Resolution on recent elections in Bangladesh

2014/2516(RSP) - 16/01/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on general elections in Bangladesh on 5 January 2014.

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

It **strongly condemned the killings and widespread violence** which erupted throughout the country in the run-up to and during the January 2014 elections, with at least 18 killings on election day, and it expressed **serious concern at the paralysis of everyday life** in Bangladesh on account of strikes and blockades and the confrontation between the two political camps - the BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party), and the ruling Awami League. The Bangladeshi Government was urged to immediately halt all repressive methods used by the security forces, including indiscriminate firing with live ammunition and torture in custody, and to release the opposition politicians who have been subjected to arbitrary arrest.

Parliament noted that the **elections were boycotted by the opposition alliance led by the BNP**, with over half of the constituencies uncontested and voter participation at 40 % according to government figures, 20 % according to Dhakabased diplomats, and even lower according to representatives of the opposition. It sincerely regretted the fact that the Bangladeshi Parliament and the political parties **did not manage to agree on an inclusive mechanism for the elections,** and called on the government and the opposition to **put the best interests of Bangladesh first and to find a compromise** which would give the Bangladeshi people a chance to express their democratic choice in a representative way. All options should be considered, including an early election if all legitimate political parties are willing to stand and offer voters a choice.

Members **called on the EU to use all the means at its disposal to assist such a process** if requested and to make full use of its resources, in particular the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and the Instrument for Stability. The Directorate for Democracy Support was asked to make Bangladesh a focal point for activities of the Office for Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy (OPPD).

Members went on to **urge the BNP to unequivocally distance itself from Jamaat-e-Islami and Hafezat-e-Islam**, which are regarded as the main instigators of the violence, stressing that parties which turn to terrorist acts should be banned.

Whilst acknowledging that the **International Crimes Tribunal (ICT)** has played an important role in providing redress and closure for victims of and those affected by the Bangladeshi war of independence, Parliament expressed concern nonetheless, at the increasing number of people on death row in Bangladesh, and the recent execution of Abdul Quader Molla. It called for the abolition of the death penalty and commutation of all death sentences.