

Resolution on Myanmar, notably the case of journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo

2018/2841(RSP) - 13/09/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Myanmar, notably the case of journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo.

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

Recalling the Myanmar authorities arbitrary arrests and detention on 12 December 2017 of two journalists, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, on allegations of reporting serious human rights violations carried out in Rakhine State, and contravening Myanmar's Official Secrets Act of 1923, Parliament called for the immediate and unconditional release of the journalists and the dropping of all charges against them and all persons arbitrarily detained, including political prisoners, and human rights defenders. Members stated that this landmark case further undermines freedom of expression, democracy and the rule of law in Myanmar. They expressed deep concerns regarding the abuse of repressive legal provisions restricting freedom of speech, asking Myanmar authorities to repeal, all laws, including the 1923 Official Secrets Act, which are not in line with international standards and which criminalise the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

Parliament also strongly condemned the widespread and systematic attacks against Rohingya people committed in Kachin, Rakhine and Shan States by the Tatmadaw and other Myanmar security forces, which, according to the report of the UN-mandated Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar (IIFMM) of 24 August 2018 (IIFMM) amount to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Conservative estimates place the death toll at 10 000. Members noted that since August 2017, more than 700 000 Rohingya people have fled for safety to Bangladesh, of which approximately 500 000 are children. Members called once again upon the Government of Myanmar and the security forces to put an immediate stop to killings, and sexual violence against Rohingya people and ethnic minorities in northern Myanmar, urging the Government and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi to condemn unequivocally all incitement of hatred and to combat social discrimination and hostilities against Rohingya people. The IIFMM report states that Myanmar's State Counsellor, Nobel Peace Prize and Sakharov Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi has failed to use her de facto position as Head of Government or her moral authority to stem or prevent the unfolding events in Rakhine State.

Parliament went on to call on Myanmar to reverse its decision to discontinue its cooperation with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar and to grant independent observers and humanitarian organisations, in particular the UN Special Rapporteur, full and unhindered access to Rakhine State. It supported the IIFMM's recommendations and welcomed the recent ruling that the International Criminal Court (ICC) may exercise jurisdiction over the alleged deportation of Rohingya people from Myanmar to Bangladesh. Parliament called on the UN Security Council to:

- refer the situation in Myanmar to the ICC without delay;
- impose a global comprehensive arms embargo on Myanmar;
- adopt targeted individual sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes, against those who appear responsible for serious crimes under international law.

The EU and Member States should take the lead in the Security Council on referring the situation to the ICC, and to increase their efforts towards the urgent establishment of an international independent accountability mechanism to support investigations into alleged atrocity crimes and the prosecution of those responsible for war crimes against the Rohingya people.

The EU was also urged to:

- consider an investigation under the mechanisms provided for in the Everything But Arms agreement, with a view to reviewing the trade preferences that benefit Myanmar;
- impose travel bans, targeted financial sanctions and asset freezes against the Myanmar officials identified by the IIFMM as responsible for atrocity crimes;
- address the need for increased and long-term humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya people in Bangladesh and their host communities;
- secure improvements in the protection from gender-based violence of Rohingya girls and women.