Resolution on Zimbabwe, the case of Pastor Evan Mawarire and other cases of restriction of freedom of expression

2017/2608(RSP) - 16/03/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Zimbabwe, the case of Pastor Evan Mawarire and other cases of restriction of freedom of expression.

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

Parliament **deplored the arrest of Pastor Evan Mawarire**, a human rights activist and founder of the #ThisFlag independent social media movement, who was arrested on 1 February 2017 at Harare airport on his return to Zimbabwe.

Evan Mawarire catalysed the frustration of citizens with the Mugabe regime during last year's protests against the government's inaction against corruption, impunity and poverty.

Initially charged with "subverting a constitutional government", an offence which is punishable with imprisonment for up to 20 years and then with insulting a flag, Pastor Evan Mawarire was only released on bail after having spent nine days in custody. Members called for the political motivated charges against him to be withdrawn. The fate of other militants should also be examined.

Concerned by human rights organisations' reports of political violence, Parliament called on the Zimbabwean authorities to **ensure that the criminal justice system is not misused** to target, harass or intimidate human rights defenders, while recalling that the freedom of assembly, association and expression are essential components of any democracy.

The resolution stressed the importance for the EU to start up a **political dialogue** with the Zimbabwean authorities in the framework of the Cotonou Agreement. It also:

- called on the EU Delegation in Harare to continue to offer its assistance to Zimbabwe in order to **improve the human rights situation** in the country;
- insisted that the EU must ensure that the **funding** allocated to Zimbabwe for its national indicative programme effectively addresses the sectors concerned.