Resolution on the murder of human rights activists in Russia

2009/2677(RSP) - 17/09/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate that took place on the same day, the European Parliament adopted by 43 votes to 6, with 6 abstentions, a resolution on the murder of human rights activists in Russia.

The text adopted in plenary had been tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP, ALDE, Greens/ALE and ECR groups.

The resolution unreservedly condemns and strongly deplores the harassment and attacks on the lives of human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists in Russia. It urges the Russian authorities to do everything in their power to ensure the protection of human rights defenders and to protect universally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Parliament calls in particular on the responsible authorities to create circumstances that allow “Memorial” and other human rights organisations to resume their activities in Chechnya in a safe environment. Although, on the one hand, it welcomes the return of the confiscated archive of “Memorial” in St Petersburg following the raid on 4 December 2008, it recalls, on the other hand, that Natalia Estemirova, head of “Memorial” in Chechnya, was abducted, on 15 July 2009 in Grozny and found dead in neighbouring Ingushetia.

Parliament calls on the Russian federal authorities to swiftly, thoroughly and effectively investigate the murders of:

- the human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov, who had also represented the assassinated journalist Anna Politkovskaya, was assassinated on 20 January 2009 together with the journalist Anastasia Barburova, who died trying to protect Mr Markelov;
- the human rights activist Andrei Kulagin was found dead on 10 July 2009;
- the Chechen civil society activists Zarema Sadulayeva and her husband, Alik Dzhabrailov, working for the humanitarian organisation "Save the Generation", who were abducted from their office in Grozny and found murdered the next day.

Parliament stresses that the impunity in Chechnya leads to destabilisation across the whole North Caucasus region. It welcomes the initiative taken by President Medvedev to amend the NGO law with a view to easing some restrictions and registration complications for Russian NGOs, and expects substantial improvements.

Moreover, it welcomes the decision of the Russian Supreme Court of 3 September 2009 to launch a new investigation into the murder of Anna Politkovskaya and calls for the process to be open to all journalists and media.

Parliament calls for a stepping-up of the EU-Russia human rights consultations and urges that this consultation process be opened to effective input from the European Parliament. It stresses its position that the protection of human rights should be a privileged item on the agenda of the next EU-Russia summit and become an integral part of the new EU-Russia agreement.

The European Parliament calls on the Russian authorities to comply with all the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights and to ratify Additional Protocol 14 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms on the reform of its control system without delay.