Resolution on the situation in Tajikistan’s Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province

2022/2753(RSP) - 07/07/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 520 votes to 24, with 31 abstentions, a resolution on the situation in Tajikistan’s Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province.

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

The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) is the poorest region in Tajikistan, with the highest unemployment rate, and suffers from an unequal distribution of income from the exploitation of precious stone mines, the main natural resource of the province. The GBAO has been severely hit economically by Russia’s illegal, unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine and the subsequent economic sanctions. In addition, the GBAO has traditionally been distinguished by its relatively strong and well-developed civil society and non-government sector. However, under the current president, Emomali Rahmon, the autonomous region has gradually come under the complete control of the Tajik authorities through the purging of local leaders from government and the suppression of civil society and journalists in particular.

Protests erupted in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) in May 2022, following months of persecution of local residents after the protests of November 2021. Tajik citizens in the GBAO were peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly in order to protest against abuses against their community when the law enforcement agencies initiated their violent crackdown.

Human rights organisations have accused the Tajik authorities of violating basic human rights, as cases of torture of detainees, kidnapping and looting by law enforcement agencies have been reported.

Parliament deeply regretted the loss of life in the GBAO and strongly condemned the Tajik authorities’ violent crackdown on protesters, journalists, bloggers, lawyers and activists in November 2021 and May 2022 for expressing their opinion and protesting peacefully.

The resolution urged the Tajikistan to:

- respect and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including people’s right to life, peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression and freedom of the media, in the GBAO and in the rest of the country, in line with international law;

- refrain from excessive use of force against protesters and from targeted harassment of residents of the GBAO;

- immediately release those who have been arbitrarily detained and to drop all charges against them, as well as to stop the political persecution of human rights defenders and influential supporters of the protesters;

- immediately set up an effective and independent investigation into the violent clashes in the GBAO during and after the May 2022 and November 2021 protests, in particular into the use of force by law enforcement representatives, the deaths of civilians and the reports about the alleged acts of torture by the security forces;

- stop classifying investigations and prosecutions as ‘secret’;

- fully restore communications and full internet access in the GBAO to ensure that residents are able to access information, and to refrain from cutting communication links in the future.