Resolution on the situation in Afghanistan

2021/2877(RSP) - 16/09/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 536 votes to 96, with 50 abstentions, a resolution on the situation in Afghanistan.

In April 2021, following three years of negotiations with the Taliban, the United States announced a withdrawal of troops to be completed by 11 September 2021. The withdrawal of NATO and allied troops was concluded in August 2021. The Taliban subsequently rapidly advanced on government-controlled territory. The Afghan army and security forces were unable to mount an effective defence and President Ashraf Ghani fled the country. Thereafter, the Taliban established full control over the country and re-established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Approximately 600 000 Afghans have been internally displaced in 2021 alone, 80 % of whom are women and children.

Parliament deplored the violent takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban and refused to recognise their current government. It expressed its strong concerns about the future of Afghanistan now that the Taliban have taken over the country and are imposing radical sharia law, depriving the Afghan people of the basic rights and freedoms they have enjoyed over the past 20 years.

A call to end the violence

Parliament is appalled by reported violations including executions of civilians and members of the Afghan national security forces, recruitment of child soldiers, repression of peaceful protest and expressions of dissent and restrictions of human rights especially targeting women and girls, human rights defenders, LGBTI+ people, religious and ethnic minorities, journalists, writers, academics and artists. It urged the Taliban to end these practices immediately and to safeguard, in particular, Afghan women’s rights to education, work, sport, free movement, assembly and association.

Enhanced coordination of evacuation efforts

Parliament regretted that the political process and military planning leading to the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan was undertaken **unilaterally and without sufficient coordination** with NATO allies. During the rescue operation, no cooperation or coordination among EU Member States took place which led to most embassies being caught by surprise by the Taliban’s takeover of Kabul. The resolution called on the EU and its Member States to work together to facilitate the further evacuation of EU citizens and Afghans at risk, notably through the use of available safe corridors.

Continued support for Afghan women and girls

Parliament deeply regrets the fact that 20 years of progress in the rights of women and girls and gender equality is now under severe threat. This progress must be carefully safeguarded and monitored. It stressed that women and young people who have left Afghanistan should be able to continue their education in other countries.

Ensuring that Afghanistan will not become a new bulwark of terrorist organisations

The resolution insisted that the Taliban and the Government of the Islamic Republic must fulfil their counterterrorism commitments, including preventing al-Qaeda, Daesh or other terrorist groups and

individuals from using Afghan soil to threaten or violate the security of any other country, not hosting members of these groups, and preventing them from recruiting, training or fundraising. Failure to crack down on these groups will lead to international sanctions and the isolation of the Taliban.

Parliament called for thorough **registration and security checks** on those being evacuated from the region and an enhanced exchange of information between the Member States' law enforcement authorities, the US and Europol to prevent possible security threats stemming from terrorism and organised crime.

Further increasing humanitarian aid

Parliament welcomed the Commission's decision to increase humanitarian support for Afghanistan from over EUR 50 million to more than EUR 200 million. It also welcomed the international community's recent EUR 1 billion pledge for the people of Afghanistan.

The EU must develop a response to a potential migration and refugee crisis

Stressing that the largest proportion of Afghan refugees will seek protection in neighbouring countries first and foremost, the EU should plan to provide additional support to Afghanistan's neighbouring refugee-hosting countries, preferably via the UN and its agencies, as well as international organisations on the ground. The financial, logistical and capacity-building support for the reception of Afghan refugees and migrants in neighbouring countries is not an alternative to a fully-fledged European asylum and migration policy. Therefore, the EU must urgently conclude and implement its **New Pact on Asylum and Migration** so as to be able to deal with migration flows in a more effective and humane manner.

A wake-up call for the European Union – necessary reforms

The withdrawal of US and international forces from Afghanistan is a manifestation of a collective failure of Western foreign and security policy and strategy, with possible long-term detrimental consequences. This crisis proves the need for the **EU to reinforce significantly its capacity to act autonomously and thus strengthen EU defence cooperation** by building a **genuine European Defence Union**, which should go hand in hand with the strengthening of the European pillar of NATO. Parliament believes that the EU must invest in military awareness, surveillance and reconnaissance, intelligence and strategic airlift.

Lastly, the EU and the Member States are called on to ensure **effective protection of the EU's external borders** in full compliance with EU law and fundamental rights in order to better prepare for migration movements from the region and unauthorised entries into the EU.