Resolution on Nicaragua, in particular the arrest of the bishop Rolando Álvarez

2022/2827(RSP) - 15/09/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 538 votes to 16, with 28 abstentions, a resolution on Nicaragua, in particular the arrest of the bishop Rolando Álvarez.

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

Since 2018, the Nicaraguan regime has carried out systematic and repeated incarceration, harassment and intimidation of presidential pre-candidates, opposition leaders and religious leaders – notably from the Roman Catholic Church – as well as student and rural leaders, journalists, human rights defenders, civil society organisations, LGBTI persons and business representatives.

Since then, a framework of state repression has been installed in Nicaragua, characterised by systemic impunity for human rights violations, a deterioration of the institutions and the rule of law, and connivance between the powers of the executive and the judiciary.

On 19 August 2022, the Nicaraguan national police forcibly raided the episcopal curia of Matagalpa to arbitrarily arrest Bishop Rolando Álvarez after a twoweek stand-off, along with five priests, two seminarians and one cameraman, who are now imprisoned in El Chipote prison.

Bishop Álvarez played an important role as a mediator in the 2018 National Dialogue and has constantly called for peaceful and reasoned dialogue in Nicaragua, criticising the closure of seven Catholic media radio stations operated by the diocese of Matagalpa on 1 August 2022.

Moreover, the resolution noted that, this year, the Nicaraguan regime authorised Russian military presence in the country, which is clear evidence of the strong relationship and common support between Ortega-Murillo and Putin’s regime.

Parliament condemned in the strongest possible terms the repression and arrests of members of the Roman Catholic Church in Nicaragua, in particular the arrest of Bishop Rolando Álvarez. It urged the Nicaraguan regime to immediately end the repression and restore full respect for all human rights, including freedom of expression, religion and belief. Parliament called explicitly for the immediate and unconditional release of all those arbitrarily detained, including Bishop Álvarez and those detained alongside him, and for all legal proceedings against them to be annulled, including their sentences.

The resolution also:

- condemns the continuous deterioration of the situation in Nicaragua and the escalation in the repression against the Catholic Church, opposition figures, civil society, human rights defenders, journalists, peasants, students and indigenous people among other actors, as well as their arbitrary detention for solely exercising their fundamental freedoms, their inhumane and degrading treatment and their deteriorating health conditions;

- condemns the abusive detention, the lack of trial guarantees and the illegal convictions of political prisoners that have been taking place in Nicaragua;

- expresses concern over the worsening situation of the more than 206 political prisoners detained in Nicaragua since April 2018 and calls for their immediate release, for the annulment of the legal proceedings against them, and for all refugees and exiles to be allowed to return safely to their homes.

Nicaragua is urged to:

- put an end to the use of cruel and inhumane treatment and to respect the physical integrity, dignity, liberty and right to access medical care of those imprisoned, as well as their families;

- stop arbitrarily closing NGOs and civil society organisations and to restore the legal charter to all organisations, political parties, religious organisations, media associations and outlets, universities and human rights organisations;

- urgently allow international organisations to return to the country, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, to monitor the human rights situation in the country.

Judicial system

According to Members, the Nicaraguan judicial system lacks independence from the executive branch. They expressed concern about the manipulation of criminal law and the use of the justice system as a tool to criminalise the exercise of civil and political rights. In this regard, Parliament reiterated its call for the **Nicaraguan judges and prosecutors to be swiftly included on the list of individuals sanctioned by the EU** and for the list of sanctioned individuals and entities to be expanded to include **Daniel Ortega and his inner circle**. The EU and the UN Security Council are called on to open a formal investigation through the International Criminal Court into **Nicaragua and Daniel Ortega for crimes against humanity**.