Resolution on the arrest of human rights defenders in Sudan, notably the case of Sakharov Prize laureate Salih Mahmoud Osman

2018/2631(RSP) - 15/03/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the arrest of human rights defenders in Sudan, notably the case of Sakharov Prize laureate Salih Mahmoud Osman.

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

The situation in Sudan continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region. The Sudanese authorities carried out a crackdown on peaceful protest, civil society and human rights defenders. In connection with sporadic protests that began around Sudan on 7 January 2018 over a rise in the cost of food and medicines, at least 140 opposition party members, human rights defenders, students and women's rights activists were arrested and detained by the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS).

Sudanese NISS forces arrested Salih Mahmoud Osman – the Vice-President of the Darfur Bar Association, a member of the Democratic Lawyers Association, a human rights lawyer who has promoted the establishment of the rule of law and advocated for legal reform through the National Assembly of Sudan, and recipient of the 2007 Sakharov Prize – at his law firm on 1 February 2018. He was recently transferred to Dabak prison, 20 km north of Khartoum, and the authorities have refused to provide information on his health and denied visits to his lawyer and family.

Parliament expressed deep concern at the ongoing persecution of human rights defenders and civil society in Sudan, particularly involving violations of freedom of expression, freedom to demonstrate, freedom of assembly and religious freedom, and the intimidation of human rights defenders, journalists and NGOs opposed to the regime.

It called for the **immediate and unconditional release** of the Sakharov Laureate Salih Mahmoud Osman, as well as of any other human rights defenders, civil society activists and opposition activists who are being held solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights and democracy.

Deploring the targeting and abuse of all human rights defenders and activists in Sudan, Parliament called on the Sudanese Government to immediately cease the violations of the rights of political opposition parties and human rights defenders to the freedoms of expression, association and assembly and for the fundamental human rights of all people in Sudan to be respected and protected. It also requested that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women should be signed without delay and ratified.

Parliament called on the EEAS to:

- continue to improve its implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, by fully utilising all means at its disposal in Sudan;
- report back to Parliament on actions taken to provide protection and support for human rights defenders;
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resume issuing statements in response to widespread human rights violations by actors of the state and militias, as well as statements concerning the shrinking space for civil society, in order to demonstrate that the EU remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Sudan.

Lastly, Parliament invited the EU and its Member States to provide support to those within Sudan who are **genuinely seeking change**, and to provide civil society organisations with technical assistance and capacity-building programmes to improve their human rights advocacy and rule of law capabilities and enable them to contribute more effectively to the improvement of human rights in Sudan. It also expressed support for the renewal of the mandate of the UN-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) up to June 2018.