



Plenary sitting

B9-0291/2020

15.9.2020

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 the Philippines, including the case of Maria Ressa (2020/2782(RSP))

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on behalf of the ECR Group

B9-0291/2020

European Parliament resolution on the situation in the Philippines, including the case of Maria Ressa (2020/2782(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in the Philippines, including those of 19 April 2018, 15 March 2017 and 15 September 2016;
 - having regard to the Framework Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of the Philippines, of the other part;
 - having regard to the Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which entered into force on 15 December 2008 and to which the Philippines is party;
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948;
 - having regard to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;
 - having regard to the statement by the European External Action Service of 16 June 2020 regarding the conviction of Maria Ressa and Reynaldo Santos;
 - having regard to the statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights of 30 June 2020;
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure;
- A. whereas the long-standing court-case against prominent news site “Rappler” founder and journalist Maria Ressa has become the epitome in the battle for media freedom in the Philippines whereas among the wave of new outlets targeted by the Duterte government, in particular Rappler, one of the last remaining independent media outlets known for its hard-hitting investigations and ABS-CBN have been subject to particularly harsh and relentless attacks seeking to limit their influence;
- B. whereas human rights defenders, journalists, and activists routinely face threats, harassment, intimidation, and violence for seeking to expose allegations of extra-judicial killings and other human rights abuses in the Philippines;
- C. whereas since President Rodrigo Duterte has launched in 2016 his so-called “war on drugs”, he has widened it to include critics, journalists, human rights groups, and political opponents seeking to expose abuses and more than 248 human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists and trade unionists were killed between 2015 and 2019; whereas President Duterte has repeatedly threatened to seek stronger relations with countries such as Russia and China, which have not criticised his actions;
- D. whereas the case against Rappler founder and journalist, Maria Ressa, a citizen of both the United States and the Philippines, started in 2012 and is part of a broader strategy to

silence opponents or humiliate opponents of Duterte, seeking to ensure the unchallenged continuity of the current government;

- E. whereas on 22 February 2018, the NBI cybercrime released a statement that it had found that the one-year prescriptive period for libel had already lapsed, affirming the content of the counter-affidavits submitted by Maria Ressa and her colleague and co-author Reynaldo Santos; whereas on 2 March 2018, the NBI retracts its dismissal of the charges, which is followed by a recommendation of the Justice department to file charges against Ressa and Santos in January 2019; whereas several other legal actions have been filed against Ressa since January 2018, including alleged violations of laws barring foreign ownership of media and tax evasion charges;
- F. whereas the Manila Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 46 issued arrest warrants for Ressa and Santos in February 2019; whereas a series of bail orders, motions and counter-suits follow the highly disputed and multiple arrests of both Ressa and Santos; whereas 23 June 2019 the trial commences, resulting in the conviction of Ressa;
- G. whereas August 2020, the Court of Appeals (CA) affirmed its ruling, following Ressa's request to attend prior arranged engagements in the U.S., that she cannot leave the country, denying her motion for reconsideration to be allowed to travel to the United States;
- H. whereas since the start of the highly controversial "war on drugs", the Philippines held the chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), whose Charter calls on its members to adhere to the principles of democracy, rule of law, and good governance, as well as respect for and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- I. whereas an investigation by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity were triggered; whereas March 2018, an announcement followed by the government of the Philippines, stating its intention to withdraw from the International Criminal Court; whereas the withdrawal from the Rome Statute became effective 17 March 2019, albeit still recognising the Courts jurisdiction over crimes committed during the time in which the State was party to the Statute and allowing for it to exercise this jurisdiction even after the withdrawal became effective;
- J. whereas the preliminary examination of the situation in the Philippines by the UN was announced on 8 February 2018 and is on-going, focusing on the crimes allegedly committed since at least 1 July 2016 and the Philippines' membership of the UNHR Council expiring at the end of 2021;
 - 1. Condemns the extrajudicial killings of journalists, activists and other anti-government protesters by individuals and authorities in the Philippines in the name of the so-called war on drugs and reminds the Government in Manila of its responsibilities under the terms of the national Constitution as well as international law;
 - 2. Condemns all threats, harassment, intimidation, and violence against human rights defenders, journalists, and other activists seeking to expose corruption scandals and allegations of extra-judicial killings and other human rights abuses in the Philippines;

3. Reminds the Government of the Philippines of the rights of all its citizens enshrined within the country's Constitution, including protection against torture, force, violence, threat, or intimidation;
4. Demands that the charges against Maria Ressa and Reynaldo Santos are revised and all those held unfairly on politically motivated charges imposed due to their criticism of and investigations into the extrajudicial killings be released immediately;
5. Urges the EU to use all available instruments and diplomatic measures at its disposal to encourage the Government of the Philippines to fulfil its international commitments and human rights obligations;
6. Deeply regrets the withdrawal of the Republic of the Philippines from the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;
7. Encourages the EU and its Member States to consider calling for the Republic of the Philippines to be removed from the United Nations Human Rights Council before its current membership term expires at the end of 2021;
8. Calls on the Government of the Philippines to allow unfettered access by the United Nations Special Rapporteur to investigate alleged unlawful killings and other abuses;
9. Calls on the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to put pressure on the Government of the Philippines over alleged unlawful killings and other abuses in the anti-drug campaign;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the EEAS, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the President and Government of the Republic of the Philippines, the chairman of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.