Resolution on the situation of human rights in the North Caucasus (Russian Federation) and the criminal prosecution against Oleg Orlov

2010/2932(RSP) - 21/10/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution by 55 votes to 1, with 3 abstentions on the situation of human rights in the North Caucasus (Russian Federation) and the criminal prosecution against Oleg Orlov.

The resolution had been tabled by the S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL, EPP and ECR groups.

Parliament condemns all acts of terrorism and underlines that there can be no justification whatsoever for acts of indiscriminate violence against the civilian population. It expresses deepest concern at the resurgence of violence and acts of terrorism in the North Caucasus and calls for an end to terrorism and on the Russian authorities to put an end to the widespread climate of impunity for human rights violations and the absence of the rule of law in the region. It stresses that the lasting impunity in Chechnya contributes to destabilisation across the whole North Caucasus region.

While it recognises Russia's right to fight real terrorism and armed insurgency in the North Caucasus, it urges the authorities to do so while upholding international human rights law.

Parliament urges the Russian authorities to do everything in their power to ensure the protection of human rights defenders.

It condemns any form of collective punishment against individuals suspected of having ties to insurgents and asks the authorities to take concrete steps to prevent any recurrence of such violations and to punish the officials responsible for them at all levels.

Parliament urges Russia to provide unhindered access to the North Caucasus for international human rights organisations, the media and international governmental institutions, and calls, in particular, on the competent authorities to create circumstances that allow Memorial and other human rights organisations fully to resume their activities in the North Caucasus in a safe environment. It condemns the intimidating search of the offices of human rights organisations and expects a clarification of the legality and aims of these actions. It also calls on the Russian federal authorities to investigate the murder of Natalia Estemirova and bring both those responsible for and those involved in her brutal murder to justice.

Parliament expresses its deep concern at the growing number of disappeared residents of the North Caucasus republics who have apparently been abducted in other Russian regions and looks to the General Public Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation to clarify and confirm the whereabouts of these citizens.

Members urge the Russian federal authorities to ensure that long-term solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) are translated into action and call for enhanced national government action to support the UNHCR operations to continue housing programmes for IDPs and to facilitate measures to improve IDPs’ access to services and benefits.

Parliament condemns the opening of a criminal investigation against Oleg Orlov (awarded the Parliament's 2009 Sakharov Prize) and urges the competent authorities to reconsider the decision to open the criminal trial. It calls on the Russian authorities - should the trial continue - to ensure that there are no

further violations of the law in this investigation and the court proceedings and to comply in all circumstances with all the international and regional human rights instruments ratified by the Russian Federation.

Recalling the fact that the Partnership Agreement between the EU and Russia is pending replacement by a new agreement, it deplores the fact that the continued human rights abuses are having a very negative impact on Russia's image and credibility in the world and casting a shadow over relations between the two parties.

It strongly supports the recommendations of the resolution adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in June 2010 on legal remedies for human rights violations in the North Caucasus, which could do much to help put an end to the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of human rights violations and restore the people's trust in law-enforcement agencies.

Parliament calls on the Russian authorities to comply with all the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights and to implement measures to rectify violations in individual cases and to adopt general measures to implement the rulings, including policy and legal changes to prevent similar violations recurring. It also calls on Russia to respect fully its obligations as a member of the OSCE and of the Council of Europe.

Parliament recommends that the state authorities at federal, regional and local level start a constructive dialogue with civil society activists so that functioning democratic structures can develop.

Lastly, Parliament calls for the EU-Russia human rights consultations to be stepped up and urges that this consultation process be opened up to effective input from the European Parliament, the Duma, the Russian judicial authorities and civil society and human rights organizations.