The situation in the Philippines, including the case of Maria Ressa

2020/2782(RSP) - 17/09/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 626 votes to 7, with 52 abstentions, a resolution on the situation in the Philippines, including the case of Maria Ressa.

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

Members expressed their deep concern about the rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in the Philippines under President Duterte. They strongly condemned the thousands of extrajudicial executions and other serious human rights violations linked to the ‘war on drugs’, stressing that the fight against drug trafficking must be pursued in full compliance with due process of law, in conformity with national and international law and with an emphasis on public health.

Concerned about the deteriorating level of press freedom in the Philippines, Parliament condemned all cases of threats, harassment, intimidation, unfair prosecution and violence against journalists, including in the case of Maria Ressa, co-founder and director of the news website Rappler, which has long been targeted for its criticism of the government's ‘war on drugs’ and Rappler's critical reporting of extrajudicial killings.

Parliament called for all politically motivated charges against Maria Ressa and her colleagues to be dropped. It called on the EU delegation and the representations of the EU Member States in Manila to follow closely the proceedings against Maria Ressa and Reynaldo Santos Jr. and to provide all necessary assistance.

Concerned about the recent adoption of the anti-terrorism law, Members recalled that under no circumstances could advocacy, protests, strikes and other similar forms of exercising civil and political rights be considered as terrorist acts.

The Philippine government is invited to:

- recognise that human rights defenders play a legitimate role in ensuring peace, justice and democracy;

- reconsider its decision to withdraw from the Rome Statute;

- immediately halt the ongoing proceedings to reinstate the death penalty;

- respect its obligations under international law to protect the human rights of indigenous peoples, including in the context of armed conflict;

- fight corruption effectively;

- put an end to the practice of trafficking in human beings, military recruitment and involvement of children in conflicts in the country;

- ensure effective human rights due diligence processes for investment, development and corporate projects, in particular with regard to large-scale agribusiness acquisitions, extractive industries, infrastructure projects and cooperation involving the security sector.

Given the seriousness of the human rights violations in the country, Parliament called on the European Commission, in the absence of any substantial improvement and willingness to cooperate on the part of the Philippine authorities, to immediately initiate the procedure which could lead to the temporary withdrawal of GSP+ preferences.