Resolution on the case of Paul Rusesabagina in Rwanda

2021/2906(RSP) - 07/10/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 660 votes to 2, with 18 abstentions, a resolution on the case of Paul Rusesabagina in Rwanda.

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

As a reminder, on 29 September 2021, the human rights defender, Belgian citizen and US resident Paul Rusesabagina was convicted and sentenced to 25 years in prison by the Chamber for International and Cross-Border Crimes of the High Court of Rwanda following his arrest in Kigali on 31 August 2020. Mr Rusesabagina was charged with nine terrorism-related charges and made criminally liable for activities attributed to the Rwandan Movement for Democratic Change / National Liberation Front (MRCD-FLN), a coalition of opposition political parties and its military wing. Mr Rusesabagina's arrest in August 2020 was arbitrary, carried out under false pretences and involved an unlawful transfer to Rwanda, enforced disappearance and incommunicado detention.

Parliament strongly condemned the illegal arrest, detention and conviction of Paul Rusesabagina, which violates international and Rwandan law. It called for his immediate release on humanitarian grounds and for his repatriation without prejudice to his guilt or innocence.

The Rwandan Government is urged to guarantee the physical integrity and psychological well-being of Mr Rusesabagina and to allow him to take his usual medication. It should also respect the right of the Belgian government to provide consular assistance to Mr Rusesabagina in order to ensure his overall health and his access to a proper defence.

The resolution deplored the human rights situation in Rwanda and in particular the targeted persecution of dissenting voices. Parliament urged the Rwandan authorities to ensure the separation of powers, safeguard the independence of its judiciary and observe the independence of the judiciary.

Parliament called on the European External Action Service, the Commission and the EU Special Representative for Human Rights to strengthen the human rights dialogue with Rwanda at the highest levels in the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, in order to ensure that the country abides by its bilateral and international commitments. It stressed that, in the context of international development work in Rwanda, much greater priority should be given to human rights, the rule of law, and transparent and responsive governance.

Lastly, the Commission is asked to critically review the EU's support to the Rwandan Government and state institutions to ensure that it fully promotes human rights, the freedoms of expression and association, political pluralism and an independent civil society.