Resolution on Tajikistan: situation of prisoners of conscience

2016/2754(RSP) - 09/06/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 535 votes to 16, with 66 abstentions, a resolution on Tajikistan: situation of prisoners of conscience.

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

Noting that members of Tajikistan's political opposition have been systematically targeted, Parliament called for the release of all those imprisoned on politically motived charges, including Abubakr Azizkhodzhaev, Zaid Saidov, Maksud Ibragimov, the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) deputy leaders Mahmadali Hayit and Saidumar Hussaini, and 11 other IRPT members.

While stressing the importance of relations between the EU and Tajikistan and of strengthening cooperation in all areas, Parliament is highly concerned about the increasing detention and arrest of human rights lawyers, restrictions on media freedom and the limitation of religious expression.

Parliament urged the authorities of Tajikistan to:

- give defence attorneys and political figures fair, open and transparent trials;
- provide substantive protections and procedural guarantees in accordance with Tajikistan's international obligations;
- authorise the reinvestigation by international organisations of all reported violations of human rights and dignity;
- allow opposition groups to operate freely and to exercise the freedoms of assembly, association, expression and religion.

Fight against terrorism: Members emphasised that the **legitimate fight against terrorism and violent extremism should not be used as a pretext to suppress opposition activity**, hinder freedom of expression or hamper the independence of the judiciary.

They welcomed a number of positive steps taken by the Tajik Government, such as the decriminalisation of defamation and insult in 2012 and called for proper implementation of the country's Criminal Code. They called for efforts to be made to ensure that legislative provisions making amendments to the Criminal Procedural Code (CPC) and the Law on Detention Procedures and Conditions for Suspects, Accused Persons and Defendants are implemented without delay.

Members also stressed the importance of effective and result-oriented human rights dialogues between the EU and the Tajik authorities as a tool to facilitate the relaxation of the political situation in the country. They called for the close monitoring of the implementation of the rule of law in Tajikistan, especially the right to association and the right to form political parties, in the context of the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2020.

Lastly, Parliament expressed deep concern about the widespread use of torture and called on the country to put a stop to this practice.