

Resolution on the current human rights situation in Turkey

2018/2527(RSP) - 08/02/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the current human rights situation in Turkey.

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

Whilst expressing its strong condemnation of the coup attempt of 16 July 2016, Parliament expressed its deep concern at the ongoing deterioration in fundamental rights and the rule of law in Turkey, and the lack of judicial independence. According to Amnesty International, the Turkish authorities have shut down hundreds of civil society organisations and closed down the offices of more than 160 broadcasters, newspapers, magazines, publishers and distribution companies.

Parliament condemned the most recent arrests of journalists, activists, doctors and ordinary citizens for expressing their opposition to the Turkish military intervention in the Syrian enclave of Afrin, noting that 449 people were detained for posting comments on social media that were critical of the Turkish Government's military intervention in Afrin. Members added that they were also concerned about the humanitarian consequences of the military intervention in this Kurdish-majority region of Syria and warned against the continuation of disproportionate actions.

The resolution called for the lifting of the state of emergency which was extended on 18 January 2018 for another three months, and which Members considered is being used to silence dissent and goes far beyond any legitimate measures to combat threats to national security.

Under these circumstances, Parliament reiterated its call for funds destined for the Turkish authorities under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPAI) to be made conditional on improvements in the field of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and, where possible, rerouted to civil society organisations. The Commission should take into consideration the developments in Turkey during the review of the IPA funds, and also present concrete proposals on how to increase support for Turkish civil society.

Members called on the Turkish authorities to:

- drop all charges against the president of Amnesty International Turkey, Taner K?l?ç (which is widely considered a travesty of justice), and his co-defendants (the Istanbul Ten) since no concrete evidence has yet been submitted against them;
- effect the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained without proof, including EU citizens such as the German journalist Deniz Yücel, who has been held in jail for a year, including nine months in solitary confinement, while no formal charges have yet been brought against him;
- drop charges against a Finnish-Turkish journalist, Ayla Albayrak, who has been convicted by a Turkish Court in absentia and immediately release of the four Cumhuriyet journalists still behind bars;
- immediately release NGO leader Osman Kavala as his arrest is politicised and arbitrary.

Parliament was seriously concerned over the functioning of the legal system in Turkey and noted that these and other cases constitute a further deterioration of the rule of law. It called on the Turkish authorities to respect the European Convention on Human Rights, which includes a clear rejection of capital punishment, and the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, including the principle of presumption of innocence;

Lastly, the resolution urged the High Representative, the EEAS, the Commission and the Member States to continue to raise with their Turkish interlocutors the situation of human rights defenders, political activists, lawyers, journalists and academics in detention, and to provide diplomatic and political support for them.