Resolution on the human rights situation in Kazakhstan

2013/2600(RSP) - 18/04/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 39 votes to 1 with 2 abstentions a resolution on the human rights situation in Kazakhstan.

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

It strongly criticises the Almaty District Court's decision on 21 December 2012 to ban the unregistered opposition party 'Alga!' on charges of extremism and also criticises the subsequent ban on 25 December 2012 on key independent media actors including eight Kazakh newspapers and 23 web news portals..

The resolution reiterates concern over the detentions of opposition leaders, journalists and lawyers on the basis of trials that fall short of international standards. Parliament calls on the EU and Member States to **seek guarantees that protect journalists, opposition activists and human rights defenders**, and in particular those visiting the EU institutions to discuss human rights issues, against any kind of subsequent personal threats, pressures or prosecution. The **EEAS is asked to closely monitor developments in Kazakhstan**, raise concerns with the Kazakh authorities where necessary, offer assistance, and report regularly to Parliament. Parliament also calls on the EU delegation in Astana to play a more proactive role, including observating trials and prison visits.

Welcoming the dialogue between the Kazakh authorities and the Venice Commission in March 2013 on the **new Code of Criminal Procedure**, Parliament stresses that the reform should aim at strengthening the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law. Members call on EEAS to monitor the reform, particularly of Article 164 on 'inciting social discord', a vague charge that can be used to criminalise legitimate exercise of the rights of freedom of expression.

The resolution stresses that **Kazakhstan is an increasingly important international partner** and is of the utmost importance for the political and socio-economic development, as well as the security situation, of the whole region. The EU has a vital interest in stepping up political, economic and security cooperation with that region, be it with regard to cooperation with NATO, support for the E3+3 talks with Iran, or the establishment of an international fuel bank in Kazakhstan. Whilst welcoming Kazakhstan's ambition to engage actively as a mediator in international security issues concerning the wider region, Members urge the Kazakhstan to:

- honour its international commitments, including those relating to the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary.
- create a climate where opposition activists, journalists and lawyers can freely exercise their activities;
- guarantee detention conditions that conform to international standards and allow adequate medical treatment for prisoners, including the opposition leader Vladimir Kozlov;
- ease restrictions on the registration and practice of religion.

Lastly, Parliament stresses that the human rights dialogues between the EU and the Kazakh authorities should be effective and results-oriented, and should involve civil-society actors where possible.