Resolution on the crackdown on the right to education and education rights activists in Afghanistan, including the case of Matiullah Wesa

2023/2648(RSP) - 20/04/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 529 votes to 2, with 11 abstentions, a resolution on the crackdown on the right to education and education rights activists in Afghanistan, including the case of Matiullah Wesa.

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

As a reminder, Afghan education activist Matiullah Wesa, the head of the PenPath organisation, was arrested alongside several of his family members by the Taliban regime on 27 March 2023 and remains detained without access to his family or the ability to challenge the legality of his detention. Women and girls have faced gender-based persecution and growing restrictions on their fundamental rights since the Taliban takeover, especially concerning their education, freedom of movement and right to work. They have been virtually erased from all areas of public life.

Afghanistan is now the only country in the world that refuses to allow women and girls to be educated beyond primary level.

In its resolution, Parliament deplored the gender-based persecution and dramatic rollback of women's rights in Afghanistan. It denounced the ban on secondary and university education, and on women working at non-governmental organisations and the UN.

Against this background, Parliament called on Afghanistan's de facto authorities to:

- immediately and unconditionally release Matiullah Wesa and all those imprisoned for exercising their fundamental rights from detention. It demanded that their rights be respected, including their access to family members and legal representation;

- fully respect the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls and restore their full, equal and meaningful participation in public life;

- fulfil their own pledge and restore girls' and women's equal access to education.

The resolution called on the European External Action Service and the Member States to exert diplomatic pressure directly or indirectly on Afghanistan's de facto authorities to secure the release of Matiullah Wesa and other arbitrarily detained activists, including Rasul Abdi Parsi, Noorayel Kaliwal and Mortaza Behboudi.

Lastly, the EU and its Member States are called on to increase support to Afghan groups providing education to women and girls, including through alternative education options, and to fund specific assistance programmes both online and via community education.