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B6-0526/2007 }
B6-0530/2007 }
B6-0534/2007 }
B6-0537/2007 }
B6-0539/2007 }
B6-0540/2007 } RC1

JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure, by

- Avril Doyle, Charles Tannock, Laima Liucija Andrikienė, Bernd Posselt, Eija-Riitta Korhola and Colm Burke, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group
- Pasqualina Napoletano, Lilli Gruber, Ana Maria Gomes and Elena Valenciano Martínez-Orozco, on behalf of the PSE Group
- Marios Matsakis, Karin Riis-Jørgensen and Frédérique Ries, on behalf of the ALDE Group
- Roberta Angelilli, Mogens N.J. Camre, Ryszard Czarnecki, Gintaras Didžiokas, Adam Bielan and Konrad Szymański, on behalf of the UEN Group
- Raül Romeva i Rueda, Hiltrud Breyer, Jill Evans and Alyn Smith, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group
- Eva-Britt Svensson, Mary Lou McDonald and Tobias Pflüger, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

replacing the motions by the following groups:

- UEN (B6-0526/2007)
- GUE/NGL (B6-0530/2007)
- PPE-DE (B6-0534/2007)
- ALDE (B6-0537/2007)
- Verts/ALE (B6-0539/2007)
- PSE (B6-0540/2007)

on women's rights in Saudi Arabia

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PE398.208v01-00}
PE398.212v01-00}
PE398.216v01-00}
PE398.219v01-00}
PE398.221v01-00}
PE398.222v01-00} RC1

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European Parliament resolution on women's rights in Saudi Arabia

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the ratification by Saudi Arabia of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on 7 September 2000,
 - having regard to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which was ratified by Saudi Arabia on 23 September 1997,
 - having regard to the fact that Saudi Arabia has been a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 26 January 1996,
 - having regard to the fact that Saudi Arabia was elected to a seat on the new UN Human Rights Council in May 2006,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Saudi Arabia, of 18 January 1996 and 10 March 2005,
 - having regard to Rule 115 (5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas women in Saudi Arabia continue to face many forms of discrimination in private and in public life, are frequently victims of sexual violence and often face enormous obstacles in the criminal justice system,
- B. whereas in October 2006 a 19-year-old woman, known as 'the Qatif Girl', was sentenced to 100 lashes following an incident in which she was alone in a car talking with a man who was not a close relative when she was attacked and gang-raped,
- C. deeply concerned by the fact that the General Court of Qatif (Saudi Arabia) reviewed the sentence and condemned her to six months in prison and 200 lashes,
- D. whereas an official at the General Court of Qatif has declared that the Court increased the woman's sentence, following direction from the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, because of her attempt to aggravate and influence the judiciary through the media,
- E. whereas the victim's lawyer, Abdul Rahman Al-Lahem, has been banned from the courtroom and from any future representation of his client after attempts to take legal action against the Ministry of Justice for failing to provide him with a copy of the verdict concerning his client so that he could prepare an appeal; whereas Mr Al-Lahem now faces a disciplinary hearing at the Ministry of Justice, where sanctions can include suspension for three years and disbarment;
- F. whereas Al-Lahem also defended the case of the couple Fatimeh and Mansour Al-Taimani, parents of two children, who were forcibly divorced in July 2007 on the request of the wife's

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brother, based on the argument that Fatimah's tribal lineage was superior to that of her husband; whereas both have been incarcerated for days, indeed months, together with their children for refusing to accept the divorce, and whereas since then Fatimeh has been obliged to live in a shelter because she refuses to return to her family,

- G. particularly concerned that the criminalisation of any close contact between unmarried individuals of the opposite sex in Saudi Arabia severely impedes the ability of rape victims to seek justice, and that a court may view a woman's charge of rape as an admission of extramarital sexual relations unless she can prove, by strict evidence, that this contact was non-consensual,
- H. noting that States Parties to international human rights conventions (such as the CEDAW) have an obligation to ensure the equal rights of men and women,
- 1. Insists that the Saudi Arabian Government take further steps aimed at lifting restrictions on women's rights, including women's free movement, on the driving prohibition, on their employment opportunities, on their legal personality and on their representation in judicial processes, eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in private and public life and promote their participation in the economic, social and political spheres;
- 2. Deplores the decision taken by the General Court of Qatif to punish the rape victim; calls on the Saudi Arabian authorities to quash the sentence and drop all charges against the victim of the rape;
- 3. Notes that, on 3 October 2007, King Abdullah announced a judicial reform, promising the setting-up of new specialised courts and improved training for judges and lawyers; recalls that, in May 2007, it was reported that King Abdullah had ordered that a new court be established which would specialise in hearing domestic violence cases;
- 4. Considers that a campaign to promote awareness regarding violence against women in Saudi Arabia, especially domestic violence, would be a most welcome initiative, which should be introduced as a matter of urgency;
- 5. Calls on the Council and the Commission to raise these issues at the next Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council;
- 6. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the UN General-Secretary, the Saudi Arabian Government, the Secretary-General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council.