Resolution on the situation in Eritrea

2016/2568(RSP) - 10/03/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation in Eritrea.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE, GUE/NGL, Greens/EFA and EFDD groups.

After the expectations within the international community and among the people of Eritrea following its independence from Ethiopia in 1993, repression has increased and there have been even more violations of human rights. According to the UN Special Rapporteur, Eritrea has one of the **worst human rights records in the world**, with routine human rights violations taking place every day and no improvement recorded in recent years.

Three key areas of concern were highlighted: the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to adequate housing; human smuggling and trafficking; and the growing number of unaccompanied minors who form part of the more than 5 000 people fleeing the country each month. Moreover, Eritrea is ranked **186th out of 188 countries in the Human Development Index** for 2015, according to the UNDP Human Development Report of 2015.

Human rights situation: Parliament noted with great concern the continuing deplorable human rights situation and the complete absence of rule of law and media freedom in Eritrea. It stressed that **addressing the justice deficit, democratic governance and restoration of the rule of law** must be prioritised by ending authoritarian rule by fear of arbitrary and incommunicado detention, of torture and of other human rights violations, some of which may amount to crimes against humanity.

It urged the Eritrean authorities to:

- release immediately and unconditionally parliamentarians, journalists, political prisoners and prisoners of conscience;
- put an end to the system of indefinite national service by demobilising the conscripts who have completed their mandatory 18 months' service and effectively ending the practice of engaging conscripts in forced labour after that period, to provide for conscientious objection, and to end the compulsory practice of all school students spending their final year of schooling in a military training camp;
- end the 'guilt-by-association' policies that target family members of those who evade national service, seek to flee Eritrea or fail to pay the 2 % income tax imposed by the government on Eritrean expatriates;
- enhance in general the promotion and protection of women's rights, including by taking further measures to combat harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and to end impunity in cases of sexual violence;
- sign and immediately enact the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and fully uphold its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, both of which prohibit torture.

Development aid: Members considered that the decision of the European Development Fund (EDF) to adopt the National Indicative Programme (NIP) for Eritrea despite Parliament's opposition demonstrates a **democratic deficit** and severely undermines Parliament's role in ensuring the effective implementation of EU development objectives. They called, in this connection, for Parliament to be given **powers of scrutiny**

over the EDF through a binding interinstitutional agreement under Article 295 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Parliament took note of the allocation of EUR **200 million over the next five years for the NIP** under the 11th European Development Fund, in order to promote poverty reduction and socio-economic development, to tackle the root economic and political causes of migration, and to finance projects relating to renewable energy, energy efficiency and economic governance.

Members called on the Commission to **ensure that the funding allocated does not benefit the Eritrean Government** but is strictly assigned to meeting the needs of the Eritrean people for development, democracy, human rights, good governance and security, and freedom of speech, press and assembly. The EU should ensure the **conditionality** of the recently agreed aid and that the NIP supports Eritrea in operating an important shift in its energy policy in order to make energy accessible for all.

Parliament appealed to the international community to intervene in the situation and to put pressure on the Eritrean Government **to allow foreign aid to support vulnerable communities** before the crisis worsens. It urged the EU to take urgent and effective measures to help the Eritrean people enhance their **resilience to El Niño** in order to guarantee food security, access to water and sanitation. It encouraged the Commission to **seek clear guarantees** from the Eritrean Government that it will implement democratic reforms and ensure respect for human rights.