Resolution on recent repression of demonstrations in Russia

2007/2551(RSP) - 26/04/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a joint resolution on human rights on Russia, and condemned the use of force against demonstrators by the Russian police and the lack of free speech in the country. The resolution referred to the violent activities of police against demonstrators in Moscow on 14 April 2007, during Dissenters' March. On 15 April 2007 another protest, albeit far smaller, organised by the same grouping, was broken up in a similar way in St Petersburg. Russia's human rights ombudsman has said that he believed police in both cities had exceeded their authority. Russian authorities, in the run-up to the parliamentary and presidential elections, are putting increased pressure on opposition groups and non-governmental organisations to refrain from any activities directed against the president and the government and to prevent the media from reporting any such activities. Parliament pointed out that democracy has been weakened in Russia, in particular by the bringing of all major TV stations and most radio stations under government control, the spread of self-censorship among the print media, new restrictions on the right to organise public demonstrations and a worsening climate for NGOs.

It strongly condemned the use of excessive force by the Russian anti-riot police during the peaceful demonstrations in Moscow and St Petersburg, and called on the Russian authorities to comply with their international obligations and to respect freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. Parliament condemned, in particular, the repressive actions of the security forces against journalists carrying out their professional duty, regarding such assaults on the media as unacceptable. The Russian authorities must order an investigation into the human rights violations that took place at both rallies and to identify and bring to justice those responsible for the violations.

The Russian leadership was asked to do its utmost to avoid any repetition of those regrettable events, in particular in the run-up to the next presidential and Duma elections, and to guarantee all political parties and movements a chance to take part in the democratic process. Parliament was deeply disturbed by an emerging pattern of use of excessive force by the Russian authorities towards opposition activists, which raises deep concern as regards democracy and respect for human rights in the Russian Federation.

It reiterated its call for the EU-Russia Human Rights Dialogue to be stepped up so as to make it more effective and result-oriented, while fully involving the European Parliament at all levels, with a view to strengthening that element in the new PCA, which is due to be negotiated soon. In order to achieve visible progress as regards democracy in Russia, the EU common policy and Member States" bilateral relations with Russia should be guided by jointly agreed principles and common positions.

Lastly, Members called on the Council of Europe to investigate the human rights violations that took place at the rallies in Moscow and St Petersburg.