Resolution on Egypt

2019/2880(RSP) - 24/10/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Egypt.

The text adopted in plenary had been tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups.

Parliament strongly condemned the latest crackdown and the ongoing restrictions on fundamental rights in Egypt, notably freedom of expression both online and offline, freedom of association and assembly, political pluralism and the rule of law.

Human rights violations

It is reported that in the past weeks the Egyptian authorities have arbitrarily arrested over 4 300 people (almost 3 000 of whom are still in pre-trial detention), including at least 114 women – and at least 111 minors according to Amnesty International in response to peaceful demonstrations that began on 20 September 2019. Parliament condemned the excessive use of violence against protesters and reminded Egypt that any response by the security forces should be in line with international norms and standards and its own Constitution.

Stressing that respect for human rights is the only way to ensure Egypt's long-term stability and security, Parliament called for an independent and transparent investigation into all human rights violations and for those responsible to be held to account. It called on the Egyptian authorities to: (i) immediately and unconditionally release all human rights defenders detained or sentenced merely for carrying out their legitimate and peaceful human rights work; (ii) stop blocking the websites of local and international news organisations and human rights organisations.

In addition, Members expressed deep concern about reprisals against those who cooperate or seek to cooperate with international human rights organisations or UN human rights bodies.

Supporting the aspirations of the majority of Egyptian people who want to establish a free, stable, prosperous, inclusive and democratic country, Parliament recalled the importance of guaranteeing the equality of all Egyptians, regardless of their faith or belief. It called on Egypt to review its blasphemy laws in order to ensure the protection of religious minorities. It also welcomed the statements calling for a renewal of Islamic discourse to challenge extremism and radicalisation.

Reviewing relations with Egypt

Parliament called on the VP/HR and the Member States to respond in a unified and resolute manner to the current crackdown and human rights violations. It expects the EEAS to prioritise the situation of human rights defenders in Egypt and to report back to Parliament on its engagement thereon with Cairo.

As regards the human rights situation in Egypt, Members called for a profound and comprehensive review of its relations with Egypt including a serious revision of the Commission's budget support operations, which should be restricted to primarily supporting civil society.

The EU is urged, with a view to negotiating new partnership priorities, to establish clear benchmarks that make further cooperation with Egypt conditional on progress in the reform of democratic institutions, the rule of law and human rights, and to mainstream human rights concerns in all talks with Egyptian authorities.

Parliament reiterated its call on the EU Member States to follow up on their 21 August 2013 conclusions announcing the suspension of export licences for any equipment which might be used for internal repression. It stressed the importance of ensuring that any arrangement between the EU and Egypt on migration must strictly comply with international human rights standards, respect the fundamental rights of migrants and refugees, and ensure adequate levels of transparency and accountability.