



Plenary sitting

B9-0562/2021

23.11.2021

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 human rights violations by private military and security companies, particularly the Wagner Group
(2021/2982(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

B9-0562/2021

European Parliament resolution on human rights violations by private military and security companies, particularly the Wagner Group (2021/2982(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Montreux document on pertinent international legal obligations and good practices for States related to operations of private military and security companies during armed conflict,
- having regard to the UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the rights of peoples to self-determination, which was established in July 2005,
- having regard to the reports of the open-ended intergovernmental working group to consider the possibility of elaborating an international regulatory framework on the regulation, monitoring and oversight of the activities of private military and security companies,
- having regard to the UN Guidelines on the Use of Armed Security Services from Private Security Companies,
- having regard to the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials,
- having regard to the conclusions of the EU Foreign Ministers Council of 15 and 16 November,
- having regard to a briefing by UN Experts on violations by the Russian Wagner Group in the Central African Republic of 27 October 2021,
- having regard to the final report to the UN Security Council by a panel of experts on the Central African Republic of 20 May 2021,
- having regard to the UN working group on mercenaries of 24 March 2021,

- having regard to the 1 October 2021 Report of the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya to the UN Human Rights Council,
 - having regard to the findings of the Special Commission of Inquiry by the Central African Republic (CAR) on violations by its army as well as by Russian mercenaries on its territory,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,
 - having regard to the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the EU Foreign Ministers in their 15/16 November meeting prepared the adoption of sanctions against individuals and entities affiliated with the Wagner Group and will reassess the matter during the December Foreign Affairs Council;
 - B. whereas since its inception in 2014 the so-called “Wagner Group” has been involved in various clandestine combat missions, among others in Ukraine, Libya, Sudan, Mozambique, Madagascar, the Central African Republic (CAR), Venezuela and Syria;
 - C. whereas in the CAR and elsewhere, UN and other experts have credibly outlined the involvement of the Wagner Group and its affiliates in systemic and grave human rights and international humanitarian law violations, including arbitrary detention, torture, disappearances, summary execution, rape and sexual violence against women, men, and young girls;
 - D. whereas the Russian government and President Putin try to uphold the absurd allegation that the Wagner Group does not have direct links to the Russian government and is an independent private business; but whereas the management and operations are deeply intertwined with the Russian military and intelligence community; whereas Wagner extensively relies on Russian military infrastructure, from using a shared base to being transported by Russian military aircraft to using military health care services;
 - E. whereas the term “Wagner Group” represents a web of paramilitaries and businesses that have been linked by overlaps in ownership and logistics networks; whereas the Kremlin via this construct, and the absurd fact that the Wagner Group as such does not exist in a legal sense, tries to maintain a plausible deniability regarding the actions and crimes committed by the group;
 - F. whereas Russia is using the pretext that private military companies are officially illegal in

Russia as an artificial and made-up proof of the non-existence of official links between the government and the Wagner Group; whereas the Russian leadership also pretends that this obvious ploy can help the Kremlin in avoiding accountability for atrocities carried out by the network's operatives;

- G. whereas next to military combat, paramilitary activity and private security the Wagner Group has carried out a wide range of activities, including suppressing pro-democracy protests and spreading disinformation;
 - H. whereas Wagner is financed in part by multimillion-dollar catering and construction contracts for the Russian armed forces awarded to companies linked with Yevgeny Prigozhin, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin; whereas the EU imposed sanctions on Mr. Prigozhin for his involvement in the Libyan conflict;
 - I. whereas in December 2017 the Russian Federation received an exemption by the UN Security Council to the arms embargo on the Central African Republic (CAR), allowing it to deliver arms and training to boost the CAR military and security forces; whereas since early 2018 Russian mercenaries are present in the CAR; whereas allegations circulate that the group has taken over key elements of the national security sector in the CAR and is committing serious human rights violations; whereas companies linked to Yevgeny Prigozhin have been awarded licences of gold and diamond mining areas in the CAR; whereas documents prove that Wagner affiliates have also been put in charge of collecting tariffs; whereas as a consequence of the perpetual human rights violation, in the CAR, public discontent with the Wagner Group's conduct is rising;
 - J. whereas numerous journalists investigating or reporting on Wagner and Russia's illegal international military operations were assassinated or have died under suspicious circumstances; whereas many journalists reporting on Wagner have received threats;
 - K. whereas Russia's illegal invasion and annexation of Crimea started in 2014 when Russia sent masked soldiers in unmarked army uniforms to take over key logistical installations;
 - L. whereas the post-Cold War era brought a renaissance of private security companies (PSCs) and private military companies (PMCs); whereas conflicts of the 21st century, particularly the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, saw PMCs getting involved on all levels, from providing logistical support to high-intensity operations;
1. Expresses its firm conviction that the Wagner Group, and other Russian-led security contractors, are proxy organisations of the Russian State and should hence be treated as such; reconfirms that the Wagner Group is not a private company and is indeed a branch of the army and secret service of the Russian Federation and its institutions as such should always be labelled as a Kremlin's proxy in European and international analyses in order to clearly attribute its true origins as well as its dangerous and damaging intentions;
 2. Welcomes plans by the EU Foreign Ministers to issue sanctions against affiliates of the Kremlin's Wagner Group and recalls that such sanctions must also be applied on the key decision-makers in the respective ministers and institutions in Moscow, including inside the Kremlin;

3. Calls on all governments to end their partnerships with affiliates linked to the Kremlin's Wagner Group;
4. Urges all authorities in governments that so far cooperate with the Kremlin's Wagner Group and other private security providers that are violating human rights and do not fulfil certain standards, such as transparency and disclosure rules, and escape the accountability of governments and the international community, to comply with their obligations under international law to hold all perpetrators of grave violations and abuses of human rights accountable;
5. Demands unhindered access to justice and redress to all victims of violations, including abuses committed by Russian private military and security personnel;
6. Expresses its grave concern at the growing influence of foreign private military companies and the possible plans of further governments to initiate a cooperation with the Kremlin's Wagner Group and other private security providers that are violating human rights and do not fulfil certain minimum standards; points out that cooperation with such groups is incompatible with the security and defence cooperation of the EU, and therefore would require the EU to reassess its engagement with such respective countries;
7. Is extremely worried about the continuing presence of the Kremlin's Wagner Group in the CAR and reiterates its previous call on the government of the CAR to immediately end the cooperation with the group which has not only depleted the CAR of natural resources and tariffs income, but to a certain degree has also undermined its own sovereignty and independence; believes that the CAR represents a worrying example and urges other countries not to repeat the same mistakes;
8. Underlines the need to closely monitor the actions of private security and military companies which are increasing their global footprint in vulnerable areas including Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe;
9. Is of the firm opinion that the EU must seriously improve its communication in order to better inform the populations of concerned countries about the true intentions of the Kremlin's Wagner Group and the severe negative consequences of its involvement for the countries future and its human and civil rights situations;
10. Recalls its firm position that no EU funds paid as development aid or other support to third countries must be used in any way to pay mercenaries such as the Kremlin's Wagner Group; calls in this light on the EEAS and the Commission to review their partnerships with countries that are engaged with the group and to demand guarantees for the adequate usage of EU funds;
11. Firmly believes that security and defence should be primarily provided by the public authorities, and recalls that such security forces best fulfil their mandate when they are made up of personnel from the respective regions and countries they serve in;
12. Is of the opinion that one of the biggest concerns about companies such as the Kremlin's Wagner Group is that they weaken local accountability and local security forces by

undermining and even replacing these institutions, which creates huge problems in the medium and long-term;

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the African Union, Venezuela and the government of the Russian Federation.