Resolution on the human rights situation in Bangladesh

2018/2927(RSP) - 15/11/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in Bangladesh.

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

Parliament expressed serious concern at the **deteriorating human rights situation** in Bangladesh and, in particular, at the ongoing crackdown on the freedom of expression and assembly against the media, students, activists, and the opposition, and was also extremely concerned at reports that the **use of torture is becoming endemic**. It called on the Bangladeshi authorities to conduct independent investigations into reports of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and excessive use of force, including the cases of Maroof Zaman and Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem, and to immediately and unconditionally release Shahidul Alam.

Members insisted that Bangladesh comply with its commitments under the **Everything But Arms** scheme in relation to democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

They were particularly concerned about the following:

- the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, which penalises the legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression by any individual, including on social media, and has already had a severe impact on the work of journalists bloggers and commentators;
- the Digital Security Act, which actually expands and reinforces the powers of the police to crack down on free speech, including on social media, ahead of national elections in 2018;
- the 2017 Child Marriage Restraint Act, which contains a clause allowing marriage under the age of 18 under special circumstances with parental consent and court permission, a loophole which must be closed as a matter of urgency in the interests of child protection.

Parliament stated its appreciation of the constructive role played by Bangladesh under difficult circumstances in accepting the **reception of Rohingya refugees**, but urged the authorities to ease the bureaucratic restrictions they are imposing on humanitarian organisations. EU and other international donors were called upon to step up their efforts in providing the necessary financial and material aid to Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh. Furthermore, both Bangladesh and Myanmar were asked to immediately reconsider the decision to start repatriating Rohingya refugees, since the conditions for a safe, dignified and voluntary return have not yet been met.

With regard to **building safety**, Parliament expressed serious concern at the annulment of the Transition Accord, which is due to take effect on 30 November 2018, noting that the Remediation Coordination Cell does not yet have the capacity to monitor and enforce health and safety requirements, with the serious implications for the safety and rights of factory workers that this entails. The Bangladeshi government was asked to recognise and implement the Transition Accord. Members called on the European External Action Service (EEAS) to continue their capacity-building work with the RCC.

Lastly, Parliament called for legislative changes to the Bangladesh Labour Act and its implementing rules to bring them into line with the ILO’s international labour standards. The Bangladeshi government was asked to address all acts of **anti-union discrimination**, including acts of violence and intimidation.