Resolution on Egypt, notably the situation of human rights defenders

2018/2968(RSP) - 13/12/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Egypt, notably the situation of human rights defenders.

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

Parliament strongly condemned the **continuous restrictions on fundamental democratic rights**, notably freedom of expression both online and offline, freedom of association and assembly, political pluralism and the rule of law in Egypt. It called on the Egyptian government to end all acts of violence and intimidation against on human rights defenders, journalists, activists, LGBTI people, minorities including Nubians and civil society organisations, among others. The resolution specifically named eighteen human rights activists and media professionals and called on the Egyptian government to immediately and unconditionally release them. It reminded the Egyptian Government that the long-term prosperity of Egypt and its people goes hand in hand with the protection of universal human rights and the establishment of democratic and transparent institutions.

Members went on to call on the Egyptian authorities to drop all existing **baseless criminal investigations into NGOs**, including the 'foreign funding case', and to repeal the draconian NGO law. They recalled that Egypt opened a legal front against NGOs last year with a law requiring their funding, foreign or domestic, to be approved by the security agencies of the state, thus virtually banning them. The 16 defendants of the 'foreign funding case' 173/2011 face charges of operating branches of international organisations without a government license. Parliament wanted to see the replacement of that law by a new legislative framework, to be drafted in genuine consultation with civil society organisations.

The resolution expressed grave concern at the **reprisals against persons who cooperate with international human rights organisations** or UN human rights bodies, such as most recently the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing. It also expressed serious concern at the mass trials by Egyptian courts and demanded that the Egyptian government cease applying the death penalty pointed to at least 144 executions carried out under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Parliament discussed other **issues of concern**, singling out the ongoing state of emergency, the continued persecution of minority groups in Egypt, the torture and killing of the Italian researcher **Giulio Regeni** in January 2016, and the discriminatory measures put in place after June 2017 against Qatari nationals. It noted that avenues for peaceful political opposition were eliminated throughout the 2018 presidential election process, with a **massive denial of Egyptian voters' right to political participation.**

Members strongly urged Egypt to therefore respect its commitment made in the **EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities adopted on 27 July 2017** to promote democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights, which were concluded with Egypt despite **continuous backsliding in the field of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.** The VP/HR and the Member States were asked to make further cooperation with Egypt conditional on respect for human rights. Parliament reiterated that migration management or counter-terrorism actions should not undermine human rights. It urged the EEAS to address recent developments in Egypt and to use all means of influence at its disposal to put pressure on Egypt to improve its human rights situation.

The resolution also calls on the EU and its Member States to maintain a strong and unified position on human rights at the meeting of the EU-Egypt Association Council, scheduled for 20 December 2018.

Lastly, Parliament deeply regretted the unwillingness shown by the Egyptian authorities to organise a mission of Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights to Cairo, and asked the EU to raise the continued refusal of the Egyptian authorities to authorise this visit.