Resolution on human rights in Uzbekistan

2014/2904(RSP) - 23/10/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on human rights in Uzbekistan.

The resolution was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE, Greens/EFA as well as Ignazio Corrao and Fabio Massimo Castaldo.

Parliament stressed that although Uzbekistan has made commitments relating to the protection of human rights, including the freedoms of expression, assembly, association and religion guaranteed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the prohibition of torture enshrined in the Convention against Torture, these commitments have yielded few positive results.

The Uzbek authorities have imprisoned thousands of people on politically motivated charges to enforce its repressive rule, targeting human rights and opposition activists, journalists, religious believers, artists and other perceived critics. Uzbekistan is ranked 166th out of 180 countries on the World Freedom of the Press Index 2014 by Reporters Without Borders. Digital freedoms are systematically curbed and violated in Uzbekistan.

Stressing the importance of relations between the EU and Uzbekistan and the strengthening of political and economic cooperation, Parliament stressed that those relations must be based on **mutual respect for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights**, as is clearly laid down in the EU-Uzbekistan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

In this regard, Members called for the **immediate and unconditional release of all persons imprisoned on politically motivated charges**. They also insisted that any of the people who have allegedly engaged in acts of violence should be granted a new and fair trial in accordance with international standards.

The Uzbek Government is called upon:

- **not to allow torture, to put an immediate and unconditional stop to all forms of torture and abuse in prison** and ill-treatment in pre-trial detention and penal facilities;
- to approve the pending requests by 11 UN special procedures to visit Uzbekistan, including the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, and to allow unimpeded independent monitoring of prisons by the International Committee of the Red Cross and other independent monitors;
- to uphold women’s rights, in particular by complying with the recommendations of the UN Committee against Torture.

Parliament called on the EU High Representative, the EEAS and the Member States to immediately put in motion **a strategy with the aim of pressing Uzbekistan** for concrete, measurable human rights improvements over the coming months, setting next year as a deadline for progress.

According to the resolution, **concrete improvements** should include the conditions laid down by EU Foreign Ministers in 2010, which are: (1) releasing all imprisoned human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience; (2) allowing unimpeded operation of non-governmental organisations in the country; (3) cooperating fully with all relevant UN Special Rapporteurs; (4) guaranteeing freedom of speech and the media; (5) proceeding with practical implementation of conventions against child labour; and (6) fully aligning its election processes with international standards.

Members took the view that if no meaningful progress is made in these areas, the EU should:

- table a UN Human Rights Council resolution, establishing **a dedicated country-specific mechanism for Uzbekistan**, ensuring sustained and proactive engagement by the HRC through monitoring, public reporting and debate on the human rights situation in Uzbekistan;
- put Uzbekistan on notice that, unless there is progress on the above-mentioned human rights concerns within the next six months, the EU will impose **targeted punitive measures**.

Parliament requested that the Council, the Commission and the EEAS should provide Parliament with a public assessment of measures taken by the EU to press Uzbekistan to meet the human rights criteria set out by EU Foreign Ministers in 2010. It encouraged the Council and the Commission to **improve their human rights dialogue** with the Government of Uzbekistan.