Resolution on the situation of Ethiopian migrants in detention centres in Saudi Arabia

2020/2815(RSP) - 08/10/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 413 votes to 49, with 233 abstentions, a resolution on the situation of Ethiopian migrants in detention centres in Saudi Arabia.

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

Migrant workers, including from African and Asian countries, make up an estimated 20 % of the population of Saudi Arabia and have played an essential role in the economies of Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region.

However, since April 2020, according to Human Rights Watch reports, around 30 000 Ethiopian migrants, including pregnant women and children, are being arbitrarily detained in Saudi Arabia under horrific conditions after having been forcibly expelled from war-torn Yemen by Houthi authorities. Many of these migrants reportedly crossed the border under crossfire from Saudi and Houthi forces.

In addition, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the pressure has been increasing on vulnerable groups, in particular migrant workers inside Saudi Arabia, which has led to an increased level of discrimination

and hostility towards them.

Parliament strongly condemned the ill-treatment of Ethiopian migrants and the violations of their human rights, notably in the detention centres in Saudi Arabia.

It called on the Saudi authorities to:

- immediately release all detainees, prioritising those in the most vulnerable situations, including women and children;

- ensure that every person entering Saudi Arabia from Yemen is allowed to do so safely and is transferred to an appropriate reception centre that meets international standards regarding food, medical and health services, sanitary installations as well as all necessary precautions to limit the transmission of COVID-19, tuberculosis and other illnesses;

- immediately end torture and other ill-treatment in detention;

- urgently release children along with their family members, and to provide for safe non-custodial alternatives to detention to which humanitarian agencies can have regular access;

- conduct an independent and impartial investigation into all allegations of human rights violations, including firing on migrants at the border and unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment during detention;

- work with the International Labour Organisation towards the full abolition of the Kafala system and to provide adequate legal safeguards to all migrant workers within the country;

- impose an immediate moratorium on the death penalty and any form of corporal punishment, including amputation and flogging, with a view to their complete abolition;

- refrain from any discrimination against women and migrant women and to unconditionally release all women's rights defenders;

- amend its Law on Associations in line with international law to allow for the establishment and operation of independent human rights organisations.

Once again, the Council is urged to adopt the EU human rights sanctions mechanism as a decision relating to the Union's strategic interests and objectives under the Treaty on European Union.