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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0049/2019**

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

**Sergey Lagodinsky, Ernest Urtasun, Hannah Neumann, Heidi Hautala, Katrin Langensiepen, Saskia Bricmont, Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, Viola Von Cramon-Taubadel, Caroline Roose, Marie Toussaint, Ellie Chowns, Markéta Gregorová, Mounir Satouri, Salima Yenbou, Catherine Rowett, Yannick Jadot, Bronis Ropé, Monika Vana, Anna Cavazzini, Alexandra Geese, Erik Marquardt, Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, Kim Van Sparrentak, Tineke Strik**  
on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

**B9-0049/2019**

**European Parliament resolution on the 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 of 8 February 2018 on the current human rights situation in Turkey and of 13 March 2019 on the 2018 Commission Report on Turkey;
- having regard to the Statement by the HRVP Spokesperson on the suspensions of elected mayors and detainment of hundreds of people in South-East Turkey of 19 August 2019;
- having regard to Resolution 2260 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 24 January 2019, “The worsening situation of opposition politicians in Turkey: what can be done to protect their fundamental rights in a Council of Europe member State?”;
- having regard to the Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the impact of the state of emergency on human rights in Turkey, including an update on the South-East, of March 2018;
- having regard to the European Charter of Local Self-Government and its entry into force in Turkey in 1993;
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- having regard to Rules 144 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. Whereas on 19 August 2019 the Turkish Interior Ministry removed from office Adnan Selcuk Mizrakli, mayor of Diyarbakir, Ahmed Türk, mayor of Mardin, and Bedia Özgökçe Ertan, mayor of Van, under several accusations, including “spreading propaganda” and “being members of a terrorist organisation”; whereas these mayors, members of the People’s Democratic Party (HDP), were democratically elected with a majority of votes in the municipal election held on 31 March 2019, and have been replaced by state-appointed governors of the provinces;

B. Whereas at least 418 people, mainly municipal council members and employees from 29 different provinces across Turkey were also arrested over alleged ties with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK);

C. Whereas nine days after the local elections the Supreme Board of Elections (YSK) declared four elected mayors and members of municipal councils ineligible to assume office in the south-east of Turkey, even though their candidacies had been validated before the elections, by arguing that these candidates had previously been civil servants and dismissed from their jobs by government decrees;

D. Whereas during the state of emergency over 90 elected mayors from HDP were replaced by government-appointed trustees, the majority of them in South-East Turkey, further undermining the functioning of democracy;

E. Whereas CHP's Istanbul chair Canan Kaftancıoğlu was sentenced on 6 September 2019 to 9 years and 8 months of prison for several charges, including for spreading terror propaganda and insulting President Erdogan and public officials, mainly over tweets which date back to 2012 and which were brought up after CHP's success defeating President Erdogan's governing AKP party in Istanbul's mayoral elections in June 2019;

F. Whereas there is the risk of Turkish authorities trying to replace Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu from the CHP Party, who won the local elections on 31 March 2019 and on 23 June 2019;

G. Whereas the actions taken by the Turkish government undermine the capacity of political parties in the opposition to take part in the democratic debate;

H. Whereas the crackdown of Turkish political opposition is taking place in a context of a shrinking space for democratic voices and of continuous measures by the Turkish authorities aimed at silencing dissenting voices, including those of journalists, human rights defenders, academics, judges and lawyers; whereas 150 000 people were taken into custody in the post-coup crackdown and 78 000 have been arrested on the basis of terrorism charges, while more than 50 000 people remain in jail in most of the cases without any convincing proofs for the charges; whereas lengthy pre-trial detention is reportedly used as a punishment for dissidents;

I. Whereas the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights documented numerous cases of excessive use of force, killings, enforced disappearances, torture, destruction of housing and cultural heritage, incitement to hatred; prevention of access to emergency medical care, food, water and livelihoods; violence against women; and severe curtailment of the right to freedom of opinion and expression as well as political participation in the South East of Turkey;

