Resolution on the situation in Egypt

2008/2509(RSP) - 17/01/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate in plenary, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation in Egypt, recognising the role that Egypt plays in the Middle East peace process and the importance that EU-Egypt relations have for the entire Euro-Mediterranean area and in the fight against international terrorism and fundamentalism. However, Parliament points out that respect for human rights is a fundamental value of the EU-Egypt Association Agreement. The Egyptian authorities have promised to put an end to the imprisonment of journalists, but this promise has so far gone unfulfilled. Parliament also pints out that the opposition presidential candidate Ayman Nour is still serving a five-year prison sentence following an unfair trial in 2005 on politically motivated charges, and his health is deteriorating as a consequence of this imprisonment. It recalls the the closure of the Centre for Trade Union and Workers' Services, this being the first closure of an advocacy NGO by an executive decision, and the closing down of the Association for Human Rights Legal Aid (AHRLA) and the ensuing verdict against the human rights activist Kamal Abbas, for committing libel against Mohammed Mostafa, following his publication of an essay in the periodical Kalam Sanya.

Parliament considers that the recent arrests and action against NGOs and human rights defenders undermines the commitments entered into by the Egyptian Government concerning fundamental rights and the democratic process in the country. It calls on the Egyptian Government to end all forms of harassment, including judicial measures, the detention of media professionals and, more generally, human rights defenders and activists calling for reforms and to fully respect freedom of expression. The Egyptian Government is encouraged to honour its undertaking to lift the state of emergency on 31 May 2008. The Egyptian authoritiesare asked to amend law No 25 of 1966 on martial courts and to ensure that all measures and legislation adopted to combat terrorism are fully in accordance with international human rights law.

Parliament goes on to call for arbitrary administrative measures, such as those taken against the Centre for Trade Union and Workers' Services and the Association for Human Rights Legal Aid to be rescinded, and the release of Kamal Abbas and other activists. The law on associations should not impose arbitrary restrictions on the peaceful activities of civil society organisations. Parliament also calls for the immediate release of Ayman Nour, in the light of the reports of his deteriorating state of health, and for an immediate welfare visit.

Members appeal for an end to all forms of torture and ill-treatment and emphasise the importance of ensuring the independence of the judiciary by amending or repealing all legal provisions that infringe its independence.

Lastly, Parliament urges the EU to put human rights developments very high on its agenda during the forthcoming meeting of the EU-Egypt Subcommittee on Political Matters. It calls on the Council and the Commission to report back to it and to involve it closely in the evaluation process.