Resolution on Cameroon

2019/2691(RSP) - 18/04/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation on Cameroon

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

Parliament called on the Government of Cameroon to take immediate steps to end the violence and impunity in the country. It deplored the cases of torture, forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings perpetrated by the security services and armed separatists, and expressed particular concern at the actions of government forces in the violence. Members noted that the ***violence has escalated*** since the presidential elections in October 2018, and the large-scale operations conducted by the security forces often involve abuses and lead to human rights violations, including unlawful killings, rape, violence against women and children, and the destruction of property. As a result of the crisis, an estimated 444 000 people have been internally displaced and a further 32 000 have fled to neighbouring Nigeria. Parliament pointed out that the overall humanitarian crisis facing Cameroon encompasses over 600 000 internally displaced people, around 35 000 refugees from neighbouring conflicts, and 1.9 million people at risk of food insecurity.

It condemned the use of excessive force against protestors and political opponents, and violations of the freedoms of the press, expression and assembly, and deeply regretted the arrest and detention of Maurice Kamto, the opposition leader of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC) and around 200 people opposition supporters at organised protests in January 2019. The crimes with which these opposition supporters and their leader have been charged include insurrection, hostilities against the fatherland, rebellion, destruction of public buildings and goods, contempt of the President of the Republic and gatherings of a political nature. On 9 April 2019 the Court of Appeal in Cameroon's Central Region rejected the release of Maurice Kamto and six others in proceedings which took place in the absence of Maurice Kamto and his lawyers. Parliament called for the immediate release by the Cameroonian authorities of Maurice Kamto and all other detainees held on politically motivated charges, for the Government of Cameroon to cease all harassment and intimidation of political activists. It expressed concern at the Government of Cameroon's failure to hold its security forces to account, and called for an independent and transparent investigation into the use of force by the police and security forces against protesters and political opponents, and for those responsible to be held to account in fair trials. It also wanted the country's government to confirm that it would not seek the death penalty for political activists and protesters, while recalling that such punishment has not been used in Cameroon since 1997. Members called for the EU to use the political leverage provided by development aid and other bilateral programmes to enhance the defence of human rights in Cameroon.

Members recalled that ***presidential elections*** were held in Cameroon on 7 October 2018, but allegations of fraud and the reporting of irregularities marked these elections. In addition, President Paul Biya has been in power since 1982, and the constitution of Cameroon was amended in 2008 to remove term limits. They called on the Government to convene all political stakeholders for a consensual review of the electoral system, with the aim of ensuring a free, transparent and credible electoral process. This must take place before any further elections are held in order to promote peace and avoid post-electoral crises. The EU was asked step up technical assistance to support Cameroon in its efforts to strengthen its electoral procedures and make them more democratic.

Lastly, Parliament called on the EU and its Member States to ensure that no support that is given to the Cameroonian authorities contributes to human rights violations. Noting the decision of the United States

to scale back its military assistance to Cameroon owing to credible allegations of gross violations of human rights by security forces, Members called on the Commission to undertake an assessment of EU support to security services in this regard and to report back to the European Parliament.