Resolution on Russia

2008/2549(RSP) - 13/03/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate held in plenary on 13 March, the European Parliament adopted on the same date a resolution on the arrests of demonstrators following the presidential elections in Russia. The text adopted in plenary was tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP-ED, ALDE, UEN, and Greens/ALE groups.

It recalls that on 3 March 2008, "Other Russia", a coalition of opposition parties, organised a "March of Dissent" to protest against the presidential elections in Russia of 2 March 2008. The city authorities refused to authorise the protest, claiming that the pro-Kremlin "Young Russia" youth group had already planned gatherings at every large meeting point in the capital. "Other Russia" decided to go ahead with the march and said it would appeal against the city's decision. Parliament goes on to recall that several opposition protesters were arrested as riot police and militias wearing helmets and carrying riot shields crushed the rally in Turgenevskaya Square in central Moscow.

In its resolution, Parliament condemns the disproportionate use of force by police and riot police and militias against the demonstrators on 3 March 2008, and calls on the authorities to investigate the incidents and to bring those responsible to justice. It calls for the immediate release of all those demonstrators who are still detained. Parliament deplores in particular the fact that the run-up to the presidential election was marked by the illegal treatment of opposition candidates, and it regrets the failure to use the recent election to strengthen democracy and the rule of law in Russia.

Members also regret that the Russian authorities regarded the intended monitoring mission of the OSCE /ODIHR as an intrusion into internal affairs. They voice their strong support for the important work of this mission and remind Russia of its commitments and responsibilities as a member of the OSCE and of the Council of Europe, including the right of association and the right to peaceful demonstrations.

Parliament calls on the newly elected President of Russia to review the treatment of imprisoned public figures (among them Mihail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev), whose imprisonment has been assessed by most observers as having been politically motivated. It underlines that this would strengthen the credibility of the Russian authorities and would enhance an even closer partnership between Russia and the EU. The Council and Member States are urged to make Russia's full compliance with European Court of Human Rights judgments a key priority at all levels of dialogue with Russia.

Lastly, Parliament calls on the new Russian President and Government to create together with the EU the necessary conditions for a rapid start of the negotiations on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Russia. It stresses once more, in this regard, that respect for the rule of law, democracy and human rights must be an important part of any future agreement with Russia.