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))

Anna Fotyga, Witold Jan Waszczykowski, Veronika Vrecionová, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Jan Zahradil, Elżbieta Rafalska, Elżbieta Kruk, Charlie Weimers, Bogdan Rzońca, Assita Kanko, Adam Bielan, Alexandr Vondra, Ladislav Ilčič

on behalf of the ECR Group
B9-0567/2021

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 its report on private security companies of 4 July 2017;
- 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 Human Rights Council Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (A/HRC/17/31, annex), which also apply to private military and security companies (PMSCs),


- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
– having regard to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,

- having regard to the Council conclusions of 15-16/11/2021

– having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,

A, whereas state-linked Russian private military contractors have spearheaded a new wave of kinetic, economic and information warfare across the developing world; whereas the PMC network under the Kremlin instigation is being involved in a wide range of activities, including working to suppress pro-democracy protests and bolstering repressive regimes, engaging in paramilitary activity, spreading disinformation, operating across the resource sectors; whereas such activities are directly linked to Russia’s strategy of broadening irregular warfare campaign to exercise competitive control over the developing world;

B. whereas the Kremlin’s use of PMSCs builds on the Soviet Union’s long history of operating proxy forces abroad when it sent thousands of military specialists under the cover of “advisors” to many conflicts worldwide, officially denied its involvement in the conflicts and labelled them civil wars; whereas in April 2012, when then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was asked in the Russian Duma about whether he supported the idea of creating a network of Russian private military companies, he replied positively and emphasized that PMCs could be tools of influence abroad, allowing the realization of national interests without the direct involvement of the state;

C. whereas Russian PMSCs have allegedly been involved in many human rights violations over the past 25 years; whereas, despite a legal prohibition on mercenary activities (Article 359 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation), Russia has actively used military 'volunteers' in
hotspots on many continents;

D. whereas the most prominent Russian PMSC – The Wagner Group – has emerged in 2014 in Eastern Ukraine and has been actively deployed since to Crimea, and more than 20 countries, including Syria, Libya, Central African Republic, Mozambique, Mal or Venezuela;

E. whereas Wagner has been linked to the Russian state, with close ties to its military intelligence services and a directive to pursue the economic interests of Russian elites; Whereas Wagner’s deployments are backed by broad propaganda campaigns by network of different entities, including the Foundation for National Values Protection (FZNC), which is sanctioned by the US Treasury Department for disseminating disinformation;

F. whereas there are credible reports about grave human rights violations perpetrated by the Wagner Group operatives, including torture, mass executions, arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, and violent persecution based on ethnic and religious grounds;

G. whereas recently the UN experts urged the Central African Republic to cut ties with Russia’s Wagner group, accusing the private security force of violent harassment, intimidation and sexual abuse, against peacekeepers, journalists, humanitarian workers and minorities; whereas other experts and diplomats confirm that the Russian mercenaries engage in human rights abuses of civilians, obtain high costs in payments and mining concessions, and deprive local citizens of critically needed resources; whereas most of the survivors were "terrified" to come forward for fear of retaliation;

H. whereas Foreign Affairs Council has agreed to impose sanctions on Wagner Group owners, leadership, members, as well as companies that support and finance their actions;

I. whereas considerable legal gaps remain when it comes to regulating actions of PMSCs on the international stage, notably regarding the use of force and firearms in the course of duty, the acquisition of weapons and arms trafficking, issues of extra-territoriality and accountability, the availability of effective remedies for victims, and civil liability of individuals and corporate actors;

J. whereas according to reports the deal between Mali and the Wagner Group would reportedly see one thousand mercenaries deploy to the country to train Malian security forces and protect senior political leaders for a monthly price tag of $10.8 million, additionally Wagner would also gain access to three mining deposits as further compensation for its services. whereas the news followed renewed bilateral engagement between Mali and Russia, including a recent visit by the Malian defence minister to Moscow;

K. whereas there are numerous other Russian paramilitary formations receiving in the past backing from the state and being deployed worldwide, including for Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, such as E.N.O.T Corp or the Cossacks.

1. Notes that Wagner’s deployments are a concise depiction of the symbiotic characteristics of modern hybrid warfare aimed at achieving political goals with military and economic means with a broad information warfare to influence local and international populations; calls on the EEAS’s Stratcom units to study these information campaigns;
2. Notes that while the establishment of private military companies is illegal in Russia, which allows Kremlin to publicly distance from illegal actions of PSMCs like Wagner Group, there are a number of important loopholes in the Russian legislative system which allow in practice to use them as important political and military tool in conflicts around the globe with shared intelligence, political backing as well as full logistical and transport support of regular Russian armed forces, including providing availability of military infrastructure and training facilities, calls to support investigations into PMSCs activities and detachments which are often registered in offshore corporate havens, technically lying outside the constitutional order of the Russian Federation and links to their Kremlin-connected sponsors who oversee strategic state-run enterprises.

3. Is deeply concerned with actions of Wagner Group in Eastern Ukraine in 2014 and 2015, where its operatives fought alongside the pro-Russia separatists under the command of Group’s founder, Dmitry Utkin; underlines alleged links between the Wagner Group and GRU officers involved in procuring the Russian Buk missile launcher that downed MH17 flight;

4. Condemns involvement of the Wagner groups in Haftar’s failed attempt to capture Tripoli between April 2019 and June 2020, where massacres were reported against Libyans, including the killings in Espiaa, and calls for a thorough investigations of Wagner’s operations in Libya including accusation of war crimes, and laying landmines in and around Libya’s capital.

5. Condemns actions of Wagner Group operatives in Central African Republic (CAR), including torture, mass executions and ethnic cleanses of Fulani and Peul Muslim minorities, as well as alleged murder of three Russian journalists - Kirill Radchenko, Alexander Rastorguyev and Orkhan Dzhemal – investigating atrocities perpetrated by Wagner Group;

6. Condemns similar acts perpetrated during deployment in Sudan Mozambique and Syria; Yevgeniy Prigozhin and his network are exploiting Sudan's natural resources for personal gain;

7. Is extremely concerned with the prospect of immediate deployment of Wagner Group to Mali and warns Malian military regime against taking this step; is concerned that the use of private military contractors has enabled developing states to let their traditional security partnerships fall by the wayside;

8. Welcomes the decision to impose sanctions on leadership and operatives of the Wagner group, as well as network of companies and institutions that finance or support them, including those linked to already sanctioned Yevgeny Prigozhin, close ally of Vladimir Putin;

9. Joins the calls of U.N. experts and diplomats in calling the authorities to cut ties with Russia's Wagner group and to comply with their obligations under international law to hold accountable all perpetrators of grave violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law committed on their territory;

10. Calls on the Russian authorities to immediately cease all logistical, political and financial support for the Wagner Group and to provide victims of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and their families, access to justice and to full reparation, including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition; moreover, calls for impartial investigations into all credible allegations of civilian casualties resulting from attacks by Russian citizens contracted by Wagner and bringing responsible to justice;
11. Supports the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities to bring members of Wagner group operating in Crimea and Donbas before a Ukrainian court and calls on Interpol to cooperate closely in these and other cases;

12. Supports the efforts of human rights groups and individuals to hold accountable Russian mercenary organization Wagner for crimes committed in Syria, including those of filmed in Holms around 2017 by themselves beating their victim with a sledgehammer, then dismembering and burning the body;

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the European Council, the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the national parliaments of the Member States, to the government and parliament of the Russian Federation, government and parliament of Ukraine, as well as governments and parliaments of Member States of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).