J. Whereas Turkey has suffered a number of terror attacks and the 2016 coup attempt in which 248 people were killed;

1. Urges the Turkish government to reverse its autocratic trends and to work towards strengthening democracy and the rule of law and to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, which includes ensuring pluralism and freedom of association and expression; stresses that a fully-functioning democracy requires an environment in which political parties, civil society and the media are able to carry out their legitimate roles without fear, threats or arbitrary restrictions;

2. Calls on the Turkish authorities to immediately and unconditionally release members of the opposition arrested as part of the crackdown against all voices of dissent in the country and to drop all charges against them; stresses that the Turkish authorities must enable them to carry out their democratic mandate independently and free of threat and impediment in all circumstances;
3. Condemns the decision by the Turkish authorities to remove democratically-elected mayors from office on the basis of spurious charges; stresses that these actions continue to undermine the ability of the political opposition to exercise their rights and fulfil their democratic roles; strongly criticises the arbitrary replacement of local elected representatives by unelected trustees, which is further undermining the democratic structure of Turkey; urges the Turkish authorities to reinstate all the mayors who won the local elections of 31 May 2019;
4. Stresses that already during the state of emergency a very high number of mayors and co-mayors in the South-East were dismissed or arrested and that the Government appointed trustees to replace them; points out that as a result, a third of Turkey's population was not represented by the people they had elected at the 2014 local elections; regrets that the Turkish authorities seem to continue to follow the same trend after the municipal elections in March 2019, which provided an important opportunity to fully reinstate the principle of direct democratic mandate;
5. Condemns the judicial harassment that members of the political opposition, particularly from HDP, have been suffering; is disheartened by the numerous HDP lawmakers which have been arrested in the past years on the grounds of alleged support for terrorist activities, including Figen Yüksekdağ, former HDP co-chair;
6. Condemns the continued arrest of Selahattin Demirtaş, opposition leader and presidential candidate and calls for his immediate and unconditional release; welcomes the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights on his case, which calls on the Turkish authorities to immediately release him; stresses that the European Court of Human Rights further ruled that Demirtaş's detention, especially during two crucial campaigns, namely the referendum and the presidential election, had pursued the predominant ulterior purpose of stifling pluralism and limiting freedom of political debate, which was at the very core of the concept of a democratic society; condemns the decision of the Turkish authorities to contravene the ruling of the ECHR;
7. Is seriously concerned by the human rights violations reported by the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights; is disturbed by the destruction of historical heritage in the South-East by the Turkish government, including the plans to flood the ancient city of Hasankeyf in the Batman province, threatening the preservation of Kurdish identity and culture; reiterates its condemnation of the return to violence of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK); stresses the urgency of resuming a credible political process involving all concerned parties and democratic forces leading to a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish issue;
8. Regrets that the HRVP Mogherini has so far not issued a statement on the sentencing of Canan Kaftancıoğlu; calls on the HRVP and the Commission to raise the situation of the arrested members of the parties in the opposition in their dialogues with Turkish authorities; expects the EEAS and the Commission to provide the European Parliament with a comprehensive debrief of the topics discussed during the EU-Turkey political dialogue of 13

September 2019;

9. Calls on the EU Delegation in Ankara to closely monitor the situation of the members political opposition arrested, including by observing trials, making public statements and requesting permission for prison visits;

10. Expresses great concern at the shrinking space for civil society and the promotion of fundamental rights and freedoms; stresses that a large number of human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers and academics have been arrested since the coup attempt; calls on Turkey to release Osman Kavala and all imprisoned human rights defenders, journalists, academics and others who have been detained on unsubstantiated charges, to drop all charges against them and to enable them to carry out their work without threat or impediment in all circumstances; calls on the EU and its Member States to increase their protection and support for human rights defenders at risk in Turkey, including through emergency grants, and to ensure full implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders by the EU Delegation and Member State embassies and consulates;

11. 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 and Security Policy, the Member States, the Government of Turkey and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.