

Resolution on Thailand, notably the situation of Andy Hall

2016/2912(RSP) - 06/10/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Thailand, notably the situation of Andy Hall.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE, GUE/NGL, Greens/EFA and EFDD groups.

Members recalled that workers rights defender Mr Andy Hall, an EU citizen, was sentenced on 20 September 2016 to a three-year suspended jail term and fined THB 150 000 after contributing to a report by Finnish NGO Finnwatch exposing labour rights violations in a Thai pineapple processing plant, Natural Fruit Company Ltd.

Andy Hall was formally indicted for criminal defamation and a computer crime relating to the online publication of the report; the two criminal cases were allowed to proceed through the Thai judicial system.

According to reports in international and Thai domestic media, Mr Hall and 14 chicken-farm workers from Myanmar face threats of similar criminal defamation and computer crime lawsuits from a Thai chicken supplier to the European market.

Human Rights situation: Parliament regretted the guilty verdict against Andy Hall, and expressed concern about the judicial process and how it might affect the freedom of human rights defenders to carry out their work. It called on the Thai Government to:

- take all necessary measures to ensure that the rights including the right to a fair trial of Mr Hall and other human rights defenders are respected and protected;
- create an enabling environment conducive to the enjoyment of human rights and, specifically, to ensure that the promotion and protection of human rights are not criminalised;
- ensure that the countrys defamation laws are compliant with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which it is a state party, and also to revise the Computer Crime Act;
- comply with Thailands own constitutional and international obligations in respect of the independence of the judiciary, the right to due process and a fair trial and the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

Parliament commended the European External Action Service (EEAS) on its work on the case of Andy Hall. It urged the EEAS to continue to follow the situation closely and to engage with the government and civil society and to use all available instruments to ensure respect for human rights in Thailand.

Protection of migrant workers: nearly four million foreigners live in Thailand, 2.7 million of whom are from Cambodia, Laos or Myanmar. Work permits have been available to migrants from these countries since 2001, but there are still more than a million unregistered migrant workers in the country.

Parliament recognised the progress achieved by the Thai Government in combating worker exploitation and protecting national and migrant workers. It called on the Thai authorities to adopt and implement, in law and in practice, a holistic, long-term in-bound migration policy for low-skilled migrant workers in accordance with human rights principles and taking into account the needs of the labour market.

Members called for the protection of migrant workers by means of stronger incentives for employers to engage in the regularisation process, while enforcing high fines or other punishments against employers that do not engage in the regularisation process or that are in breach of labour law. They urged the EU and its Member States to ensure that companies established in their territories which conduct business in Thailand respect international human rights standards.