



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2016)0269

Situation in Venezuela

European Parliament resolution of 8 June 2016 on the situation in Venezuela (2016/2699(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its numerous previous and recent resolutions on the situation in Venezuela, in particular those of 27 February 2014 on the situation in Venezuela¹, of 18 December 2014 on the persecution of the democratic opposition in Venezuela², and of 12 March 2015 on the situation in Venezuela³,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Venezuela is a party,
- having regard to the Inter-American Democratic Charter adopted on 11 September 2001,
- having regard to the Constitution of Venezuela, and in particular Articles 72 and 233 thereof,
- 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 statements of 7 December 2015 by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), Federica Mogherini, on the elections in Venezuela,
- having regard to the statement of 5 January 2016 by the EEAS Spokesperson on the inauguration of the new National Assembly of Venezuela,
- having regard to the statement of 12 April 2016 by the Spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ravina Shamdasani,

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0176.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2014)0106.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0080.

- having regard to the statement of 10 May 2016 by the VP/HR on the situation in Venezuela,
 - having regard to the letter of 16 May 2016 from Human Rights Watch to the Secretary-General of the Organisation of American States, Luis Almagro, on the subject of Venezuela¹,
 - having regard to the statement of the Permanent Council of the Organisation of American States of 18 May 2016,
 - having regard to the official communications from the Secretary-General of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) issued on 23 May² and 28 May³ 2016 on the exploratory meetings to launch a national dialogue between representatives of the Venezuelan Government and the MUD opposition coalition,
 - having regard to the G7 Ise-Shima Leaders' Declaration of 26-27 May 2016⁴,
 - having regard to the statement by US Secretary of State John Kerry of 27 May 2016 regarding his call with former Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero⁵,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Venezuela's opposition coalition, the MUD, won 112 seats in the 167-member unicameral National Assembly, a two-thirds majority, compared with 55 seats for the PSUV; whereas the Supreme Court subsequently blocked four newly elected National Assembly representatives, 3 of whom from the MUD, from taking office, which deprived the opposition of its two-thirds majority;
- B. whereas, in the five months during which the new National Assembly has been legislatively active, with the democratic opposition in the majority, the Supreme Court has handed down 13 politically motivated judgments in favour of the executive, all of which imperil the balance of power required in a state governed by the rule of law;
- C. whereas decisions such as those issuing and confirming the State of Exception and Economic Emergency Decree, removing the National Assembly's powers to scrutinise policy, refusing to recognise the power conferred on the National Assembly by the constitution to revoke the appointment of Supreme Court judges, declaring the reform of the Central Bank of Venezuela Law unconstitutional and suspending the articles of the National Assembly's Internal Debate Rules were taken, among others, in contravention of the legislative powers of the National Assembly, with no respect for the balance of power essential in a state governed by the rule of law;
- D. whereas there are around 2 000 people in prison, under house arrest or on probation for political reasons, including important political leaders such as Leopoldo López, Antonio Ledezma and Daniel Ceballos; whereas on 30 March 2016 the Venezuelan National Assembly passed a law that would give amnesty to the abovementioned prisoners, thus

¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/05/16/letter-human-rights-watch-secretary-general-almagro-about-venezuela>

² <http://www.unasur.org/es/node/719>

³ <http://www.unasur.org/es/node/779>

⁴ <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000160266.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/05/257789.htm>

paving the way for dialogue towards national reconciliation; whereas this law is in line with Article 29 of the Venezuelan Constitution, in spite of the declaration of unconstitutionality issued by the Supreme Court; whereas Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, stated publicly that the Amnesty and National Reconciliation Law was in line with international law and expressed disappointment at its rejection;

- E. whereas the rule of law and the principle of the separation of powers are not duly respected in Venezuela; whereas current facts point to government influence and control over judicial power and the National Electoral Council, which has a detrimental impact on the legislature and opposition powers, the cornerstones of any democratic system, in clear breach of the principle of independence and separation of powers that is characteristic of democratic states governed by the rule of law;
- F. whereas the democratic opposition has started a constitutionally recognised process that enables public officials to be removed from office through a recall referendum after having completed 50 % of their term; whereas the National Electoral Council received from the MUD 1,8 million signatures of Venezuelan citizens supporting this process, many more than the 198 000 initially required for the process to be legal and constitutionally accepted;
- G. whereas Venezuela is facing a serious humanitarian crisis, caused by shortages of food and medicine; whereas the National Assembly has declared a 'humanitarian health and food crisis' in view of the general lack of medicines, medical devices and supplies, and has asked the World Health Organisation (WHO) for humanitarian aid and a technical visit to certify the conditions described above;
- H. whereas, despite the lack of official data, according to ENCOVI (Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida), the poverty rate in Venezuela has doubled from 30 % in 2013 to 60 % in 2016; whereas 75 % of the medicines considered essential by the World Health Organisation are not available in Venezuela;
- I. whereas the government is preventing the entry of humanitarian aid into the country, and is boycotting the various international initiatives to assist civil society, as has happened with Caritas and other NGOs;
- J. whereas, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Venezuela's economy is projected to contract by 8 % in 2016, following a contraction of 5,7 % in 2015; whereas, despite a 30 % increase in the minimum wage, the 180,9 % inflation rate hinders any prospects for basic commodities being affordable for Venezuelans; whereas the IMF forecasts an average inflation rate of 700 % by the end of 2016 and of 2 200 % in 2017;
- K. whereas the lack of foresight in basic infrastructure and inefficient governance have led to a major economic and social crisis, which is demonstrated by a long-running shortage of resources, raw materials, inputs, basic foodstuffs and essential medicines, with zero production, and whereas the country is on the verge of a major social upheaval and a humanitarian crisis with unpredictable consequences;
- L. whereas Venezuela's very high crime rates and complete impunity have turned it into one of the most dangerous countries in the world, Caracas having the highest rate of violent crime in the world, with over 119,87 homicides per 100 000 people;

