Resolution on Iran, notably the situation of women’s rights defenders and imprisoned EU dual nationals

2019/2823(RSP) - 19/09/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 608 votes to 7, with 46 abstentions, a resolution on Iran, notably the situation of women’s rights defenders and imprisoned EU dual nationals.

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

In recent months Iranian revolutionary courts have substantially increased the clampdown on peaceful acts of resistance by women’s rights defenders protesting against the compulsory wearing of the hijab, including the length of prison sentences. According to the UN, at least 32 people have been arrested and at least 10 imprisoned since 2018 for protesting against the mandatory wearing of the hijab.

Iranian activists Mojgan Keshavarz, Monireh Arabshahi and Yasaman Aryani were arbitrarily detained in April 2019 after publishing an online video in which they appear without their headscarves, peacefully protesting against Iran’s compulsory veiling laws while handing out flowers on the Tehran metro on 8 March 2019, International Women’s Day. Sahar Khodayari, an Iranian woman detained for attempting to watch a football match at a stadium, burned herself to death in protest after learning that she would face a six-month prison sentence for her actions.

In August 2019, Mojgan Keshavarz, Yasaman Aryani, Morineh Arabshahi and Saba Kord-Afshari were handed sentences ranging from 16 to 24 years’ imprisonment. They were denied access to lawyers during the initial investigation stage and their legal representatives were reportedly prohibited from representing them at their trial. Their sentences are directly related to their peaceful exercise of the rights of freedom of expression and assembly in defence of gender equality in Iran.

Moreover, at least six EU-Iranian dual nationals, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Ahmadreza Djalali, Kamal Ahmady, Kamran Ghaderi, Massud Mossaheb and Morad Tahbaz, are currently imprisoned in Iran.

Parliament condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing repression of women for objecting to compulsory veiling and for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

The Iranian Government and authorities are urged to:

- respect the freedom of Iranian women to choose their own dress code;

- annul all these sentences and immediately and unconditionally release Mojgan Keshavarz, Yasaman Aryani, Monireh Arabshahi, Saba Kord-Afshari and Atena Daemi as women’s rights defenders protesting against the compulsory hijab;

- release of Nasrin Sotoudeh, Narges Mohammadi, Sepideh Gholian, Sanaz Allahyari, Asal Mohammadi, Marzieh Amiri and Atefeh Rangriz, and of all the human rights defenders imprisoned and sentenced for simply exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly;

- revise the legal provisions which discriminate against women, in particular those relating to their personal status;

- ensure that women are allowed access to all stadiums, without discrimination or risk of persecution.

- introduce an immediate moratorium as a fundamental step towards the abolition of the death penalty;

Parliament also deeply regretted the lack of progress made in the cases regarding EU-Iranian dual nationals detained in Iran. It demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all EU-Iranian dual nationals who are currently detained in Iranian prisons, unless they are retried in accordance with international standards.

Members urged the Iranian authorities to cooperate without further ado with EU Member State embassies in Tehran in order to enable the establishment of a comprehensive list of EU-Iranian dual nationals currently being detained in Iranian prisons, and to closely monitor each individual case, given that citizens' security and protection of their fundamental rights are of the highest importance for the EU.