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11.6.2013

B7-0307/2013

## 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 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Turkey  
(2013/2664(RSP))

**Hannes Swoboda, Libor Rouček, Raimon Obiols, Ana Gomes, Richard Howitt, Maria Eleni Koppa, María Muñiz De Urquiza, Emine Bozkurt, Boris Zala, Michael Cashman, Pino Arlacchi**  
on behalf of the S&D Group

**B7-0307/2013**

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Turkey  
(2013/2664(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions, in particular that of 18 April 2013 on Turkey’s 2012 progress report<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
  - having regard to the Negotiating Framework for Turkey of 3 October 2005,
  - having regard to Council Decision 2008/157/EC of 18 February 2008 on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with the Republic of Turkey<sup>2</sup> (‘the Accession Partnership’), as well as to the previous Council decisions on the Accession Partnership of 2001, 2003 and 2006,
  - having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Turkish police used excessive violence – with the approval of the political authorities – following the legal and peaceful reaction on Friday, 31 May 2013 by the people of Istanbul to the construction project in Istanbul Taksim Gezi Park (the planned construction of the Taksim military barracks and a shopping centre);
- B. whereas the excessively violent intervention of the police, initially in Istanbul but later also in other cities, infringes on the right to peacefully assemble and protest; whereas three people are reported dead and thousands are injured as a result of the police intervention; whereas people representing different sections of Turkish society have been participating in the demonstrations, and the demonstrations have gained broad support;
- C. whereas tear-gas was used extensively against the protesters, tear-gas canisters being fired directly at protesters, causing serious injuries, in clear violation of the principles of necessity and proportionality; whereas on several occasions the authorities prevented the injured protesters from accessing medical treatment;
- D. whereas the harsh condemnations by the Turkish Government, and by Prime Minister Erdogan in particular, seem to have been counter-productive and acted as further fuel to the protests;
- E. whereas Article 34 of the Turkish Constitution guarantees the right to organise peaceful, unarmed meetings and demonstrations; whereas Article 26 of the Turkish Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and Articles 27 and 28 of the Constitution guarantee ‘freedom of expression’ and ‘unhindered dissemination of thought’;

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0184).

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 51, 26.2.2008, p. 4.

- F. whereas the protests are also an expression of concern on the part of significant sections of Turkish society over recent decisions and legislative acts perceived as attempts to impose the government's preferred lifestyle on citizens, and as political rhetoric marginalising and discriminating against various groups within society on the basis of their lifestyles and beliefs;
- G. whereas the mainstream Turkish media remained silent regarding the demonstrations, and whereas Twitter users have been arrested;
1. Strongly condemns the excessive use of force by Turkish police in their response to the peaceful and legitimate protests in Istanbul's Gezi Park; expresses its condolences to the families of the protesters and the policeman who lost their lives in the course of the protests; calls on the Turkish authorities to thoroughly investigate the police violence and to bring those responsible to justice;
  2. Urges the Turkish authorities to guarantee and respect the right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and peaceful protest of all citizens; calls for the immediate release of all peaceful protesters who were taken into custody and demands information on the exact number of detainees and injured;
  3. Condemns the statements by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan dismissing the legitimate concerns of the peaceful protesters and their supporters, as incompatible with the values of a truly pluralist and democratic society; warns that the escalation of hostile rhetoric and threats is deepening polarisation in Turkish society, increasing the risk of civil unrest and harming the prospects for democratic consolidation; stresses the particular responsibility of Prime Minister Erdogan to calm the tensions and heed opponents; welcomes the constructive response by the President of the Republic, Abdullah Gül, and the apologies to the injured protesters expressed by Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc; urges the government to engage immediately in dialogue with peaceful protesters;
  4. Underlines the fact that the eradication of excessive use of force, torture and ill-treatment will only be possible after the impunity culture in the Turkish law enforcement agencies has been tackled; stresses the need for continued intensive training of the police force and the judiciary both in their formal instruction and during their active careers on the implementation of the Istanbul Protocol (a set of international guidelines against torture and ill-treatment) and also on the primacy of individual rights and liberties;
  5. Reminds Turkey that in an inclusive, pluralist democracy all citizens should feel represented and that the majority has a responsibility to include opposition and civil society in the decision-making process;
  6. Points to the crucial role of a system of checks and balances in the governance of a modern democratic state, which must be based on the principle of separation of powers, with balance between the executive, legislative and judicial functions, on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms – in particular freedom of expression and freedom of the press – and on a participatory political culture that truly reflects the plurality of a democratic society;

7. Recalls that freedom of expression and media pluralism are at the heart of European values and that a truly democratic, free and pluralist society requires true freedom of expression; recalls that freedom of expression is applicable not only to information or ideas that are favourably received or regarded as inoffensive but also, in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights, to those that offend, shock or disturb the state or any section of the population; draws particular attention, therefore, to the recent arrests of dozens of people for using ‘provocative expressions’ in social media;
8. Is concerned about the ongoing trials and the long pre-trial detention periods affecting, amongst other, journalists, which has turned Turkey into one of the largest prisons for journalists in the world; reiterates its previous calls on the Turkish authorities to finalise the review of the legal framework on freedom of expression and to bring it, without delay, into line with ECtHR case-law;
9. Is concerned about the deterioration in freedom of the press and about certain acts of censorship and growing self-censorship within the Turkish media, including on the internet; calls on the Turkish Government to uphold the principle of press freedom; stresses that an independent press is crucial to a democratic society, and points in this context to the essential role of the judiciary in protecting and enhancing press freedom, and thereby guaranteeing public space for free debate;
10. Believes that the current wave of protests further underscores the need for a truly inclusive and open constitutional process; is convinced that the drafting of a new Constitution offers a unique platform for the government to engage in a structured dialogue with opposition parties and civil society, including the new movements arising from the protests, with a view to consolidating and deepening Turkey’s democracy; contends that a failure to seize this opportunity would bring with it adverse consequences for long-term political stability and social cohesion;
11. Observes that the unprecedented wave of protests also reflects the legitimate concerns of many Turkish citizens that the government is aspiring to impose a single set of ethical values and religious beliefs upon Turkish society as a whole; reiterates that, in a democratic polity, governments must promote tolerance and ensure freedom of religion and belief for all citizens; calls on the government to respect the plurality and richness of Turkish society;
12. Considers it a matter of urgency to open Chapters 23 and 24 on fundamental rights and the judiciary in the process of the EU accession negotiations, as a tool with which to address Turkey’s deficiencies in these areas; recalls its commitment to keeping the negotiation process open;
13. Believes that, in itself, the organisation of peaceful and legitimate protests testifies to the vibrancy of Turkish civil society, as well as the resilience of European values in Turkey, and that it should strengthen the European Union’s commitment to Turkey’s European perspective;
14. Warns that the police crackdown undermines the credibility of Turkey’s regional role as a champion of democratic change in the Southern neighbourhood; takes the view that recent

events undercut the legitimacy and attractiveness of the AKP as a self-proclaimed model for nascent and future democratic parties in North Africa and the Middle East;

15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission, the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, the President of the European Court of Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Turkey.