Resolution on Burma: conduct of elections and the release of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi

2010/2966(RSP) - 25/11/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 23 November 2010, the European Parliament adopted by 68 votes to 0, with 1 abstention, a resolution on Burma – conduct of elections and the release on 13 November 2010 of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from the house arrest under which she had spent 15 of the last 21 years.

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

Parliament welcomes Aung San Suu Kyi's release and insists that **her freshly regained freedom must be unconditional and unrestricted**. It deplores the fact that she was only released after the elections, making it impossible for her to actively campaign for the opposition during the elections, and it deeply regrets that the ruling Burmese military junta refused to hold free and fair elections in Burma on 7 November, noting that the elections were conducted in a climate of fear, intimidation and resignation and hundreds of thousands of Burmese citizens, including Buddhist monks and political prisoners, were banned from voting or standing for election.

Members strongly urge the **Burmese regime to enter into discussions with Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy**, as well as with representatives of the minority peoples. In this regard, it welcomes the mediation efforts made by the UN Secretary-General and his Special Rapporteur on Burma. Parliament endorses its President's invitation to Aung San Suu Kyi to attend the Sakharov prize-giving ceremony in Strasbourg in December. Should she be able to attend, she will be officially presented with the Sakharov Prize that she won in 1990 for all that she has done to promote democracy and freedom in Burma. Members insists that Aung San Suu Kyi's freedom of expression and physical freedom, including her unhindered right to travel freely and safely throughout Burma and abroad, and to return to Burma, be guaranteed by the Burmese regime and the services under its control. They welcome the decision taken by the President of the European Parliament to send a Parliamentary delegation to Burma to present Aung San Suu Kyi with her Sakharov Prize, should she be unable to attend the prize-giving ceremony in Strasbourg.

Parliament **deplores the restrictions placed by the ruling military junta on the main opposition parties**, as well as the restrictions placed on the press's freedom to report on and monitor the elections. It also deplores the lack of transparency in the organisation of the ballot and vote counting, the refusal of the military to accept international observers and the delay in announcing results, as well as the fact that the new constitution guarantees the Burmese military a minimum of a quarter of all seats in parliament, enough to veto any constitutional change, and also allows the military to suspend all civil liberties and parliament whenever it deems it necessary. Members note the restricted participation in the ballot of the opposition parties that had to take a difficult decision whether or not to boycott the elections, and they take the view that the participation of opposition and ethnic representatives in both national and regional assemblies, albeit at a very limited level, could constitute a beginning of normalisation and might offer an opportunity for change.

The resolution urges the Government of Burma to **release all Burma's remaining 2 200 political prisoners without delay and without any pre-conditions**, as well as to restore all their political rights; also insists that the Burmese authorities make no further politically motivated arrests.

Members note that the EU has imposed restrictive measures on the Burmese regime since 1996, including a freeze on the assets of some 540 individuals and 62 entities, until such time as there is evidence of genuine change in the direction of democracy, human rights, freedom of expression and the rule of law. They reiterate their support for the Council's decision of 26 April 2010 to extend the restrictive measures provided for in the current EU decision by another year, urging the Burmese authorities to take the necessary steps to enable these measures to be reconsidered.

Parliament calls on the **EU and its Member States to employ their full economic and political influence** in order to bring about freedom and democracy in Burma. It urges the Member States and the EU to continue to provide funding for refugees on the Thai-Burmese border.

Lastly, the resolution calls not only on the international community, including China, India and Russia as Burma's main trading partners, but also on ASEAN to stop supporting the undemocratic regime that thrives at the expense of its people and to exert more pressure for positive change in the country. Parliament believes that the ASEAN Charter confers upon the ASEAN Member States a special responsibility and moral obligation to act in the event of systematic violations of human rights in a member country.