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Riots in European cities: lessons and Council of Europe response

Committee Opinion¹

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

Rapporteur: Mr Mike HANCOCK, United Kingdom, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

A. Conclusions of the committee

1. The importance of the report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee prepared by Mr Roland Blum, France, EPP/CD cannot be underestimated. Many European countries have experienced violent riots in the past years. The tightening of immigration policies has not changed the situation; riots have continued and have become even more violent as evidenced by recent violent riots in Brussels (May 2008), Caserta and Milano (Italy, September 2008) and Roquetas de Mar (Spain, September 2008).
2. The European countries, all member states of the Council of Europe, have to act together to come up with a policy of actions to tackle and prevent future violent riots in our countries, taking into account the specificities of each country.
3. The understanding of the incentives that make people organise and participate in the riots is of paramount importance. As the rapporteur rightly points out that, built out of frustration, in some but not all cases it is the only way for these people to express themselves and carry their message to the government.
4. The only way to improve the situation is to tackle all the causes of the riots simultaneously. The value of this report is that it has identified those causes, which paves the way for the next step – the action.
5. The rapporteur notices rightly that riots should not be perceived by justice system as individual matters, for collectivism plays the decisive role in riots. Conviction of the people involved in the riots will only bring out more anger against the state's unsuccessful policies. The Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population proposes that the Parliamentary Assembly should open a discussion on the alternatives to custody that could be used towards the people participating in riots.
6. The committee recommends the Assembly to consider keeping the progress of each country's successes and failures on its agenda. This would enable further understanding of the situation in practices and have the potential to lead Council of Europe member states to the elaboration of best policies.
7. The committee particularly highlights the need to conduct thorough research and comparative analysis of the links between media coverage and violence during the riots, with a particular focus on the long-term consequences of limited or recurrent coverage of violent riots in the media and in some countries the no coverage as a policy of government. It recalls that the restriction of the media coverage can be used by the parties as an excuse for further human rights violations.
8. Finally, the committee proposes the following amendments to the draft resolution presented by the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, complementing paragraph 9 with some additional recommendations to the member states:

1. See [Doc. 11685](#) tabled by the Social, Health and family Affairs Committee



B. Proposed amendments

Amendment A (to the draft resolution)

At the end of sub-paragraph 9.1.2., add the following phrase:

“wherever possible, encourage large companies to build new housing and open new branches in disadvantaged areas with a view to improving both housing and employment conditions in these areas”

Amendment B (to the draft resolution)

At the end of sub-paragraph 9.1.4., add a sentence:

“Those willing to leave the disadvantaged areas should be given more opportunities to move to new accommodation in other parts of the city/country. This will also improve integration within society”

Amendment C (to the draft resolution)

After sub-paragraph 9.2.3., add a new sub-paragraph:

“consider introducing tax incentives for those companies/organisations who agree to take on board more people from disadvantaged areas”

Amendment D (to the draft resolution)

After sub-paragraph 9.2.5., add a new sub-paragraph:

“introduce quotas for children from disadvantaged areas to allow easier access to educational institutions and sponsorship/scholarships”

Amendment E (to the draft resolution)

Before sub-paragraph 9.3.1., add a new sub-paragraph:

“encourage integration of migrant communities through creating opportunities for their greater participation in public life and granting the right to vote at local level, in line with Assembly [Resolution 1618 \(2008\)](#) on measures to improve the democratic participation of migrants”

Amendment F (to the draft resolution)

After sub-paragraph 9.3.1., add a new sub-paragraph:

“encourage initiatives of community policing with a view to closer interaction between the population in “difficult” areas and the law enforcement officials;”

Amendment G (to the draft resolution)

In sub-paragraph 9.3.5., after the word “condemn”, insert the word “, investigate”

Amendment H (to the draft resolution)

After sub-paragraph 9.4.1., add a new sub-paragraph:

“carry out research and comparative analysis on long-term consequences of the limited or total absence of coverage of violent riots in the media”

Reporting Committee: Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee

Committee for opinion: Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

Reference to Committee: [Doc. 10782](#), Reference No. 3166, 23 January 2006

Opinion approved by the Committee on 2 October 2008

Secretariat of the Committee: Mr Lervik, Mr Neville, Mrs Odrats