Resolution on Honduras: situation of human rights defenders

2016/2648(RSP) - 14/04/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation of human rights defenders in Honduras.

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

It condemned in the strongest terms the recent assassination of Berta Cáceres, Nelson García (activists in indigenous rights movements) and Paola Barraza (a defender of LGBTI rights), as well as each of the earlier assassinations of other human rights defenders in Honduras. It noted that despite the fact that the Honduran Government has made positive commitments and initiated legislation to protect human rights defenders, **Honduras has now become one of the most dangerous countries in the region for human rights defenders and environmental activists**, with at least 109 of the latter murdered between 2010 and 2015.

Members recalled that Ms Cáceres was benefiting from precautionary measures issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), which were reportedly not implemented effectively by the Honduran state. She was one of 15 human rights defenders who have been killed between 2010 and 2016 in Honduras despite being beneficiaries of these precautionary measures. Parliament called on the Honduran Government to:

- prosecute immediate, independent, objective and thorough investigations into these and previous murders in order to bring their intellectual and material authors to justice and to put an end to impunity;

- mobilise all the means at its disposal in order to implement effectively the 92 IACHR precautionary measures currently active in the country and to prevent the perpetration of similar acts against other environmental and indigenous activists under threat.

- bring into force and fully develop the existing 2015 law for the protection of human rights defenders, and to ensure that, in appropriate cooperation with civil society, the national protection system for human rights defenders, journalists and legal practitioners is fully operational and adequately funded.

Those Member States that have not done so must **ratify the EU-Central America Association Agreement**. Members urged the Council to develop a unified policy towards Honduras that commits the 28 Member States and the EU institutions to a strong common message concerning the role of human rights in the EU-Honduras relationship and in the region as a whole. They called on the EU Delegation, and on the Member States' embassies and consulates in the country, to actively accompany and monitor the processes associated with the investigation of murders of human rights defenders, and to further step up efforts to engage with human rights defenders currently in danger.

Parliament went on to note that these recent murders should be seen in the context of the peaceful, decade-long **resistance led by activists against the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam** on the Gualcarque River, a mega-project highly dependent on European investors and technology which is reportedly being **constructed without prior free and informed consultation** aimed at obtaining the consent of affected

indigenous communities, as required by ILO Convention 169. It recalled that Dutch development bank FMO and Finnfund have suspended disbursements to the Agua Zarca dam project, of which Ms Cáceres was a leading opponent. In this regard, Parliament made two points;

- it called on the Commission and the European External Action Service to ensure that European assistance does not promote or permit development projects **unless they meet the requirement for prior, free and informed consultation with indigenous communities**, ensure meaningful consultation of all affected communities and have strong human rights, labour rights and environmental safeguards in place;

- it considered that European investors' activities must be embedded in a strong set of environmental and social safeguard policies, and strongly supported the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, with clear due diligence requirements, risk management safeguards and the provision of effective remedies when needed.