Resolution on the case of Osman Kavala in Turkey

2022/2656(RSP) - 05/05/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament resolution on the case of Osman Kavala in Turkey.

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

On 25 April 2022, Istanbul's 13th High Criminal Court, presided by Judge Mesut Özdemir, sentenced Osman Kavala, a philanthropist and prominent human rights defender, to life in prison without parole, finding him guilty of attempting to overthrow the government, but acquitting him of espionage.

Following a binding judgement in 2019 from the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) concerning Mr Kavala's case, it was demanded of the Turkish to secure Mr Kavala's immediate release. However, there has not been any progress towards his release, increasing the EU's concerns about the Turkish judiciary's adherence to international and EU standards. Parliament is concerned about incidents suggesting clear **government interference** in the judicial affairs related to the prosecution of Mr Kavala.

Parliament condemned, in the strongest possible terms, the ruling imposing an aggravated life sentence on Osman Kavala after more than four and a half years of unjust, unlawful and illegitimate detention. It believes that he has been convicted on unjustified charges, for the ulterior purpose of silencing him as a human rights defender and deterring critical voices in Turkey.

Members called for all charges against him to be dropped immediately and for his rights and freedoms to be guaranteed in full. Parliament also called for the immediate release of the other seven defendants in the case.

Parliament is deeply concerned about the ongoing deterioration of fundamental rights and freedoms and the rule of law in Turkey. It called on Turkey to end the judicial harassment of human rights defenders, academics, journalists, spiritual leaders and lawyers.

The resolution called for a delegation of the European Parliament to attend the trial of Mr Kavala and his co-defendants, if it goes ahead. It also noted the possibility to **lodge an appeal** against the last court ruling at the Turkish Court of Cassation and the Constitutional Court. Members stressed that Mr Kavala and other Turkish citizens in similar situations can be granted **political asylum** inside the EU if necessary.

Furthermore, the Commission and the Member States are called on to increase the use of emergency grants for human rights defenders and to ensure the full implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders.

Lastly, Parliament noted that with the decision to openly defy the binding rulings of the ECtHR on the case of Osman Kavala and others, the current Turkish Government has deliberately **destroyed any hopes of reopening its EU accession process** or opening new chapters and closing open ones under the current circumstances.