Resolution on recent actions by the Russian Federation against Lithuanian judges, prosecutors and investigators involved in investigating the tragic events of 13 January 1991 in Vilnius

2019/2938(RSP) - 28/11/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 493 votes to 43, with 86 abstentions, a resolution on the recent actions by the Russian Federation against Lithuanian judges, prosecutors and investigators involved in investigating the tragic events of 13 January 1991 in Vilnius.

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

Parliament called on the Russian Federation authorities to stop criminal proceedings against prosecutors, investigators and judges in the so-called ‘13 January’ case.

Members recalled that between 11 and 13 January 1991, the armed forces of the USSR committed an act of aggression against the independent state of Lithuania and people who were peacefully trying to defend the Vilnius TV tower, which left 14 people dead and nearly 800 injured. In March 2019, a Lithuanian court issued a decision on this act of aggression against Lithuania, declaring 67 persons, including the former Minister of Defence of the Soviet Union and the former Commander of the KGB Special Forces, guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The majority of the perpetrators of this attack were on trial in absentia. The initial Russian reaction to the court ruling was negative, with the Russian State Duma claiming the trial to be ‘politically motivated’, ‘an attempt to rewrite history’ and the Russian Foreign Ministry announcing ‘not to leave it without further reactions’. In 2018, Russia initiated criminal proceedings against Lithuanian judges, prosecutors and investigators investigating the tragic events of 13 January 1991 in Vilnius.

Parliament noted that the actions of the authorities of the Russian Federation with respect to Lithuanian judges and prosecutors violate fundamental legal values, in particular the independence of the judiciary. It recalled that the criminal prosecution of prosecutors and judges for their professional activities is a form of unacceptable external influence that interferes with the primacy of law and stressed that proceedings in such criminal cases against prosecutors and judges cannot be considered legitimate.

Members called on the Russian authorities to:

- assess the accountability of the persons who led or participated in the act of aggression of 11-13 January 1991 against the state of Lithuania, and to assist the law enforcement authorities of the Republic of Lithuania in seeking justice in the 13 January case;

- comply with the Republic of Lithuania’s requests for mutual legal assistance in the 13 January case;

- cease the irresponsible disinformation and propaganda statements made by Russian Federation officials.

Parliament called on the Member States to refrain from transferring any personal data to Russia that could be used in criminal proceedings against Lithuanian judges, prosecutors and investigators and to refuse legal assistance to the Russian Federation in this case.

Member States are called on to fully cooperate at European level with regard to their policies towards Russia, as more consistency and better coordination is essential in order to achieve more effective EU policy, and to make greater efforts to build resilience and work towards practical solutions that support and strengthen democratic processes and an independent judiciary.