Resolution on the deteriorating situation of human rights in Algeria, in particular the case of journalist Khaled Drareni

2020/2880(RSP) - 26/11/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 669 votes to 3, with 22 abstentions, a resolution on the deteriorating situation of human rights in Algeria, in particular the case of journalist Khaled Drareni.

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

Overall, Parliament strongly condemned the escalation of arbitrary and unlawful arrests, detentions and judicial harassment of journalists, human rights defenders, trade unionists, lawyers, civil society and peaceful activists in Algeria.

Mohamed Khaled Drareni, a journalist, was subjected to detention, interrogation and intimidation for his coverage of the Algerian Government's harsh crackdown on peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. He was eventually sentenced in August 2020 to three years in prison and a fine of 50 000 Algerian dinars for filming police attacking demonstrators in Algiers.

Parliament called on the Algerian authorities to:

- immediately and unconditionally release Mohamed Khaled Drareni and all those detained and charged for exercising their right to freedom of expression, both online and offline, and to freedom of assembly and association, including Yacine Mebarki, Abdellah Benaoum, Mohamed Tadjadit, Abdelkrim Zeghileche, Walid Kechida, Brahim Laalami, Aissa Chouha, Zoheir Kaddam, Walid Nekkiche, Nourreddine Khimoud and Hakim Addad;

- unblock media outlets and put a stop to the arrest and detention of political activists, journalists, and human rights defenders, or anyone who expresses a dissenting view or criticism of the government;

- conduct independent investigations into each case of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, and to hold all perpetrators to account;

- ensure the establishment of a free civic space that allows for a genuine political dialogue and does not criminalise fundamental freedoms, by adopting new legislation which is fully in line with international standards;

- overturn the ban on brandishing the Amazigh flag and to immediately release anyone imprisoned for displaying Amazigh symbols frequently used during the Hirak protests;

- fully guarantee the independence of the judiciary and the impartiality of the justice system, and to cease and prohibit any restrictions, improper influences, pressures, threats or interference in judicial decision-making and other judicial issues;

- ensure both full accountability and civilian and democratic oversight of the armed forces, and their effective subordination to a legally constituted civilian authority, and guarantee that the role of the military is adequately defined in the Constitution and expressly limited to matters of national defence;

Lastly, the resolution underlined the importance of EU-Algeria relations with Algeria as an important neighbour and partner. It expected the EU to position the situation of human rights at the heart of its engagement with the Algerian authorities, notably during the forthcoming EU-Algeria Association Council. The European External Action Service (EEAS) was called on to draw up and provide a list of individual cases of particular concern, including those mentioned in this resolution, and to regularly report back to Parliament on progress towards resolving these cases.