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Plenary sitting

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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Venezuela
(2015/2582(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Venezuela
(2015/2582(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolutions on the situation in Venezuela and, in particular, to its resolution of 27 February 2014 on the political situation in Venezuela and its resolution of 18 December 2014 on the persecution of the democratic opposition in Venezuela,
 - having regard to the statement by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the arrest of the Mayor of Caracas, Antonio Ledezma, and the situation in Venezuela,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions of the Commission on Human Rights of the UN General Assembly of 26 August 2014,
 - having regard to the Statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights of 20 October 2014 on the detention of protesters and politicians in Venezuela,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Venezuela is a party,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas on 19 February 2015, a heavily armed group of officers from the Venezuelan state intelligence services burst violently into the offices of the Metropolitan Municipal Council of Caracas and without producing any arrest warrant carried off by force the Mayor, Antonio Ledezma, who has been held ever since in a military prison accused of conspiracy and consorting in a conspiracy, offences which in Venezuela are punished by harsh prison sentences;
- B. whereas the President, Nicolás Maduro, announced on a national radio and television channel that an alleged plan to destabilise his government through a supposed coup d'état involving the leaders of the Democratic Unity (MUD) opposition party, members of parliament Maria Corina Machado and Julio Borges, and the Mayor of Caracas, Antonio Ledezma, had been broken up; whereas claims have been made that these opposition leaders were linked to a plan to assassinate Leopoldo López, also a leader of the opposition, who has been held in a military prison for over one year now;
- C. whereas on former occasions repeated and baseless accusations of being involved in alleged destabilisation plans and coups d'état have been made against leaders of the democratic opposition, which have resulted in implacable political persecution, in parliamentary immunity being lifted, as has already happened in the case of Maria Corina Machado and which is being sought for Julio Borges, and in threats, insults, and even physical attacks as occurred in April 2013 when Ms Machado and Mr Borges were attacked within the very seat of legislative power while the head of the National

Assembly, Diosdado Cabello, just looked on;

- D. whereas President Maduro has also on numerous occasions made statements alleging foreign conspiracies, supposed destabilisation plans and assassination attempts, which have frequently been denounced in the national executive, probably with the aim of diverting attention away from the true source of the serious political, economic and social crisis Venezuela is going through;
- E. whereas threats have been made against business people and the media both in Venezuela and abroad, and warnings and condemnations directed at foreign governments and international organisations that have expressed their concern and warned against the dangers of the political crisis in Venezuela and the incrimination of those who encourage peaceful, democratic, constitutional and electoral change in the country;
- F. whereas Decision No 008610 of the Venezuelan Ministry of Defence, published in Venezuela's Official Gazette of 27 January 2015, authorised the 'use of potentially lethal force, either with a firearm or other potentially lethal weapon' as a last resort to 'prevent disorder, support the legitimately constituted authority and counter all aggression, confronting it immediately with the means necessary';
- G. whereas Kluivert Roa, a fourteen-year-old schoolboy, was killed in cold blood by a Bolivarian National Police officer near the Catholic University of Táchira (UCAT) during an anti-government demonstration, becoming the first fatality since Nicolas Maduro authorised the use of firearms against protestors;
- H. whereas elections are to be held this year for the renewal of the entire National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;
- I. whereas Leopoldo López remains in prison after more than a year, having been arbitrarily detained on 18 February 2014 on charges of conspiracy, instigating violent demonstrations, arson and damage to property; whereas, since his detention, he has suffered physical and psychological torture and has undergone increasing periods of solitary confinement in recent months; whereas opposition mayors Daniel Ceballos and Vicencio Scarano have also been arrested and held in solitary confinement for failing to end protests and civil rebellion in their cities and have been sentenced to several years in prison; whereas congressmen Juan Carlos Caldera, Ismael García and Richard Mardo are facing investigations and trial proceedings aimed at their suspension and disqualification from Congress;
- J. whereas the remarks in the report of the UN Committee against Torture concerning the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela explicitly expressed concern at the prevailing impunity, torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners, excessive use of force and acquiescence and complicity in the actions of armed pro-government groups, arbitrary detention and absence of fundamental procedural guarantees; whereas the 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;

