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B8-0379/2014

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on Persecution of the democratic opposition in Venezuela  
(2014/2998(RSP))

**Fernando Maura Barandiarán, Dita Charanzová, Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Frédérique Ries, Louis Michel, Ramon Tremosa i Balcells, Marielle de Sarnez, Pavel Telička, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Ivo Vajgl, Juan Carlos Girauta Vidal, Renate Weber, Johannes Cornelis van Baalen, Gérard Deprez, Ivan Jakovčić, Jozo Radoš, Antanas Guoga, Martina Dlabajová, Petras Auštrevičius, Javier Nart, Marietje Schaake**  
on behalf of the ALDE Group

**European Parliament resolution on Persecution of the democratic opposition in Venezuela  
(2014/2998(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Venezuela, and in particular the one on 27 February 2014 on the situation in Venezuela,
  - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Venezuela is a party,
  - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
  - having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. Whereas the economic crisis, high rates of corruption, the chronic shortage of basic goods, the violence and the political divisions have triggered peaceful protests against the government of President Nicolas Maduro since February 2014, which are still on-going; whereas the protestors have been met with excessive force and systematic violence on behalf of police, members of the National Guard and violent and uncontrolled armed pro-government groups; whereas according to local and international organisations over 1700 protesters await trial, more than 69 remain jailed, and at least 40 people have been killed in the protests and their murderers remain unaccountable; whereas the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner confirms that it has received reports of more than 150 cases of ill-treatment during detention, including torture; whereas according to several sources systematic persecution of the democratic opposition by the security forces still continues;
- B. Whereas freedom of expression and the right to participate in peaceful demonstrations are fundamental human rights that are recognised in the Venezuelan Constitution; whereas there are many reports confirming that the media is being subject to increasing censorship and intimidation; whereas during the American Press Association's (IAPA) 70th General Assembly in Santiago de Chile, the organisation has declared that Venezuela is putting independent media under greater pressure and has urged Venezuela to respect freedom of expression and warned for the further loss of democratic freedom;
- C. Whereas opposition leader Leopoldo López was arbitrarily detained on 18 February 2014 and is accused of conspiracy, instigating violent demonstrations, arson and damage to property; whereas since his detention he has suffered physical and psychological torture and undergone an unjust isolation regime; whereas opposition mayors Daniel Ceballos and Vincenzo Scarano, as well as police officer Salvatore Lucchese were arrested for

failing to end protests in their cities and civil rebellion, and have each been sentenced to several years in prison;

- D. Whereas student leaders such as Sairam Rivas, President of the Students' Centre of the School of Social Work at the Central University of Venezuela, Christian Gil and Manuel Cotiz have been unjustly held in buildings belonging to the Bolivarian Intelligence Service for more than 120 days and have been subjected to torture and ill-treatment in connection with the protests that took place between February and May 2014, having been accused of the offences of instigating crimes and using minors to commit crimes;
- E. Whereas on 20 October 2014, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein voiced concern about the detention of protesters and has called for the release of anyone detained for exercising their rights to peaceful protest; whereas on 8 October 2014 the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has called Leopoldo Lopez's detention illegal, arbitrary and motivated by political opinion and called for his release and all those who remain arbitrarily detained;
- F. Whereas the remarks set out in the recent report of the United Nations Committee against Torture on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela explicitly expressed concern at prevailing impunity, torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners, excessive use of force, acquiescence and complicity with the actions of pro-government armed groups, arbitrary detention and the absence of fundamental procedural guarantees; whereas this report called for the immediate release of all those held in arbitrary detention, including Leopoldo López and Daniel Ceballos, who were arrested for exercising their right to express themselves and protest peacefully, and furthermore expressed concern at the attacks on journalists and human rights activists, extrajudicial executions and the complete lack of an independent judiciary;
- G. Whereas Jose Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the Organisation of American States (OAS) has called for the release of those imprisoned for their participation in the protests; whereas the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has expressed deep concerns over the situation with respect to freedom of association and the freedom of expression in Venezuela;
- H. Whereas the decision of Venezuela to denounce the American Convention on Human Rights entered effect on 10 September 2013; whereas the citizens and residents of Venezuela cannot bring any complaint before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights as a result of this action;
- I. Whereas in the course of her political and parliamentary activity, Maria Corina Machado was subjected to a series of criminal proceedings, political persecution, threats, intimidation, harassment and even physical violence from government supporters inside the Chamber of the National Assembly; whereas she was recently charged with conspiracy in connection with an alleged plot to assassinate the President of the Republic, Nicolás Maduro;

