Resolution on the Gambia

2016/2693(RSP) - 12/05/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 539 votes to 27, with 43 abstentions, a resolution on The Gambia.

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

Members recalled the peaceful protest, held on 14 April 2016 in Serekunda, a suburb of the capital Banjul, calling for electoral reform led to violent reactions by the Gambian security forces and arbitrary detention of protestors, among them several members of the United Democratic Party (UDP). Solo Sandeng, the opposition leader and a member of the UDP, died in detention shortly after his arrest in suspicious circumstances.

Against this background, Parliament called for the immediate release of all protestors arrested in relation to the 14 and 16 April 2016 protests and requested the Government of The Gambia to ensure due process for any suspects detained on allegations of participating in the attempted unconstitutional change of government.

Members also called on the Gambian authorities to conduct a swift and independent investigation into these events, and in particular expressed grave concern about the reported death in custody of opposition activist Solo Sandeng. They also strongly condemned the forced disappearances, arbitrary detentions as well as attacks on LGBT people, under the government of President Yahya Jammeh.

Combat inhumain treatment: Parliament called on the EU and the African Union to work with The Gambia to put in place safeguards against torture, ensure independent access to prisoners and reform all legislation interfering with the rights of freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. It called on The Gambia to ratify the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

It also called on Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the AU to remain engaged towards the ongoing human rights violations committed by the Gambian regime. It recalled that security and stabilisation remain great challenges in the West African region.

Moreover, Parliament urged the Government of The Gambia to ratify the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance in advance of the presidential elections scheduled for December 2016.

Towards democratic elections: Parliament called on The Gambia to engage in genuine dialogue with all opposition political parties on legislative and policy reforms that will ensure a free and fair election in this country. The Gambia is urged to take all necessary measures to guarantee, in all circumstances, full respect of freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

Cooperation agreement: Parliament is concerned that the 2015-2016 national indicative programme for The Gambia does not provide for any support or funding for civil society or for democratic governance, promotion of the rule of law and human rights protection. It called on the Commission to ensure that democratic governance, the rule of law and human rights protection are the focal sectors of any future development cooperation agreements to be considered between the EU and The Gambia.

The EU Delegation to the Gambia is called upon to use all tools at its disposal, including the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, to actively monitor detention conditions in The Gambia, and to accompany and monitor investigations into the government's suppression of the protests and the treatment of protestors in detention.

Lastly, Parliament urged the EU and its Member States to conduct a public consultation under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, and to consider **freezing all non-humanitarian assistance to the Government of The Gambia**.