


Procedure file

Basic information	
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2003/2005(INI)
Annual report on the human rights in the world in 2003 and the Union's policy on this matter	Procedure completed
Subject	
6.10.08 Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general	

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security, Defense	PSE <u>DE KEYSER Véronique</u>	08/07/2003

Key events			
16/01/2003	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
06/04/2004	Vote in committee		Summary
06/04/2004	Committee report tabled for plenary	A5-0270/2004	
21/04/2004	Debate in Parliament		
22/04/2004	Decision by Parliament	T5-0376/2004	Summary
22/04/2004	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2003/2005(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Annual report
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP P.F.
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/5/19097

Documentation gateway					
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A5-0270/2004	06/04/2004	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T5-0376/2004 OJ C 104 30.04.2004, p.	22/04/2004	EP	Summary

Annual report on the human rights in the world in 2003 and the Union's policy on this matter

The committee adopted the annual report drawn up by Véronique DE KEYSER (PES, B) on human rights in the world for 2003. The main focus of the report was the fight against terrorism and the rights of disabled people. MEPs stressed that the fight against terrorism had to take place in the framework of international law and that democratic countries must set an example. The committee called on the US authorities to put an immediate end to the legal limbo in which the detainees held in Guantánamo Bay had been placed and to guarantee immediate access to justice in order to determine the status of each individual detainee on a case-by-case basis. MEPs also condemned certain dictatorships (without naming them) which use the fight against terrorism as a pretext for stepping up repression against political dissidence. Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the committee condemned all acts of violence, including extra-judicial killings, indiscriminate terrorist attacks, the continuing Israeli settlement activities and the construction of the "security fence". Turning to the question of the fundamental rights of disabled people, the committee pointed out that, according to the UN, there are more than 500 million such people in the world. 2003 was the European Year of Disabled People and it focused attention on the special needs of the disabled, such as the barriers to their inclusion in social, professional, family, emotional and sexual life. Among their comments on this subject, MEPs condemned the unacceptable obstacles faced in some countries by disabled children, adolescents and students in gaining access to education or training. The committee deplored the human rights violations experienced by many disabled people in the world, notably those living in institutions where they are subject to degrading treatment, violence and abuse. MEPs called on the Commission to draw up a specific report on this matter. Lastly, the committee fully supported the Council and Member States in calling for an international convention to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by disabled people. ?

Annual report on the human rights in the world in 2003 and the Union's policy on this matter

By 189 votes for to 111 against with 29 abstentions, Parliament adopted its annual report on human rights in the world in 2003. Drawn up by Véronique DE KEYSER (PES, B), the report aims to draw attention to the hidden costs of instability in the world, affecting more than just the direct victims of conflict. The report condemns in particular the denial of human rights often faced by disabled people. It also makes recommendations for a strengthening of EU human rights policy. Furthermore, it stresses the right for everyone to have access to public health provision, including the fight against AIDS, opposition to sexual violence and reproductive health care as a fundamental right.

Parliament expresses its satisfaction that the fifth parliamentary term has seen a number of major innovations in relation to EU policy on human rights, including the creation or further development of important instruments, that correspond largely to its own initiatives. It considers that terrorism is one of the most serious common challenges facing the international community. It condemns all acts of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, irrespective of their motivation, forms and manifestations and underlines that the fight against terrorism has to remain a matter of the highest priority for the EU. Moreover, Parliament manifests its commitment to continuing to act in support of respect for human rights and promotion of democracy worldwide, and to pursuing in particular its initiatives in favour of the abolition of the death penalty and torture, the fight against impunity, the elimination of racism, xenophobia and discrimination, the protection of women's rights and children's rights (including child soldiers and child labour).

Parliament welcomes the creation of the Commission's website on human rights which includes analyses, reports and research done on key issues and which allows even better information to NGOs and civil society as a whole. It decides to retain closer contacts with former winners of the Sakharov Prize and stresses, in particular, the need to continue and increase support for former Sakharov Prize winners who are still suffering from repression in their country, in particular Leyla Zana, Aung San Suu Kyi and Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas.

The house is convinced that the new European security strategy provides an important conceptual framework in relation to armed conflict and conflict resolution and insists that a proper human rights dimension has to be developed, based on a concept of prevention. On the other hand, it regrets that Parliament's demands for a serious and non-selective application of human rights clauses appear to have had no visible effect on the human rights policies of the Council, the EU Member States and the Commission.

The Commission is called upon to report back to Parliament on the state of preparation of an implementation mechanism for the human rights clause in order to maintain explicit pressure for significant improvements of the human rights situation in the countries concerned and to encourage sections of society that are in favour of promoting democracy and respect for human rights.

Grave concern is expressed at the continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has led to a seemingly endless spiral of hatred and violence and to increased suffering for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Parliament repeats its call for periodic review of sanctions policies in order to assess and enhance their effectiveness. MEPs welcome the EU's support for the creation of the International Criminal Court and ask the Council and Commission to use the political influence of the EU to encourage as many countries as possible to sign the Rome statute of the ICC.

Parliament welcomes the action taken by ECHO in the field of humanitarian aid, which often has a component of reproductive health, and urges it to pay even greater attention to the dramatic situation caused by the lack of access to all aspects of reproductive health in emergency situations and in refugee camps. It insists that the Council and the Member States have to address even more firmly the magnitude of HIV/AIDS, which represents a major threat to global security, with 3 million people dying yearly despite the possibility of treatment; underlines that the fight against HIV/AIDS must include effective public health programmes involving education, prevention, treatment, care and support.

The Council is called upon to act upon its stated intention to step up funding for the Global Fund, specifically for programmes in the field of reproductive health as well as funding of NGOs under all assistance programmes (TACIS, PHARE, MEDA, CARDS, etc.) via not only health projects, but also projects dedicated to drug problems and general educational and awareness-raising projects. For its part, the Commission is asked to step up its reproductive health programmes in the TACIS area as the situation is increasingly worrying and the countries concerned do not have the means to meet educational and supply needs, which results in a sharp increase of HIV/AIDS transmission (1.2 million people living with HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe/Central Asia), an extremely high rate of abortions (3.6 abortions per lifetime per woman), poor-quality contraceptive methods and a high infant mortality rate (up to 74 per 1000 compared to 5 per 1000 in France).

A significant section of the report is devoted to the protection of the fundamental rights of disabled people. Parliament stresses that disabled

people exercising their right to mobility must not suffer any form of direct or indirect discrimination, whether deliberate or not, or financial discrimination, and regrets that public transport (buses, coaches, taxis, underground trains, trams, and transport by rail, air, river and sea) are still hard for disabled people (and their guide dogs) to access and use.

Regarding reproductive health, MEPs ask the European Community Humanitarian Office to make greater efforts to tackle the "dramatic situation caused by the lack of access to all aspects of reproductive health in emergency situations and in refugee camps." They ask the Commission to reinforce its funding of education programmes relating to reproductive health, with a focus, amongst others, on the fight against sexual violence and female genital cutting or mutilation.

Lastly, in an amendment to the report, Parliament regrets that people arrested in Egypt on grounds of their sexual orientation are all too often denied certain aspects of their fundamental human rights, including the right to a fair trial.