Resolution on the human rights situation in Eritrea

2004/2613(RSP) - 18/11/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted by a resolution on the human rights situation in Eritrea. The resolution had been tabled by the PES, EPP-ED, Greens/ALE, GUE/NGL, UEN and ALDE groups. Deeply concerned by Eritrea's steadily deteriorating human rights situation, and dismayed by the manifest lack of cooperation from the Eritrean authorities, Parliament firmly condemns all human rights abuses in Eritrea and calls on the country's authorities to uphold human rights, to respect the international conventions and to cooperate in full with international human rights organisations and NGOs. Parliament calls on the Council and Commission to open the consultation procedure in accordance with Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement in order to stop human rights violations and pave the way for political pluralism, noting that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms constitutes an essential element of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement.

Recalling that on 4 November 2004 the Eritrean security forces indiscriminately arrested thousands of young people suspected of evading military conscription, and that 12 people died in an alleged escape bid on the same day in the Adi Abeto military prison, Parliament calls for a thorough and independent investigation of the incident at the Adi Abeto military prison and calls for those responsible to be brought to justice.

Members strongly deplore the continued imprisonment without charge since September 2001 of the so-called Asmara 11, a group of former ruling-party members of parliament campaigning for democratisation, and they call on the Eritrean authorities to release the 11 former members of parliament, in compliance with the ruling of the African Commission on Human Rights of March 2004.

The Eritrean authorities are called upon to:

- lift the ban on the country's independent press and to immediately release the 13 independent journalists who have been arrested in Asmara, one of them being a Swedish citizen, Dawit Isaak, who has not been tried for any crime, and all others who have been jailed simply for exercising their right to freedom of expression;
- respect the human rights of all detainees, including the young people arrested on 4 November 2004, and allow them immediate access to their families and lawyers.

Parliament reiterates its demand for the initiation of an inter-Eritrean political process, bringing together the various party leaders and representatives of civil society with a view to finding a solution to the current crisis and to setting the country on the path to democracy, political pluralism and sustainable development.