Resolution on the state law relating to abortion in Texas, USA

2021/2910(RSP) - 07/10/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 381 votes to 253, with 36 abstentions, a resolution on the state law relating to abortion in Texas, USA.

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

On 1 September 2021, Texas enacted Senate Bill 8 (SB8), prohibiting women from accessing abortion care following the commencement of foetal cardiac impulses, de facto as little as six weeks since the last menstrual cycle, necessitating two separate ultrasound scans before the procedure may be performed, and with no exception if the pregnancy results from for rape, incest or for foetal health conditions incompatible with sustained life after birth. SB8 amounts to a near-total abortion ban.

This law is one of 26 restrictions on abortion passed in Texas in the last decade and constitutes a further attempt to undermine women's rights and reproductive freedom.

Parliament condemned the adoption by the Texas Legislature of SB8 as a strong attack on women's freedom and women's sexual and reproductive rights which are fundamental human rights. It is deeply concerned about the extent to which this prohibition will contribute to the trauma experienced by rape and incest victims. It called for the swift repeal of SB8 to ensure safe, legal, free and good quality abortion services in the State and to make these services easily accessible to all women and girls.

Parliament expressed its firm solidarity with and support to the women of Texas and those involved in both the provision of and advocacy for abortion healthcare in such trying circumstances. It also expressed its full support to medical professionals and those engaged in legal challenges against Senate Bill 8, in the hope that their work will result in the restoration of Texan women's right to reproductive healthcare.

Stressing that highly restrictive laws prohibiting abortion result in women having to seek clandestine abortions, the US Government is called on to:

- fully decriminalise abortion;

- establish federal legal protection for universal access to abortion.

The report stressed that only education, information and universal access to contraception, the eradication of sexual violence and shared responsibility for contraception can reduce the number of unintended pregnancies. Universally accessible modern contraceptive methods and supplies and family planning counselling should be prioritised.

Lastly, Parliament strongly condemned the backsliding in women's sexual and reproductive health and rights taking place in the US and globally and called on the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Commission and all EU Member States to use all instruments at their disposal to strengthen their actions to counteract it. It welcomed the Biden Administration's lifting of the global anti-abortion gag rule and its intention to restore US funding to the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA), the UN's sexual and reproductive health agency. The EU is called on to offer all possible support, including financial support as well as safe havens for all medical professionals who might be at risk of legal or other forms of harassment as a result of their legitimate work.