- J. Whereas the government of Venezuela has rejected the various calls for release of the political prisoners and has denounced the calls as impartial; whereas president Maduro has called the negative press a 'campaign to destroy Venezuela';
- K. Whereas for the past decade the judiciary has failed to function as an independent branch of government; whereas this judicial system cannot be expected impartially investigate and pass fair judgements on allegations against opposition to the government;
- L. Whereas Venezuela is the country with the largest energy reserves in Latin America; whereas the government of Venezuela's mismanagement of these resources and its economy has produced conditions of economic hardship; whereas the people of Venezuela suffer from a grave shortage of basic commodities, food prices have doubled and food rationing has started; whereas oil prices continue to drop significantly deepening the economic downturn and threatening the country's fragile oil-dependent economy;
- M. Whereas the government's failure to guarantee public security has led Venezuela to become one of the most violent countries in the world; whereas the on-going political and economic crisis in Venezuela has contributed to a surging murder rate and citizen security, according to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime;
- N. Whereas Belgium granted political asylum to Israel Colmenares, recognising his persecution by the Government of Venezuela.
1. Is deeply concerned over the situation in Venezuela and condemns the imprisonment of peaceful protesters, students and opposition leaders, and urges for the immediate release of those arbitrarily detained prisoners, in line with the demands made by several UN and international organisations;
  2. Strongly condemns the political persecution and repression of the democratic opposition, the violation of freedom of expression and demonstration, and the existence of media and web censorship.
  3. Strongly condemns the use of violence by the government's forces against protesters; expresses its sincere condolences to the families of the victims; calls on the Venezuelan authorities to investigate these crimes and to hold those responsible fully accountable with no margin of impunity;
  4. Urges all parties, in particular the Venezuelan authorities, to pursue a peaceful dialogue; encourages the new leader of the MUD (Mesa de la Unidad Democrática), Jesus Torrealba to engage in a constructive dialogue with the government and to reach out to all segments of Venezuelan society in order to enable common understanding and to allow political actors to discuss the most serious problems facing the country; calls upon all parties concerned to avoid further escalation of violence and reminds the government of Venezuela that a constructive dialogue is impossible so long as opposition leaders are still arbitrarily held in jail;

5. Underlines that the Venezuelan Government will be a member of the UN Security Council in 2015 and should play a responsible role on the Security Council respecting international standards on democratic rights; reminds the government that freedom of expression and the right to participate in peaceful demonstrations are fundamental human rights in a democracy, as recognised in the Venezuelan Constitution; calls upon President Maduro to abide by the international treaties to which Venezuela is a party;
6. Urges Venezuelan government to allow free expression, the right of association and the right to peaceful protests; emphasises that respect for freedom of the press, information and opinion and political pluralism are fundamental to democracy;
7. Reminds the government of its responsibility to ensure that all trials conform to international standards; recalls that the respect for the principle of separation of powers is fundamental in a democracy and that the justice system cannot be used by the authorities as a means of political persecution and repression of the democratic opposition; calls on the Venezuelan authorities to withdraw the unfounded accusations and arrest warrants against opposition leaders, in particular Maria Corina Machado, Leopoldo Lopez, Daniel Ceballos, Vicencio Scarano and Salvatore Lucchese;
8. Calls on the EU, its Member States, and HR/VP Federica Mogherini to call for the immediate release of the protesters who have been arbitrarily arrested since the start of the protests;
9. Calls on the Council, should the human rights situation continue to deteriorate, to consider the option of targeted sanctions and other measures against authorities and any other person responsible for the violation of the rights of protesters and the democratic opposition;
10. Calls upon Venezuela's government to find a sustainable response to the country's ailing economy, high rate of violence, and sharp political divisions; recalls that no long-term stability is possible so long as these issues are not being dealt with properly;
11. Recalls its demand for an ad hoc European Parliament delegation to be sent to assess the situation in Venezuela and to hold a dialogue with all sectors involved in the conflict as soon as possible;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Government and National Assembly of Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretary-General of the Organisation of American States.