

Resolution on Russia, notably the case of Ukrainian political prisoner Oleg Sentsov

2018/2754(RSP) - 14/06/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 485 votes to 76 with 66 abstentions a resolution on Russia, notably the case of Ukrainian political prisoner Oleg Sentsov.

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

Members cited the case of Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov, who opposed the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia, was arrested in May 2014 in connection with alleged activities conducted in Crimea, and has allegedly been subjected to torture and severe mistreatment leading to the illegal extraction of depositions that have subsequently been given legal value.

Parliament demanded that the Russian authorities **immediately and unconditionally release** Oleg Sentsov, who began a hunger strike on 14 May 2018, and release all the other 70 illegally detained Ukrainian citizens in Russia and on the Crimean peninsula,. It also demanded the immediate and unconditional release of Oyub Titiev, Director of the Human Rights Centre Memorial in the Chechen Republic, and required that the Russian authorities cease the intimidation and harassment of the Human Rights Centre Memorial staff.

Russia was reminded of the importance of **full compliance with its international legal obligations**, and with the principles of fundamental human rights including freedom of assembly, and the rule of law. Members expressed their deep concern regarding the worrying trend of arrests, **attacks**, intimidations and discreditations of independent journalists and human rights defenders working in Russia, in particular in Chechnya, and equal concern about the **climate of impunity** that allows these acts to take place. They underlined the fact that Russia and its Government carries the ultimate responsibility for investigating these acts, bringing the perpetrators to justice and protecting all Russian citizens from unlawful abuse.

Parliament went on to condemn Russia's **violations of international law in occupied Crimea**, including the enforcement of Russian legislation, the heavy militarisation of the Crimean peninsula, which threatens the regional security, and the massive and systematic human rights violations targeting, in particular, ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars. It reminded the Russian authorities that in their de facto capacity as occupying power exercising effective control over Crimea, they are fully responsible for the **protection of Crimean citizens** from arbitrary judicial or administrative measures, and, in the same capacity, they are bound by international humanitarian law to ensure the protection of human rights on the peninsula.

The resolution reiterated Parliament's serious concern about **the 'foreign agent' law**, noting that according to the Russian law on 'foreign agents', NGOs that receive foreign funding and are engaged in 'political activity' must apply for inclusion on a special government list of foreign agents subject to additional and close scrutiny by the government, and are required to state in all publications, press-releases and reports that these have been produced by a foreign agent. Parliament considered that the definition of 'political activity' carried out by NGOs that accept foreign funding is so broad as to allow, in practice, **government control over just about any organised activity relating to public life**.

The resolution called on the Council and the Member States to remain firm and united in their **commitment to the agreed sanctions** against Russia and to prolong them, and to consider **targeted measures against the individuals** responsible for the detention and trial of the political prisoners. In addition, the Council, the Commission and the VP/HR were asked to:

- continue to follow the cases of **non-compliance of international legal obligations** closely and to raise these issues in different formats and meetings with Russia;
- ensure that all cases of persons prosecuted for political reasons are raised in **EU-Russia human rights consultations**, when resumed, and that Russia's representatives in these consultations are formally requested to respond in each case and to report back to Parliament on their exchanges with the Russian authorities;
- ensure that the Union seeks every opportunity to continue to **support Russian civil-society organisations**.

Lastly, Parliament called on the **EU to make a statement to condemn human rights violations in Russia** and the attempt to hide them under the cover of the FIFA World Cup.