Resolution on Eritrea, notably the case of Dawit Isaak

2020/2813(RSP) - 08/10/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 663 votes to 19, with 13 abstentions, a resolution on Eritrea, notably the case of Dawit Isaak.

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

As a reminder, Dawit Isaak, a dual citizen of Eritrea and Sweden, a journalist and co-owner of Eritrea's first independent newspaper, the widely distributed Setit, was arrested by the Eritrean authorities on 23 September 2001, along with 21 other persons. The Eritrean Government accused him of being a 'traitor', although he has never been charged or brought to trial. The imprisonments occurred after the publishing of an open letter condemning the regime and calling on President Isaias Afwerki to make democratic reforms.

Parliament demanded that:

- all prisoners of conscience in Eritrea be immediately and unconditionally released, notably EU citizen Dawit Isaak and the other journalists detained since September 2001;

- information be published regarding Dawit Isaak's whereabouts and well-being and detailed information on the fate and whereabouts of all those deprived of physical liberty;

- given the current COVID-19 health crisis, the poor sanitary conditions in Eritrean prisons and the high risk of infection for detainees, adequate food, water, and medical care be promptly provided;

- Dawit Issak should be provided with access to representatives of the EU, the Member States and Sweden in order to establish his healthcare needs and any other necessary support.

For its part, the Eritrean Government is called on to:

- lift the ban on independent media and to allow the creation of political parties;

- put an end to detention of the opposition, journalists, religious leaders, civil society representatives and innocent civilians;

- open civic space for independent civil society organisations and allow the creation of other political parties in the country;

- abandon the use of the extraterritorial 'diaspora tax' and to respect freedom of movement and to end the 'guilt-by-association' policies that target the family members of those who evade national service, seek to flee Eritrea or fail to pay the 2 % income tax imposed by the government on Eritrean expatriates, including EU citizens;

- desist from using its citizens as forced labour through indefinite national service and put an end to the compulsory practice of all children undertaking their final year of schooling in a military training camp.

Parliament reiterated its urgent request for a global EU human rights mechanism, the so-called European Magnitsky Act and called on the Council to adopt this mechanism through a decision relating to the Union' s strategic interests and objectives under the Treaty on European Union;

Lastly, the Commission is called on to ascertain whether the conditionality of EU aid is respected and to ensure that no financing for projects in Eritrea, particularly those that are carried out using national service labour, benefits the Eritrean Government.