

Resolution on the situation in Egypt

2014/2532(RSP) - 06/02/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation in Egypt.

The resolution was tabled by the ECR, ALDE, S&D, EPP, Greens/EFA and EFD groups. It strongly condemned all acts of violence, and urged all political actors and security forces to show the utmost restraint and avoid provocation. The interim authority and security forces must ensure the security of all citizens, irrespective of their political views, affiliation or confession.

Members took note of the new Constitution of Egypt, approved by the referendum held on 14 and 15 January 2014, which should be an important step forward in the country's troubled transition to democracy. They called for full and effective implementation of the provisions on fundamental freedoms including the freedoms of assembly, association and expression and human rights in the new constitution, as well as for all existing and future legislation in these fields to be in compliance with it. However, Parliament expressed its concern over certain articles in the new Constitution, with special regard to those related to the status of the armed forces, including the following:

- Article 202, which declares that the Minister of Defence, who is also the Commander-in-Chief, shall be appointed from among the armed forces officers;
- Article 203 on the budget of the armed forces;
- Article 204 allowing the trial of civilians by military judges in case of crimes of direct assaults against military installations, military zones, military equipment, military documents, public funds of the armed forces, military factories, and military personnel, as well as in case of crimes pertaining to military service; and
- Article 234 declaring that the Minister of Defence shall be appointed upon the approval of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which provision shall remain in force for two full presidential terms, with no indication on how and by whom the minister can be removed from office;

Parliament underlined the fact that the constitutional referendum constituted an opportunity to build national consensus, reconciliation and institutional and political stability for the country. It strongly regretted the violent clashes before, during and after the referendum, and called on all actors and the security forces to show restraint. It stressed that holding free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections within the timeframe defined by the new Constitution leading to adequate representation of different political views and of women and minority communities was another crucial step. It called on Vice-President / High Representative Catherine Ashton to make public the report of the EU Expert Electoral Mission that monitored the constitutional referendum in Egypt on 14 and 15 January 2014. Furthermore, Parliament invited the Egyptian Government to request the deployment of an EU Election Observation Mission to monitor the upcoming presidential elections.

It welcomed the efforts of VP/HR Catherine Ashton and Special Representative Bernardino León to mediate between the parties with the aim of brokering a way out of the current political crisis. The Council, the VP/HR and the Commission were urged to take into consideration both the principle of conditionality (more for more) and the serious economic challenges faced by Egypt in its bilateral relations with, and its financial support for, the country, calling for jointly agreed benchmarks in this regard.

Members called for the release of all political detainees held for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of assembly, association and expression. They expressed concern about Law 107 of 2013 on Regulating the Right to Public Gatherings, Processions and Peaceful Protests.

The resolution went on to condemn the recent terrorist attacks against security forces in Egypt and expressed concern about the further deterioration of the security situation in Sinai, and called for intensified efforts to restore security, in particular by fighting human traffickers, in this area. Parliament requested that the Council place Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, the group which claimed responsibility for several recent attacks in the Sinai as well as in Cairo and elsewhere, on its list of designated terrorist organisations. It also condemned the violence against the Coptic community and stressed the need to combat all forms of gender-based violence.

Lastly, Parliament stressed again that facilitating the return of assets stolen by former dictators was a moral imperative for the EU and is a highly political issue, by reason of its symbolic value, in the Union's relations with its southern neighbourhood.