- M. whereas fights for control of illegal mines are common in the mineral-rich area near the borders of Guyana and Brazil; whereas on 4 March 2016 a massacre took place in Tumeremo, Bolívar state, in which 28 miners went missing and were then murdered; whereas a satisfactory answer is still due from the authorities, and whereas journalist Lucía Suárez, who had recently investigated the case, was shot dead on 28 April 2016 at her home in Tumeremo;
- N. whereas on 27 May 2016 the G7 countries issued a statement urging Venezuela ‘to establish the conditions for dialogue between the government and its citizens to resolve the increasingly serious economic and political crisis’, and whereas on 1 June 2016 the Permanent Council of the Organisation of American States (OAS) issued a statement on the situation in Venezuela;
- O. whereas, in the framework of UNASUR, exploratory meetings have recently been held in the Dominican Republic, led by former Prime Minister of Spain José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, former President of the Dominican Republic Leonel Fernández and former President of Panama Martín Torrijos, with the aim of initiating a national dialogue with representatives of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the opposition parties represented by the MUD;
- P. whereas a solution to the crisis can only be found through dialogue with all levels of government, democratic opposition and society;
1. Expresses grave concern at the seriously deteriorating situation as regards democracy, human rights and the socio-economic situation in Venezuela, with an increasing climate of political and social instability;
 2. Expresses its concern also at the current institutional blockade impasse and the executive’s use of state powers to control the Supreme Court and the National Electoral Council with the aim of impeding the application of laws and initiatives adopted by the National Assembly; calls on the Venezuelan Government to respect the rule of law and the principle of the separation of powers; recalls that separation and non-interference between equally legitimate powers is an essential principle of democratic states guided by the rule of law;
 3. Calls on the Venezuelan Government to adopt a constructive attitude in order to overcome Venezuela’s current critical situation through a constitutional, peaceful and democratic solution based on dialogue;
 4. Welcomes the mediation efforts initiated at the invitation of UNASUR to launch a national dialogue process between the executive and the opposition represented by the majority components of the MUD;
 5. Takes note of the G7 Leaders’ Declaration on Venezuela; asks the June European Council to deliver a political statement on the situation in the country and to support the mediation efforts recently launched in order to allow democratic and political solutions to be agreed on for Venezuela;
 6. Urges the Venezuelan Government to release all political prisoners immediately; recalls that the freeing of political prisoners is a precondition set by the opposition for starting the negotiation talks, and calls on both sides to agree on a compromise solution aimed at supporting the mediation efforts currently in place; calls for the EU and the VP/HR to

urge the release of the political prisoners and those arbitrarily detained, in line with the demands made by several UN bodies and international organisations and with the Amnesty and National Reconciliation Law;

7. Requests that the authorities respect and guarantee the constitutional right to peaceful demonstrations; calls also on the opposition leaders to exercise their powers responsibly; calls on the Venezuelan authorities to guarantee security and the free exercise of rights for all citizens, in particular human rights defenders, journalists, political activists and members of independent non-governmental organisations;
8. Calls on President Nicolas Maduro and his government to implement urgent economic reforms in cooperation with the National Assembly in order to find a constructive solution to the economic and energy crises, in particular the shortage of food and medicines;
9. Expresses serious concern at the increasingly deteriorating social tension caused by the shortage of basic goods such as food and medicines; calls on the VP/HR to propose an assistance plan for the country and to urge the Venezuelan authorities to allow humanitarian aid into the country and to grant access to the international organisations that want to assist the most affected sectors in society with a view to addressing the population's most urgent and basic needs;
10. Urges the government and public authorities of Venezuela to respect the Constitution, including the legal and recognised mechanisms and procedures for activating the process laid down in the Venezuelan Constitution for impeaching the president before the end of 2016;
11. Urges the VP/HR to cooperate with Latin American countries and regional and international organisations to ensure that mechanisms for dialogue, national reconciliation and mediation are put in place in Venezuela in order to support a peaceful, democratic and constitutional solution to the crisis the country is currently experiencing;
12. Considers it an absolute priority to reduce the existing high levels of impunity, which increase and foster the growing violence and insecurity in the country, and to ensure respect for the existing legal system, which demands justice for the victims of kidnappings, murders and other crimes committed every day, and for their families;
13. Calls on the Venezuelan authorities to investigate the Tumeremo massacre, in which 28 miners were murdered, with a view to bringing the perpetrators and instigators to justice, including those behind the recent murder of journalist Lucía Suárez, which took place in the same location and is suspected of being connected;
14. Reiterates its request for a European Parliament delegation to be sent to Venezuela and to hold a dialogue with all sectors involved in the conflict as soon as possible;
15. 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 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.