;

United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution No 28/34 of 7 April 2015 defining 'complex situations that might lead to genocide', recognisable from 'possible warning signs [...] such as the existence of groups at risk, the massive, serious and systematic violation of human rights, the resurgence of systematic discrimination and the prevalence of expressions of hate speech targeting persons belonging to national, ethnic, racial or religious groups, especially if they are uttered in the context of an actual or potential outbreak of violence' and 'condemning impunity for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and emphasizing the responsibility of States to comply with their obligations under relevant international instruments to end impunity and, to that end, to thoroughly investigate and prosecute

persons responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or other massive, serious or systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in order to avoid their recurrence and to seek sustainable peace, justice, truth and reconciliation’;

The European Parliament Resolution of 10 October 2013 on recent cases of violence and persecution against Christians, notably in Maaloula (Syria), Peshawar (Pakistan) and the case of Pastor Saeed Abedini (Iran) (2013/2872(RSP)); the European Parliament Resolution of 12 March 2015 on recent attacks and abductions by Da’esh in the Middle East, notably of Assyrians (2015/2599(RSP)); the European Parliament Resolution of 28 April 2015 on the persecution of Christians around the world, in relation to the killing of students in Kenya by terror group Al-Shabaab (2015/2661 (RSP)), which bring to the foreground the cases of killing and persecution on religious grounds in the Middle East, North Africa and other countries;

United Nations General Assembly Resolution No 69/323 of 11 September 2015 proclaiming 9 December as the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of This Crime;

stating that:

for thousands of years, Christians of the Middle East and North Africa and other religious minorities have been an integral part of the region’s culture;

the so-called ‘Islamic State’ (Da’esh) and other extremist militant groups in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and Syria, and North Africa are currently exerting systematic violence against Christians and representatives of other religious minorities, who have been the target of such violence already since 2003, and millions of representatives of such minorities have been forced to leave their ancestral home and to become refugees;

Christians and other religious minorities in this region were and are being killed and kidnapped, suffered and continue to suffer serious bodily and mental harm, also sexual slavery and other forms of violence, and that all of this is done consciously and on purpose, resulting in a breach of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime

of Genocide adopted in Paris on 9 December 1948 (hereinafter: the 'Convention');

such atrocities are pursued with a specific goal, namely, to eradicate and to expel from the region Christians and other religious minorities, destroy their cultural heritage, thus resulting in a breach of the Convention;

genocide is a crime under international law for which the persons committing it are punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals, as stipulated in Article 4 of the Convention;

Article 1 of the Convention emphasises that 'the Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.';

Article 2 of the Convention specifies that 'in the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.';

Article 3 of the Convention establishes that 'the following acts shall be punishable:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- (e) Complicity in genocide.';

on 10 July 2015 Pope Francis, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, announced that Christians of the Middle East are suffering genocide which needs to be 'denounced. In this third world war, waged piecemeal, which we are now experiencing, a form of genocide – and I stress the word genocide – is taking place, and it must end.';

in its report of 27 March 2015 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that 'ethnic and religious groups targeted by ISIL include Yezidis, Christians, Turkmen, Sabea-Mandean, Kaka'e, Kurds and Shia' and that, in the light of reliable information about the acts of violence perpetrated against civilians because of their affiliation to an ethnic or religious group, 'it is reasonable to conclude that some of those incidents may constitute genocide. Other incidents may amount to crimes against humanity or war crimes.'

states that atrocities against Christians and representatives of other religious minorities which are targeted in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and Syria, and North Africa on religious grounds only may be considered as genocide and, by this Resolution, is treated as the crime of genocide under international law;

reminds all the Contracting Parties to the Convention, particularly those states whose governments and citizens in one way or another are engaged in and support genocide, of their legal obligations under the Convention;

draws governments' and international organisations' attention to the fact that crimes against humanity perpetrated on religious grounds and war crimes which can be treated as the crime of genocide must be condemned;

calls on the United Nations and the United Nations Secretary-General to take clear political leadership and recognise the atrocities being committed in the Middle East and North Africa as the crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes;

invites the United Nations Member States, in particular members of the African Union, the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, to support this Resolution, take measures to prevent further conduct of criminal persecution that may be

treated as genocide and cooperate in developing international and national tribunals to punish persons responsible for genocide and in ensuring their effective functioning;

expresses gratitude to the governments of the Iraqi Kurdistan region, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Lebanon and other states for their efforts to shelter and protect Christians and other religious minorities until they can safely return to their homes in Iraq and Syria;

emphasizes that Christians and other religious minorities have the right to safe and stable life on the historic lands of their ancestors and practice of their faith without fear of persecution, deportation or death.

SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS

LORETA GRAUŽINIENĖ
