



Plenary sitting

B9-0138/2021

9.2.2021

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 political situation in Uganda
(2021/2545(RSP))

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

B9-0138/2021

**European Parliament resolution on the political situation in Uganda
(2021/2545(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Uganda,
 - having regard to the Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell of 12th January 2021 on the upcoming general elections;
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948, to which Uganda is a signatory,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human Rights,
 - having regard to the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement (‘Cotonou Agreement’)
 - having regard to the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda,
 - having regard to Rules 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Since the beginning of the electoral season in November 2020, political opponents human rights defenders, and journalists have faced persecution by national authorities; whereas the excessive use of force by law enforcement agents, has resulted in the arbitrary arrests, detentions and killing of civilians;
- B. whereas between 18 and 20 November 2020, at least 54 people were killed during riots and protests in at least 7 districts across the country subsequent to the arrest and detention of two opposition presidential candidates, Robert Kyagulanyi, and Patrick Oboi Amuriat, and members of the political opposition; whereas these candidates have been blocked from holding campaign activities on several occasions;
- C. whereas presidential and parliamentary elections were held on 14 January; whereas the results announced by the Uganda Electoral Commission gave Yoweri Museveni, president since 1986, a sixth term in office with almost 59% of the vote, while his main opponent Robert Kyagulanyi, also known as Bobi Wine obtained about 35%; whereas Mr Kyagulani rejected the results, alleging fraud and malpractice and filed a lawsuit demanding the annulment of the presidential election results;
- D. whereas Mr. Kyagulani’s National Unity Party (NUP) secured 61 seats in the national parliament, which makes it the second biggest party in parliament after Museveni’s ruling party which won 310 seats; whereas the other major opposition party the Forum for Democratic Change led by Mr Amuriat, won 29 seats;
- E. whereas Uganda is one of the youngest countries in the world with 78% of the population below the age of 30 and a median age of just sixteen; whereas one million eligible voters who, given their young age, were more likely to vote for Wine, were not registered by the Uganda National Electoral Commission, which claimed to lack the

material resources to register them;

- F. whereas in the eve of the elections, Mr Kyagulani was arbitrarily arrested with soldiers restricting him from leaving and others from entering his property even after election results were announced; whereas the Ugandan High Court has recently ruled that his detention was unlawful, and considers it as an infringement on his personal liberties;
 - G. whereas Uganda's election commission also rejected electoral international observation missions including the European Union's offer, even though the EU had previously observed three elections between 2006 and 2016;
 - H. whereas journalists covering Mr Kyagulani's campaign were reportedly beaten by security forces and ordered to delete videos and photos; whereas Uganda is now ranked 125th out of 180 countries according to RSF's World Press Freedom Index;
 - I. whereas shortly before the election days all access to internet and social media and online messaging platforms has been interrupted; whereas access has been partially re-established after elections;
 - J. whereas on 23 December 2020, human right lawyer Nicholas Opiyo, was arrested alongside three other lawyers - Herbert Dakasi, Anthony Odur, and Esomu Obure - and Hamid Tenywa, a NUP member, upon accusation of money laundering and will be tried accordingly;
 - K. whereas on 12th December the government froze the assets of 4 NGOs active in the election campaigns encouraging the participation of women and youth - The Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), the National NGO Forum, the Women International Peace Centre, and the Alliance of Finance Election Monitoring (AFEM) - on charges of financing terrorism;
 - L. whereas on several occasions COVID-19 related restrictive measures have been enforced disproportionately to curtail opposition electoral campaign activities or to targets particular groups, resulting in excessive violence and arbitrary arrests without access to lawyer, as illustrated with the police raid held on 29th March 2020 on the Children of the Sun Foundation (COSF), a shelter for homeless lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth;
1. Is appalled by the harassment and violent repression from Ugandan security forces against opposition leaders, civil society, human right defenders, journalists and civilians, which have occurred throughout the electoral season;
 2. calls on the Government of Uganda and its institutions to ensure the safety, security and dignified treatment of its population, including electoral candidates and their supporters, in line with national laws and Uganda's international human rights commitments;
 3. Urges to ensure that any violations or abuses by national authorities are duly and impartially investigated and that those responsible are held to account, in this regard, calls to ensure justice for victims of events that occurred between 18 and 20 November 2020; calls for the immediate release of political prisoners;

4. calls on all parties to refrain from any form of violence throughout any processes aimed at challenging election results, in particular the ongoing lawsuit demanding the annulment of the presidential election results,
5. calls on the international community to ensure an international audit of the election addressed in an independent and transparent manner, respectful of the respective interests and concerns of the candidates and in line with the domestic electoral process as well as the constitutional and national legal framework;
6. calls for the removal of any legal barriers affecting the voting rights of young people who have reached the legal age to vote or stand as a candidate for local or national elections;
7. Is strongly concerned by the discriminatory enforcement of COVID-19 related restrictions which have led to violence, arbitrary arrests and detention, targeted notably at LGBTQ persons; urges the Ugandan authorities to respect people's rights, dignity, and to strictly limit the exercise of emergency power to the protection of public health;
8. Reiterates its call the EU delegation in Uganda to continue to monitor the situation of LGBTQ people closely and to actively support civil society organisations and human rights defenders and LGBTI people on the ground;
9. Urges Ugandan authorities to end the arbitrary suspension of civil society activities, freezing of their financial assets, and arrests of civil society activists;
10. calls on Ugandan police to desist from the use of live bullets and other unorthodox weapons on unarmed demonstrators and non-violent suspects;
11. calls on the Ugandan authorities to ensure everyone's access to high-quality, secure, and unrestricted internet including to social media and online messaging platforms as it constitutes a serious obstacle to the freedom to inform including media freedom;
12. Calls on the EU to take advantage of the political leverage provided by development aid programmes, namely budget support programmes, to enhance the defence and promotion of human rights in Uganda; calls on the EU and aid donors involved to end the suspension of the Democratic Governance Facility as the mechanism supports the work of local groups focusing on democracy and good governance;
13. 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, the President of the Republic of Uganda, the Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament and the African Union and its institutions.