Resolution on the situation in Tunisia

2021/2903(RSP) - 21/10/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 534 votes to 45, with 106 abstentions, a resolution on the situation in Tunisia.

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

The resolution highlighted that the socio-economic situation in Tunisia has been characterised by widespread economic stagnation, related to the internal political context, and a sanitary crisis with the world's second highest rate of COVID-19 deaths. In May 2021, an instalment of EUR 600 million was made available under the macro-financial assistance programme for Tunisia with the specific objective of mitigating the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

Political context

On 22 September 2021, the President issued Presidential Decree No 2021-117, which contains provisions affirming self-supremacy and the primacy of the decree over the Constitution, thereby undermining the Constitution, and concentrates all the powers of the State in the person of President Kais Saied. Although Parliament reaffirmed its commitment to the privileged partnership between the EU and Tunisia and to Tunisia's democratic process, it expressed deep concern that Decree 2021-117 established the indefinite concentration of powers in the President's hands. It called for a return to normal functioning of state institutions, including a return to fully-fledged democracy and the resumption of parliamentary activity as soon as possible, as part of a national dialogue, and for a clear road map to be announced.

The resolution called on Tunisia to:

- establish a constitutional court with the objective of avoiding misinterpretations and misuse of its Constitution;

- restore an independent judiciary, leading to the reform of the military courts in Tunisia which would do away with military trials of civilians;

- fully abolish the death penalty.

Equal rights

Parliament called on the President to reconsider his position and to actively support all steps to guarantee equal rights between women and men in all areas, especially in laws against women in inheritance rights, child custody rights, rights granted as the head of the household, the right to parental leave, and labour rights, particularly for domestic workers and women agricultural workers.

EU efforts

The resolution stressed that the Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS) should step up their dialogue with the Tunisian authorities, economic entities and Tunisian civil society. The EU should continue programmes that directly support Tunisian citizens and step-up assistance where necessary in the light of the current crisis, including with healthcare support through the COVAX system to help the country to manage the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.