Resolution on the political situation and the independence of the media in Belarus

2005/2582(RSP) - 07/07/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the political situation and the independence of the media in Belarus. The resolution had been tabled by the ALDE, Greens/ALE, EPP-ED, UEN, GUE/NGL and PES groups. It notes that instead of improving, the situation in Belarus has further deteriorated and it strongly condemns the Belarus regime's indiscriminate attacks on the media, journalists, members of the opposition, human rights activists and any person who attempts freely to voice criticism of the President and the regime, as evidenced by arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment of detainees, disappearances, politically-motivated persecution and other acts of repression. The resolution states that should the Belarussian authorities fail to improve the situation regarding freedom of speech and the mass media or if it deteriorated any further, the Commission, the Council and Parliament should initiate the procedure to add more names to the visa-ban list of Belarussian authorities involved in persecution of the mass media. It emphasises once again that the further development of EU relations with Belarus will also continue to depend on the progress made towards democratisation and reform in the country and access for Belarussians to objective, free and transparent media.

Members welcome the project for the creation of a radio network broadcasting from Poland, Lithuania and possibly Ukraine, and call on the Commission to support its implementation and also to provide the necessary assistance as soon as possible to enable the broadcasting of independent radio programmes to Belarus from abroad to begin.

They refer to government action against the Union of Poles on 12 May 2005, when the leadership of the Union of Poles in Belarus were declared illegitimate by the Belarussian Ministry of Justice, a printing plant under instructions from the government refused to print the Polish weekly 'Gos znad Niemna' and fake issues were printed under the umbrella of the government. They condemns the government's action against the Union of Poles in Belarus as an attempt to curb the largest NGO and one of the few not controlled by the government, and deplore the government's attempt to take control of 'Gos znad Niemna';

Parliament calls on the Council and Commission, as appropriate, to do the following:

- create a complex, multi-annual programme of support for the independent media in Belarus which will encompass support for the broadcasting of independent radio and television programmes from abroad, as well as support for independent journalists and newspapers;
- assist journalists and their families who are the victims of repression;
- create a programme of scholarships and traineeships for independent journalists, and to create training programmes for young independent journalists;
- consult Parliament on the implementation of this programme for free and independent media and information to the people of Belarus;
- raise the issue of Belarus with the Russian authorities so as to define common action to bring about concrete democratic changes in that country;

Lastly, Parliament calls on Member States to recognise the degrees awarded by the European Humanities University by way of confirmation of a high level of competence and outstanding academic skills, and calls on European universities to enter into a closer cooperation with it.