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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for the debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 115 of the Rules of Procedure

by Pasqualina Napoletano, Ana Maria Gomes, Robert Evans, Elena Valenciano Martínez-Orozco, Emilio Menéndez del Valle

on behalf of the PSE Group

on the case of the journalist Perwez Kambakshh

European Parliament resolution on the case of the journalist Perwez Kambakhsh

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Afghanistan, in particular the one of 18 January 2006,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on the death penalty, in particular the one on a universal moratorium on the death penalty of 27 September 2007,
 - having regard to the opening of the International Conference in London on 31 January 2006, aimed at drawing up a post-Bonn convention on Afghanistan, in response to the support of the international community as regards security, governance and development, all of which are challenges that Afghanistan is currently facing,
 - having regard to the EU Annual Reports on Human Rights,
 - having regard to its Annual Reports on Human Rights in the World and the European Union's policy on the matter,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Sayed Perwez Kambakhsh, a student in journalism and correspondent for Jahan-e Naw ("the New World") on 27 October 2007 was imprisoned after having circulated an article about women's rights in Islam among his fellow students,
- B. whereas a panel of judges in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkh province of Afghanistan on 23 January 2008 ruled that the article constituted "blasphemy" and subsequently sentenced Perwez Kambakhsh to death,
- C. whereas the death sentence against Perwez Kambakhsh comes despite the UN General Assembly's adoption of a resolution (18 December 2007) calling for a worldwide moratorium on the use of the death penalty and at a time when a total of 135 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice,
- D. whereas freedom of press is guaranteed under the new Afghan Constitution of 2004,
- E. whereas on 6 February 2008, a delegation of the Independent Journalists' Association in Afghanistan (AIJA) met with President Hamid Karzai in Kabul, providing him with details of this case and asking him to intervene on Mr Kambakhsh's behalf,
- F. whereas President Karzai's efforts in the country's democratisation process should be supported,

G. considering also the fight waged for years by a number of Afghan intellectuals, academics and journalists against the oppression formerly inflicted by the communist regime and then by the Taliban,

1. Expresses its full solidarity with Mr Perwiz Kambakhsh and with all those who fight for freedom of the press and an independent journalism in Afghanistan and throughout the world;
2. Believes that the death sentence is a serious step backwards after all the efforts made so far for democratisation and freedom of expression in Afghanistan;
3. Welcomes the promises made by President Hamid Karzai on 6 February 2008 to the Afghan journalists' delegation regarding Sayed Perwiz Kambakhsh, saying in particular not to worry about the fate of the young man accused of disseminating information which insults Islam;
4. Calls on President Hamid Karzai to use his powers to pardon Perwiz Kambakhsh;
5. Believes that further deepening of EU cooperation with the Afghan Government is linked to the outcome of Mr Perwiz Kambakhsh's situation;
6. Calls on the Afghan authorities to review the judiciary procedures so that freedom of expression guaranteed by the Constitution can be applied and so that the religious tribunal can operate in respect of human rights and fundamental liberties;
7. Calls on the Afghan authorities to contribute jointly to such an effort;
8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and to the Government and Parliament of Afghanistan.