



Plenary sitting

B9-0085/2019

17.9.2019

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 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on situation in Turkey, notably the removal of elected mayors
(2019/2821(RSP))

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on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

**European Parliament resolution on situation in Turkey, notably the removal of elected mayors
(2019/2821(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Turkey, in particular those regarding the annual progress reports, the resolution on the freedom of expression in Turkey and the resolution on the situation of Journalists in Turkey,
- having regard to the Commission Annual Progress reports on Turkey,
- having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights,
- having regard to the 1996 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
 - having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. Whereas the Law on Municipalities was changed in September 2016 under a state of emergency decree to facilitate the removal of mayors accused of terrorism links and their replacement with provincial governors.

B. Whereas on 19 August 2019, the Turkish Interior Ministry removed three elected mayors of Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van provinces, who secured despite major repression large majorities in the March elections; whereas the mayors were replaced by government-appointed provincial governors on the ground that the candidates are currently under criminal investigations for terrorism-related charges; whereas the three elected mayors are from the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP);

C. Whereas on 6 September 2019, the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) İstanbul Provincial Chairperson Canan Kaftancıoğlu was sentenced for tweets to 9 years and 8 months in prison for charges of "propagandising for a terrorist organisation," "insulting the President," "insulting a public official because of his duty," and "provoking people into enmity and hatred.";

D. Whereas the Turkish local elections of 2019 were held on Sunday 31 March 2019 throughout the 81 provinces of Turkey in a context of repression and unequal conditions for the different opposition candidates,

E. Whereas during the campaign the opposition parties were accused of "*acting in the interests of foreign powers and terrorists*"; whereas five people were killed and two were injured during political violence on election day, in two separate incidents in Gaziantep and Malatya; whereas the election was broadly criticised by observers due to excessive media bias in favour of the governing People's Alliance;

F. Whereas the removal of the mayors and of Canan Kaftancıoğlu is emblematic of the current common judicial harassment against political opponents, human rights defenders, and elected members of Parliament in Turkey through the use of overly broad and vague terrorism offenses, in particular following the State of Emergency;

G. Whereas several public peaceful demonstrations organised against the removal of the mayors have been prohibited for weeks on security grounds, and those that have taken place have resulted in forceful dispersal by police, often with mass detentions and prosecution of participants whereas this is the result of legislation introduced immediately after the lifting of the State of Emergency; whereas in several cities (Mus, Tunceli, Adana) in the eastern and southern region of Turkey demonstrations were also prohibited; whereas gatherings/meetings and demonstration in Van are forbidden since years.

H. Whereas on 4 March 2019 sixteen human rights defenders, who are mostly civil society workers, were indicted on charges of financing and organising the 2013 Gezi protests, which saw the participation of almost three million citizens, and face a possible life sentence without parole as a result; whereas chairperson of Anadolu Kültür Osman Kavala, and Yiğit Aksakoğlu are among the defendants and have been arbitrarily detained in Silivri prison since November 2017 and November 2018, respectively; whereas Yiğit Aksakoğlu was ordered to be released on probation with an international travel ban, Osman Kavala remains in detention;

I. Whereas as of 11 September 2019, 549 academics from a Turkish human rights defenders organisation known as the Academics for Peace have been dismissed or suspended from their jobs at universities, forced to resign or leave the country; whereas 406 of them also lost their right to work in the public sector and had their passports cancelled through statutory decrees; whereas 795 of them have been on trial on charges of disseminating “terrorist propaganda,” 40 sentenced to imprisonment, and 564 are currently involved in judicial proceedings; whereas, despite the acquittal of 27 academics in July 2019 following a Constitutional Court judgment, the judicial harassment against the hundreds of other academics remains, their passports remain cancelled, their jobs remain suspended;

J. Whereas the various legislative changes to the judiciary, especially those in 2010 and 2014, have generally limited the independence of the judiciary, it is becoming more and more obvious that the judiciary is being used as a tool to suppress critical voices and to intimidate human rights defenders; whereas the purge of the judiciary and the prosecutions of lawyers during the State of Emergency have seriously undermined the ability of the criminal justice system to deliver fair and impartial trials, and led to human rights defenders suffering further violations of rights to liberty, to a fair trial, to free movement;

1. Calls on the Turkish authorities to immediately and unconditionally reinstate mayor of Diyarbakır Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı, mayor of Mardin Ahmet Türk, and mayor of Van Bedia Özgökçe Ertan; calls on the same way for the immediate termination of the trial of the İstanbul Provincial Chairperson Canan Kaftancıoğlu and to release all jailed politicians, journalists, academics, human rights defenders;

2. Insists that the Turkish authorities put an end to all forms of harassment, including at judicial level, against all human rights defenders, political opponents, elected members of

Parliament in Turkey, and that the charges against the Academics for Peace in particular be immediately dropped or cancelled, the academics immediately and unconditionally released, reinstated at their previous university positions, and their travel bans lifted.

3. Expresses its strong concerns concerning the rule of law, democracy and human rights in Turkey; Urges Turkey to defuse the tense political since the post-coup of July 2016 climate, which creates an environment curtailing human rights and fundamental freedoms and particularly freedom of speech in the media and on the internet;
4. Calls on the Turkish government to ensure the human rights of all people, including those in need in international protection, that live and work in Turkey; strongly condemns the increase of torture cases of detainees in prisons
5. Condemns all form of violence and underlines that a peaceful, democratic and self-determined solution to the Kurdish question is also necessary for Turkey's democratic future, and will be reached only by involving all parties and forces concerned; calls for a resumption of negotiations with a view to achieving a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the Kurdish issue; recalls its position for the removal of PKK from the list of terrorist organisation of the EU;
6. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Governments and Parliaments of the Member States and the Government and Parliament of Turkey