Resolution on situation in Turkey, notably the removal of elected mayors

2019/2821(RSP) - 19/09/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on situation in Turkey, notably the removal of elected mayors.

As a reminder, local elections were held in Turkey on 31 March 2019 and were conducted in an orderly way, according to the preliminary conclusions of the election observation delegation from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. An impressive voter turnout was witnessed in the local elections. However, the election was broadly criticised by observers due to excessive media bias in favour of the governing People's Alliance.

In these elections, mayor Adnan Selçuk Mzrakl of Diyarbakr received a majority of 63 %, mayor Ahmet Türk of Mardin a majority of 56 %, and mayor Bedia Özgökçe of Van a majority of 54 % of the votes, meaning, therefore, that all three mayors obtained a clear popular mandate to fulfil the duties that concern their mayoral offices.

The democratically elected mayors of Diyarbakr, Van and Mardin in south-east Turkey were replaced by government-appointed provincial governors/trustees on the grounds that they were currently under criminal investigation for alleged links to terrorism.

The replacement of Adnan Selçuk Mzrakl, Ahmet Türk, and Bedia Özgökçe Ertan by state governors is of serious concern as it calls into question respect for the democratic outcomes of the 31 March 2019 elections.

Furthrmore, on 3 September 2019, the Turkish Interior Minister announced that further orders to remove elected officials were to follow, specifically threatening to replace the mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem mamolu.

Parliament condemned the decision made by the Turkish authorities to remove democratically elected mayors from office on the basis of questionable evidence. It stressed that these actions continue to undermine the ability of the political opposition to exercise their rights and fulfil their democratic roles and called on the Turkish authorities to immediately and unconditionally release members of the opposition arrested as part of the crackdown on all voices of dissent in the country and to drop all charges against them.

In the resolution, Members strongly criticised the arbitrary replacement of local elected representatives by unelected trustees, which further undermines the democratic structure of Turkey.

Parliament called on the Turkish authorities to reinstate all mayors and other elected officials who won local elections on 31 March 2019 and were prevented from assuming office or were dismissed or replaced with unelected trustees on the basis of unsubstantiated allegations.

Lastly, Parliament expressed serious concern over the monitoring of social media platforms and the closedown of social media accounts by the Turkish authorities.