



Plenary sitting

B8-0769/2016

7.6.2016

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 Tajikistan, situation of prisoners of conscience
(2016/2754(RSP))

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on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

European Parliament resolution on Tajikistan, situation of prisoners of conscience (2016/2754(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, in particular to its Article 19, on freedom opinion and expression,
 - having regard to Article 21 of the Treaty of the European Union,
 - having regard to Article 208 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to OSCE statements on the elections in Tajikistan since 1992,
 - having regard to Article 2 Agreement of the EU-Tajikistan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) of 2010,
 - having regard to EU and Central Asia strategy for a new partnership of 2007,
 - having regard to the findings of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression in Tajikistan of 2016
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Central Asia countries,
 - having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Tajikistan is in the midst of the worst political and religious crackdown since the end of the country's civil war in 1997, with hundreds of people landing behind bars for no other reason than their peaceful political work;
- B. whereas Tajikistan's civil war, the deadliest conflict in the post-Soviet space which left almost 100.000 dead, erupted after independence from the USSR and lasted almost five years, dividing the country into two main camps: a 'Russia-backed secular regime', and the 'Islamists' under the umbrella of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO); whereas after a long peace process, the war was ended by a United Nations-brokered power-sharing agreement signed in June 1997, promising 30% of the seats in executive power structures to the UTO: the 1997 deal with the opposition was challenged by President Emomali Rahmon, gradually eroding UTO's representation in the government;
- C. whereas Tajikistan's deteriorating human rights situation worsened dramatically in the last year, including the forced closure of Tajikistan's leading opposition party, the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) in September 2015; whereas Tajikistan's human rights crisis is expanding by the day, but the response of the international community has fallen seriously short due to security and geostrategic interest on the country;

- D. whereas the Tajik government is arresting, imprisoning, silencing and torturing members of the country's peaceful political opposition;
- E. whereas the authorities have also targeted lawyers, journalists, and ordinary citizens who have posted statements critical of the government of President Emomali Rahmon on social media;
- F. whereas hundreds of perceived critics and their family members have fled the country, according to observers' estimates;
- G. whereas in March 2016, an opposition figure, Umarali Kuvvatov, was shot dead in Istanbul in circumstances that point to involvement or acquiescence by the Tajik government; whereas Tajikistan authorities have sought the detention and forcible return to Tajikistan of peaceful political activists in Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia, Turkey, and elsewhere;
- H. whereas since a wave of arrests that began on September 16th 2015 it is estimated that Tajik police and security services have arrested hundreds of members of the Islamic Renaissance Party on politically motivated charges; whereas a major trial being held behind closed doors of 16 senior party leaders began on February 9th 2016; whereas as Tajik prosecutors demanded life sentences for four jailed leaders of the banned Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT); whereas the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the protection to the right of freedom of expression, concluded that the situation is particularly dire after concluding his tour in Tajikistan by March 2016, making clear that the drastic measures against opposition cannot be justified by national security imperatives;
- I. whereas terrorist attacks in September 2015, followed by a military response and closure of the Islamic Renaissance Party raised concerns about instability; whereas Tajikistan is facing both internal and external security challenges mostly related to the rise of religious extremism and terrorist groups, in particular the Taliban;
- J. whereas none of the elections in Tajikistan since 1992 were judged either free or fair by international observers; whereas President Rahmon – who in December 2015 was granted the title of 'Leader of the Nation' and lifelong immunity for anything he has done while in office – is increasingly monopolizing all political power;
- K. whereas bilateral relations between Tajikistan and the EU are governed by a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) since 2010; whereas its article 2 focus on the paramount importance of human rights; whereas financial assistance is provided by the EU's Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and focuses on rural development and poverty reduction, agriculture and land reform, promotion of good governance and economic reforms; whereas the EU and Tajikistan also cooperate in the framework of a regional approach, which includes all five Central Asian republics: the EU and Central Asia strategy for a new partnership which is mainly driven by EU's security and geopolitical interests;

1. Reiterates its deep concerns on the dramatic and continuously deteriorating situation of human rights in Tajikistan, including freedom of expression and religion;
2. Recalls the paramount importance of human rights respect including freedoms of assembly, association, expression, and religion;
3. Calls for the immediately and unconditionally release everyone imprisoned on politically motivated charges;
4. Reiterates the importance of allowing peaceful and democratic opposition groups to operate freely and exercise the freedoms of assembly, association, expression, and religion, in accordance with international human rights norms and Tajikistan's constitution;
5. Calls for the respect of all detainees and prisoners process rights, including access to counsel of their choosing and visits with relatives; calls for the respect of decent conditions for those in prison;
6. Strongly condemns the use of torture and enforced disappearances;
7. Notes with concern the weaknesses of Tajikistan political system and the lack of people's participation in politics;
8. Calls on the Government of Tajikistan to refrain from impeding the people's access to media and communication services; recalls on the paramount importance of ensuring full range of civil and political rights to the political opposition;
9. Recalls that social inclusion, redistributive and social cohesion policies are essential to fight violent extremism;
10. Rejects international community approach to Tajikistan based on security and geopolitical interest; underlines the need of having a EU-Central Asia strategy not based on geostrategic interests but designed, implemented and monitored in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, gender equality and women empowerment, accordingly to the wills of local civil society organisations, including women rights organisations, trade unions and in alignment with human rights;
11. Calls on the High Representative of the European Union, and the EU External Action Service to raise these concerns with the Tajikistan authorities and, in line with The Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and Tajikistan Article 2, to take all the necessary diplomatic measure to effectively enhance human rights respect by Tajikistan's authorities;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the European External Action Service, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation

in Europe, the UN Human Rights Council, and the Government and Parliament of Tajikistan.