

Human Rights: European Parliament cannot conclude its 5-year legislative period by condemning Pope Benedict XVI

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Today, the European Parliament adopted the Report on the Human Rights in the World 2008 and the EU's policy on the subject. 429 MEPs voted in favour, 36 against and 55 abstained.

The EPP-ED Group's Human Rights Coordinator, Laima Andrikienė MEP, who was actively involved in the preparation of the Report, welcomed the outcome of the vote. "The Report and the Resolution are well prepared, a long list of human rights violations in the world, including the EU, are covered in the Report and the necessary compromises for the adoption of the Report have been reached", said Andrikienė.

"The amendment tabled by the ALDE Group (Liberals) just before the plenary session, which condemns Pope Benedict XVI for his statements, is totally unacceptable and was rejected. As we all agree that our Union is based on values including Christian values, how can anyone imagine that this Parliament could finish its current term condemning Pope Benedict XVI for his declarations? My position is that the wording used by the signatories of the amendment is absolutely unacceptable", she continued. It is a great success for the EPP-ED Group that the European Parliament rejected this amendment by a substantial majority.

On his visit to Africa in March 2009, Pope Benedict XVI said that HIV/AIDS is a tragedy that cannot be overcome only by the distribution of condoms. "You can't overcome this problem of AIDS with just money. It helps, but if there is no soul, the money cannot help. You cannot overcome it just by distributing condoms. You will increase it", Pope Benedict XVI said in an interview. "We know that the fundamental element of the crisis is the deficit of ethics in economic structures. We understand that ethics is something that is outside the concept of economy, but the economy cannot work if it does not work within ethics".

Laima Andrikienė also proposed an amendment regarding defenders of human rights - the Laureates of the Sakharov Prize, political prisoners in Cuba, Sri Lanka and China. "I suggest that in the Resolution that the European Parliament reiterates our demand that all winners of the Sakharov Prize and, in particular, Aung San Suu Kyi, Oswaldo José Paya Sardinias, the Cuban Damas de Blanco and Hu Jia, be given access to the European institutions. We regret the fact that none of them were allowed to participate in the 20th anniversary ceremony of the Sakharov Prize", she said.

The MEP suggested that the European Parliament call on the EU and its Member States to maintain the fight against terrorism, carried out in full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as one of

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the main priorities of the Union and as a key element of its external action.

The European Parliament's annual report provides the evaluation of the human rights situation in the world, developments regarding the death penalty, women's rights, child participation in military conflicts and other problematic issues.