



Plenary sitting

B9-0083/2019

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))

Kati Piri
on behalf of the S&D Group

B9-0083/2019

**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 of 13 March 2019 on the 2018 Commission Report on Turkey, and of 8 February 2018 on the current human rights situation in Turkey;

- having regard to the Council conclusions on enlargement and stabilization and association process of 18 June 2019, in particular articles 32 and 33;
- having regard to the Statement by the Spokesperson of the European External Action Service on the suspensions of elected mayors and detainment of hundreds of people in south-east Turkey of 19 August 2019 and the Statement by the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights on the dismissal of Kurdish mayors of 23 August 2019;
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on EU Enlargement Policy of 29 May 2019;
- having regard to Resolution 2260 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) of 24 January 2019, entitled “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 Joint Opinion of the Venice Commission and ODIHR on Amendments to the electoral legislation and related “harmonisation laws” adopted in March and April 2018 of 13 December 2018;
- having regard to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Report on the human rights situation in South-East Turkey of February 2017 and its Report 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 statement by the President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on the recent suspension of mayors in Turkey of 20 August, 2019;
- having regard to the European Charter of Local Self-Government and its entry into force in Turkey in 1993;
- having regard to Rules 144(5) of its Rules of Procedure;

- A. Whereas on 19 August 2019 Turkey replaced the democratically elected Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) mayors of the south-eastern cities of Diyarbakır, Van and Mardin by an Interior Ministry order with appointed provincial Governors, serving as trustees, over unsubstantiated allegations;
- B. Whereas, in the local elections of 31 March 2019, mayor Adnan Selçuk Mizrakli of Diyarbakır received a majority of 63%, mayor Ahmet Turk of Mardin a majority of 56%, and mayor Bedia Özgökçe of Van a majority of 54% of the votes, and therefore all three mayors obtained a clear popular mandate to fulfil the duties that appertain to their mayoral offices;
- C. Whereas all three mayors received approval by the Supreme Board of Elections of the Republic of Turkey (YSK) to stand in the elections as a candidate;
- D. Whereas an additional 418 civilians, mainly municipal council members and employees from 29 different provinces across Turkey, were detained on 18 August on similarly unsubstantiated allegations;
- E. Whereas on 9 April 2019, the Supreme Board of Elections declared four other elected mayors and members of municipal councils in the south-east of Turkey ineligible to assume office, even though it had validated their candidacies prior to the elections of 31 March 2019, arguing that these candidates had previously been civil servants and were dismissed from their jobs by government decree; whereas, following this decision, the YSK granted these positions to candidates of the Justice and Development Party (AKP);
- F. Whereas during the nationwide State of Emergency imposed between 15 July 2016 and 18 July 2018, the government of the Republic of Turkey dismissed and/or arrested 94 mayors and deputy mayors in Turkey's South-East, replacing them with unelected trustees;
- G. Whereas reports of the Supreme Court of Public Accounts have revealed that during the period of the unelected administrators appointed by the state ('kayyims'), the resources of these municipalities have been squandered and seriously corrupted;
- H. Whereas the Interior Minister of the Republic of Turkey on 3 September 2019 announced that further orders to remove elected officials are to follow, specifically threatening the replacement of Istanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu;
- I. Whereas on 6 September 2019 the Provincial Chairperson of the Republican People's Party (CHP), Canan Kaftancıoğlu, was sentenced to 9 years and 8 months in prison on charges of insulting the President, insulting public officials, humiliating the state, inciting the people to enmity and hatred, and propagandizing for a terrorist organization on her social media channels in the period 2012-2017;
- J. Whereas these recent actions aim to suppress freedom of speech and expression and contribute to a climate of fear and intimidation.

1. Strongly condemns the arbitrary replacement of local elected representatives and appointing unelected trustees in their place in contravention of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, further undermining the democratic structures of Turkey;
2. Calls on the Turkish authorities to reinstate all mayors and other elected officials who won local elections on 31 March 2019 and were prevented from assuming office, dismissed, or replaced with unelected trustees on the basis of unsubstantiated allegations;
3. Stresses that these decisions are of serious concern as they call into question the Turkish government's commitment to the democratic outcomes of the 31 March 2019 elections and further jeopardize the legality and integrity of the electoral process and the legitimacy of the democratic institutions of the Republic of Turkey;
4. Stresses that these decisions violate the right to free elections, the right to political participation, and the right to freedom of expression under the European Convention on Human Rights;
5. Stresses that, as a result of these decisions, a large part of Turkey's population lacks local-level democratic representation and that these decisions inhibit popular trust in local democracy;
6. Stands firmly behind all democratic forces in Turkey and reaffirms its stance that anti-terrorism or criminal legislation must not be applied for political reasons or to suppress legitimate democratic opposition;
7. Reiterates that the Republic of Turkey must repeal any legal or executive measures that inhibit the proper execution of local democracy, in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission and with the European Charter of Local Self-Government;
8. Strongly condemns the politically motivated sentence of Canan Kaftancıoğlu, who is clearly punished for playing a key role in the successful election campaign of the mayor of Istanbul, and demands its immediate reversal;
9. Condemns the threats of Turkish authorities to dismiss other elected officials and calls on Turkey to refrain from their further intimidation;
10. 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, and the President, Government and Parliament of Turkey.