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Vojvodina: harassment of minorities

European Parliament resolution on harassment of minorities in Vojvodina

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Serbia and Montenegro and Yugoslavia,
- having regard to its resolutions on the Commission's Annual Reports on the Stabilisation and Association Process for South-East Europe of 7 November 2002¹ and of 20 November 2003²,
- having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. having regard to the EU's efforts to promote democratisation and respect for human and minority rights in the Republic of Serbia and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro,
- B. having regard to the repeated harassment of minorities in Vojvodina, and in particular of the Hungarian minority, in recent months,
- C. aware of the fact that there has been recent proof of ongoing violence against Serb citizens of Hungarian ethnic origin, which has occurred in several towns in the province of Vojvodina, such as desecration of tombstones in many towns ; a proliferation of anti-Hungarian graffiti; burning of the national flag of the Republic of Hungary; physical aggression by the police against a mayor representing the Hungarian minority,
- D. noting that although these incidents can be perceived as local or isolated, there is a danger that they could escalate in different directions,
- E. whereas in the past one and a half years the central and local authorities of Serbia have failed to ensure respect for fundamental human rights, including those of ethnic and national minorities, and to bring the perpetrators to justice,
- F. deeply concerned at the fact that the Serb authorities mostly turn a blind eye to the violence, often treating it as vandalism and refusing to accept a nationalist or sectarian motive,
- G. whereas the EU and its Member States have consistently been calling for respect for fundamental values and minority rights throughout the region,
- H. noting recent steps by the Belgrade authorities to address this serious situation and expecting more concrete measures to be taken by them,

¹ OJ C 16 E, 22.1.2004, p. 98.

² OJ C 87 E, 7.4.2004, p. 521.

1. Expresses deep concern at the repeated breaches of human rights in the province of Vojvodina;
2. Calls upon the authorities in the Republic of Serbia and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro to acknowledge these violent acts as criminal acts according to the legislation in force and insists on the importance of immediate and effective action, so that similar events are not left unremedied and are prevented in the future;
3. Reminds the Governments of the Republic of Serbia and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro that observance of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human and minority rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law is one of the basic principles of the Stabilisation and Association Process and a prerequisite for their future relationship with the EU, including orderly relations with all their neighbours;
4. Calls on the Regional Assembly of Vojvodina urgently to address these issues and to establish a political climate that assists in addressing the concerns and aspirations of all citizens and ensuring safety and the rule of law in the region;
5. Invites the Conference of Presidents to authorise its Delegation for relations with Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo) to send a fact-finding mission to the province and to report back to the Foreign Affairs Committee and its Subcommittee on Human Rights, with regard to further action to be taken;
6. Calls on the Council and the Commission also to monitor closely developments in Vojvodina and to use the EU's political leverage to raise this issue with all authorities in the Republic of Serbia and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro;
7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Governments and Parliaments of the Republic of Serbia and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, the authorities of Vojvodina province, the Special Coordinator for the Stability Pact for South-East Europe and the OSCE.