Resolution on Armenia

2008/2543(RSP) - 13/03/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate held in plenary on the same date, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on Armenia. The text adopted in plenary was tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, UEN, Greens/ALE and GUE/NGL groups.

Parliament recalls that the official results of the presidential elections in Armenia on 19 February 2008 showed a first-round victory for Prime Minister Serzh Sarkisian but were contested by one of the opposition leaders, Levon Ter-Petrosian, as being fraudulent.

Opposition supporters began peaceful rallies on 20 February 2008 in Yerevan to protest against the election result and demand a rerun. On the evening of 1 March 2008, after eleven days of protest by opposition supporters, violence erupted when police moved into Freedom Square in central Yerevan to disperse the protesters camped out in tents, leaving eight people dead, including one police officer, and dozens injured. A state of emergency was declared on 1 March 2008, which imposed restrictions on the freedom of the media, freedom of assembly and political parties.

In its resolution, Parliament expresses its concern at recent developments in Armenia, with the violent police crackdown on opposition demonstrations, and calls on all parties to show openness and restraint and to engage in a constructive and fruitful dialogue aimed at consolidating the country's democratic institutions.

Members call for a prompt, thorough, transparent, independent and impartial investigation of the events of 1 March 2008, including an independent investigation of the police intervention, and for all those responsible to be brought to justice and punished for misconduct and criminal acts of violence. The Council and the Commission are asked to offer EU assistance to the Armenian authorities with such an investigation.

The Armenian authorities are called upon to lift the state of emergency, which was mitigated by a presidential decree on 10 March 2008, to restore media freedom and take all the measures necessary to ensure a return to normality. They are also asked to release citizens detained for having exercised their right of peaceful assembly.

Parliament stresses that Priority Area 1 of the ENP Action Plan deals with the strengthening of democratic structures and the rule of law. It urges the Commission in this context to focus its assistance to Armenia on the independence of the judiciary and the training of police and security forces, and calls on the Armenian authorities to implement swiftly all the remaining recommendations made by the International Election Observation Mission. Lastly, Parliament reiterates the clear EU commitment to building closer ties with Armenia and the South Caucasus countries. It emphasises, however, that closer cooperation with the EU must be based on real and tangible progress and reforms and a full commitment to democracy and the rule of law.