- K. whereas the Secretary-General of the OAS has called for the release of Mayor Ledezma and of those imprisoned for participation in the protests last year; whereas the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has expressed deep concern over the situation with respect to freedom of association and freedom of expression in Venezuela;
 - L. whereas the full and unquestioning obeisance of the judiciary to the demands and requirements of the current Venezuelan government leaves little hope regarding the fairness and impartiality of its investigations or judgments regarding allegations against members of the opposition;
 - M. whereas only respect for fundamental rights and freedoms and a constructive and respectful dialogue carried out in a spirit of tolerance can help Venezuela emerge from this serious crisis and overcome future difficulties;
 - N. whereas, in April 2014, government and opposition commenced 'roundtable' negotiations regarding the protests; unfortunately, however, the talks were broken off one month later without achieving the slightest result;
 - O. whereas Venezuela is the country with the largest energy reserves in Latin America; whereas the Venezuelan people are suffering from a grave shortage of basic commodities; whereas food prices have doubled and food rationing has been stepped up; whereas oil prices have fallen dramatically, deepening the economic downturn and threatening the country's fragile, oil-dependent economy; whereas the Venezuelan government is exercising harsh censorship and carrying out acts of intimidation and harassment against those seeking to reveal the gravity of the economic and social crisis;
1. Reiterates its deep concern at the worsening situation in Venezuela; condemns the imprisonment of Mayor Antonio Ledezma, the attempt to waive the immunity of the Member of Parliament Julio Borges and the persecution of students and other opposition leaders; urges the immediate release of the Mayor of Caracas and other arbitrarily detained prisoners, in line with the demands made by several UN bodies and international organisations;
 2. Strongly condemns the murder of the young student from San Cristobal, Kluivert Roa, and six other students; conveys its sincere condolences to the families and friends of the victims and calls for those responsible for these crimes to be brought to justice with no margin of impunity; calls on the Government to end the political persecution and repression of the democratic opposition, the violations of freedom of expression and of demonstration, and media censorship;
 3. Draws attention to the steady deterioration in democratic coexistence, the climate of political violence, the violation of the fundamental rights of a significant section of Venezuelan society and the regime's drift towards authoritarianism, which are placing Venezuela in a situation of unsustainable political tension, particularly bearing in mind that parliamentary elections for the National Assembly are due to be held this year; warns, in this context, against any manoeuvre that could result in a climate of tension and regression that might lead to the democratic opposition being delegitimised and

banned and/or the elections being cancelled;

4. Encourages all parties, with the support and mediation of regional bodies, to pursue peaceful dialogue reaching out to all segments of Venezuelan society, in order to define points of convergence and allow political actors to discuss the most serious problems facing the country; calls on all parties concerned to avoid further escalation of violence, and reminds the Government of Venezuela that a constructive dialogue is impossible as long as opposition leaders are still arbitrarily held in jail;
5. Reminds the Government of Venezuela of its responsibility to ensure that all trials conform to international standards; recalls that 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 charges and arrest warrants against opposition politicians and to ensure the security of all citizens in the country, regardless of their political views or affiliations;
6. Calls on the Government of Venezuela to comply with its own constitution and its international obligations with respect to the independence of the judiciary, the rights of freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and political pluralism, since these are cornerstones of democracy, and to ensure that people are not penalised for exercising their rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression;
7. Calls on the Government of Venezuela to respect human rights, to conduct effective investigations into alleged human rights violations, and to enable an environment in which human rights defenders and independent non-governmental organisations can carry out their legitimate work of promoting human rights and democracy;
8. Reiterates its request for the EEAS and the EU Delegation in Caracas, as well as the Member States' delegations, to continue to observe the investigations and the trial hearings of opposition leaders;
9. Reiterates its request, not yet acted on, for the High Representative/Vice-President, Federica Mogherini, to call for the immediate release of the opposition leaders and other people who have been arbitrarily arrested;
10. Insists on its call for an ad hoc European Parliament delegation to be sent to assess the situation in Venezuela and hold a dialogue with all sectors involved in the conflict, as soon as possible;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Government and National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretary-General of the Organisation of American States.

