Resolution on the political situation in Uganda

2021/2545(RSP) - 11/02/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 632 votes to 15, with 48 abstentions, a resolution on the political situation in Uganda.

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

On 14 January 2021, Ugandan voters went to the polls to elect a president and members of parliament amid huge reports of irregularities. On 16 January 2021, the Electoral Commission declared President Yoweri Museveni, who has been in office for 35 years, the winner – for a sixth term – with 59 % of the vote, against main opposition leader Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, also known as Bobi Wine, who received 35 %. The results of the election were hard to verify because the Elections Commission did not follow the prescribed tallying process.

Parliament deplored the fact that the election process was not democratic and transparent and condemned the excessive use of force by the police and the armed forces in the presidential election and their growing interference in the political process. It regretted the fact that independent, local and international election observers were prohibited from overseeing the election, preventing it from being assessed against internationally recognised standards.

Moreover, the resolution condemned the violence against, continued harassment of and systematic crackdown on political opposition leaders in Uganda, as well as the suppression of civil society, human rights defenders and the media, and the disruption of social media platforms and internet blackouts.

The Ugandan Government is called on to:

- put an end to the persistent use of lethal and excessive force by the security forces and the arbitrary arrests and detention of, and attacks against, opposition politicians and supporters, protesters, human rights defenders and journalists;

- ensure justice and accountability for all victims by carrying out impartial, thorough and independent investigations into the shootings and violence perpetrated by security forces;

- immediately and unconditionally release or drop all charges against all those arrested and detained solely for participating in peaceful political assemblies or for exercising their right to freedom of expression and association;

- immediately desist from using the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext for introducing laws and policies that violate international law and for rolling back human rights guarantees.

The resolution insisted on the EU’s commitment and readiness to engage with the Ugandan authorities and assist with much-needed democratic and governance reforms. The success of this cooperation largely depends on willingness from the Ugandan side to implement those reforms.

Lastly, Parliament urged the Commission and the European External Action Service to continue conducting systematic reviews of EU budget support programmes where there is a risk of funds being diverted for use by the Ugandan authorities in activities which may abet human rights abuses and target activists.