Resolution on the crackdown on the democratic opposition in Hong Kong

2021/2505(RSP) - 21/01/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 597 votes to 17, with 61 abstentions, a resolution on the crackdown on the democratic opposition in Hong Kong.

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

On 5 January 2021, the Hong Kong police arrested 53 representatives of the democratic opposition and activists on charges of subversion under the National Security Law (NSL) for Hong Kong. This was the latest in a long series of arrests of representatives and activists of the democratic opposition and other actions aimed at undermining democratic institutions in Hong Kong since the entry into force of the NSL on 1 July 2020. 93 opposition figures have been arrested under the law since its introduction.

The EU has always strongly supported the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ principle and the preservation of Hong Kong’s high degree of autonomy in line with the Basic Law and international commitments. However, in the current circumstances these principles are on the verge of being irreversibly undermined.

Parliament called for the immediate and unconditional release of those arrested in Hong Kong in the first two weeks of 2021, and of all those previously arrested on charges pursuant to the NSL, and for all charges against them to be dropped.

It urged the authorities to:

- respect Hong Kong’s rule of law, human rights, democratic principles and high degree of autonomy under the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ principle, as enshrined in the Hong Kong Basic Law and in line with domestic and international obligations;

- immediately refrain from making further use of the NSL to suppress the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

Parliament strongly welcomed the decision by the UK Government to create a pathway to citizenship for the more than one million Hong Kong residents who hold British National Overseas (BNO) passports. It condemned the threats by China to withdraw its recognition of such passports as a valid travel document and is concerned at the latest information that China is allegedly considering excluding BNO passport holders from Hong Kong public office or even denying them the right to vote in Hong Kong Elections.

The EEAS is called on to provide a more transparent assessment of these measures, including the urgency of setting up a ‘lifeboat scheme’ for citizens of Hong Kong in the event of a further deterioration of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Lastly, the Council is urged to intensify its discussions on and assessment of the package of measures on Hong Kong and to promptly consider the introduction of targeted sanctions against individuals in Hong Kong and China, including Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam, under the EU human rights global sanction regime.