Resolution on the continued detention of political prisoners in Burma

2008/2602(RSP) - 19/06/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 19 June 2008, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the continued detention of political prisoners in Burma. The resolution had been tabled for consideration in plenary by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, UEN, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups. Parliament strongly condemns the decision by the Burmese authorities to extend the house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi, who has spent 13 of the last 18 years as a political prisoner. It also deplores the detention of the group of political activists demanding the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and urges the Burmese authorities to free all political prisoners without further delay. Members refer to the call of the official newspapers of the Burmese military junta, including the regime's mouthpiece, The New Light of Myanmar, for the public flogging of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. They denounce this prospect as a crime against humanity. They call for a judicial investigation to be carried out under UN auspices into reports that the Burmese army murdered political prisoners in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis.

Recalling the arrest of a further 16 individuals, victims of Cyclone Nargis, for the crime of presenting themselves at the offices of the UN Development Programme and asking for humanitarian assistance, Parliament deplores the ongoing imprisonment by the Burmese authorities of victims of Cyclone Nargis who attempted to seek aid from international aid organisations in Burma. It views as deeply regrettable the holding by the Burmese junta of a referendum on the constitution only days after a devastating cyclone had hit the country, and regards the results of the referendum as wholly lacking credibility. The Burmese authorities are asked to lift all restrictions on peaceful political activities in the country and to progress towards an inclusive process of national reconciliation and the restoration of democracy, the rule of law and full respect for human rights. The regime is asked also to provide explanations regarding the individuals still missing after September 2007 crackdown on protests by Buddhist monks and democracy activists. The military government of Burma must uphold the agreement reached with the UN Secretary-General to allow international humanitarian workers and supplies unhindered access to the areas affected by Cyclone Nargis and must cooperate fully with the international community in assessing assistance needs. Parliament calls on the Burmese authorities to stop official interference in the delivery of aid and to cooperate fully with humanitarian organisations.

It appreciates the latest report by the UN Special Rapporteur, which compiles important evidence of continuing violations of human rights in the country, noting with great concern the conclusion of the report that almost no improvement has been made in the human rights situation in Burma since 26 March 2008. Parliament urges the Burmese authorities to enter into close dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur and to accept his request to visit Burma.

Members call on countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with which Burma enjoys close economic and political relations to put heavy pressure on the Burmese authorities to bring about democratic change.

Lastly, Parliament is of the opinion that the EU's clearly defined and targeted sanctions against the Burmese junta, although broadened after the September 2007 events with the introduction of an embargo on further sectors of the economy, are still having only a limited effect on the regime, thus falling short of the objectives sought. It reiterates, therefore, its call on the Council to take further steps and effectively prevent the Burmese junta from accessing EU funding. The Council and Member States must monitor closely, and ensure the effective application of, the targeted sanctions.