Resolution on Russia: sentencing of demonstrators involved in the Bolotnaya Square events

2014/2628(RSP) - 13/03/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 46 votes to 1 with 2 abstentions, a resolution on Russia: sentencing of demonstrators involved in the Bolotnaya Square events.

The text adopted in plenary had been jointly tabled by the EPP, S & D, ALDE, Greens/EFA and GUE /NGL groups.

Parliament recalled that on 6 May 2012, on the eve of President Vladimir Putin's inauguration, several dozen of the estimated tens of thousands of protesters clashed sporadically with police, leading to minor injuries, in Bolotnaya Square. Around 600 activists were briefly detained and criminal proceedings were started against 28 individuals. The authorities deemed the actions of the protestors 'mass riots', alleging that the violence was planned and was part of a conspiracy to destabilise the country and overthrow the government.

Members expressed their deep concern over the proceedings against the Bolotnaya Square demonstrators, believing that the charges brought against the demonstrators and their sentences seem **disproportionate** in the light of the nature of the events and the offences of which they are accused. They called for **the dropping of all charges against the protesters** and called on the Russian Government to respect the rights of all citizens to exercise their fundamental freedoms and universal human rights.

Recalling the importance of Russia's full compliance with its international legal obligations, as a member of the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the resolution called on the Russian government:

- to take **concrete steps to address the deterioration of human rights**, in particular by ceasing the campaign of harassment against civil-society organisations and activists;
- to ensure that freedom of assembly in the Russian Federation is respected;
- to bring its surveillance programmes into line with the European Convention on Human Rights.

Parliament called on the High Representative and the European External Action Service (EEAS):

to ensure that the cases of all persons prosecuted for political reasons are raised in **EU-Russia human rights consultations**;

to ensure that the Union **seeks every opportunity** to continue to engage with and support Russian civil-society organisations, including those working to promote the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law;

to increase its **financial assistance** to Russian civil society through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and to include the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum in the Partnership Instrument.

The Council was urged to develop a unified policy towards Russia that commits the 28 EU Member States and EU institutions to a strong common message on the role of human rights in the EU-Russia relationship and the need to end the crackdown on freedom of expression, assembly and association in Russia.