Resolution on Vietnam, in particular freedom of expression

2013/2599(RSP) - 18/04/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 41 votes to 0 with 0 abstentions a resolution on Vietnam in particular freedom of expression.

The resolution was tabled by the EFD, EPP, S&D, ECR, Greens/EFA and ALDE groups.

It expresses its **deep concern about the conviction and harsh sentencing of journalists and bloggers in Vietnam**, citing amongst others the recent case of three journalists sentenced for 12, 10 and 3 years respectively, followed by several years of house arrest, for posting articles on the website of the Vietnamese Club of Free Journalists. Members condemn the **continuing violations of human rights**, including political intimidation, assaults, arbitrary arrests, heavy prison sentences and unfair trials, in Vietnam perpetrated against political activists, journalists, bloggers, dissidents and human rights defenders, in clear violation of Vietnam's international human rights obligations. Parliament also notes that **land confiscation by government officials,** use of excessive force in response to public protests, arbitrary arrests of activists and heavy sentences for protesters are ongoing, while the issues of land rights and land use are unclear.

The Vietnamerse Government is asked to:

- **repeal legislation that restricts the right to freedom of expression** and modify the draft ‘Decree on the Management, Provision, Use of Internet Services and Information Content Online’ which, in its current form, would legalise content-filtering, censorship and sanctions by the government and which would oblige internet providers, including foreign ones, to cooperate in the surveillance and tracking of cyber dissidents;

- **cease forced evictions**, and guarantee those who have been forcibly evicted access to legal remedies and adequate compensation.

Parliament calls on the EU to consistently raise concerns about human rights violations in Vietnam at the highest levels and to **intensify pressure on the Vietnamese authorities to lift internet and blogging controls** and prohibitions on privately owned media, allow groups and individuals to express their opinions and dissent publicly, take steps to abolish the death penalty, repeal or amend national security laws used to criminalise peaceful dissent, and release peaceful prisoners of conscience. It reminds all parties of the **human rights clause in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)** between the EU and Vietnam signed on 27 June 2012 and asks the High Representative to assess the compatibility of the Vietnamese government's policies with the conditions included in the PCA.

Parliament also calls on Vietnam to:

- **put an end to religious persecution** and ensure the restitution of assets arbitrarily seized by the state from the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, the Catholic Church and any other religious community;

- guarantee their physical and psychological integrity of prisoners of conscience, ensure their unrestricted access to legal counsel and offer appropriate medical assistance to those in need.

Whilst welcoming the fact that the Government of Vietnam has issued a call for public input into its first constitutional reform since 1992, Parliament regrets that **the public consultation has led to sanctions and pressure against those who legitimately express their opinions** and recommends that an invitation be addressed to the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Opinion to visit the country and that the authorities fully implement any recommendations.