Resolution on Estonian and UK seamen under detention in India

2016/2522(RSP) - 21/01/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 65 votes to 2, with 10 abstentions, a resolution on Estonian and UK seamen under detention in India.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE and EFDD groups.

Parliament recalled that on 12 October 2013, the 35-strong crew (including 14 Estonians and 6 Britons, as well as Indians and Ukrainians) of the US-based, Sierra Leone-flagged and privately owned ship the MV Seaman Guard Ohio were arrested in Tamil Nadu state (India) and charged with illegally possessing weapons in Indian waters.

The crew were apparently on an anti-piracy mission, carried out no aggressive acts against Indian citizens, and have consistently denied any wrongdoing.

The charges were quashed soon after, but the Indian authorities appealed and the Supreme Court ordered the trial to proceed.

On 12 January 2016, each of the **35 sailors and guards was handed a maximum sentence of five years' 'rigorous imprisonment'**. The men are now in Palayamkottai prison in Tamil Nadu; they are considering an appeal against the sentences within the prescribed 90 days.

While respecting India's sovereignty over its territory and jurisdiction and sharing its well-founded concern in relation to terrorism, Parliament called on the Indian authorities to **ensure that the case of the MV Seaman Guard Ohio crew is dealt with on a basis of full respect for the human and legal rights** of the defendants. It urged the Indian authorities to act sympathetically in this case, to **resolve the legal proceedings as swiftly as possible**, and to release all personnel concerned pending conclusion of the judicial processes.

Underlining the long-standing excellent relations existing between the EU and its Member States and India, Members called on the EU and India to increase cooperation in matters of maritime security and counter-piracy, including through the **development of international doctrine and standard operating procedures**, which should contribute to preventing similar contentious cases from occurring in the future.