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Human rights: Human rights situation in Guatemala

European Parliament resolution on the human rights situation in Guatemala

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its earlier resolutions on the situation in Guatemala and, in particular, its resolution of 14 June 2001 on human rights in Guatemala¹,
 - having regard to its firm and long-standing commitment in favour of the peace and reconciliation agreements in Guatemala,
- A. concerned at the escalation of intimidation against all those involved in efforts to confront impunity - survivors, witnesses, NGOs, journalists, politicians, church figures, rural worker leaders - and, in particular, the repeated threats against forensic scientists involved in efforts to exhume mass graves, in order to collect evidence for possible prosecutions,
- B. deeply concerned also at the mounting acts of violence and intimidation against human rights activists, trade unionists and members of churches working with the indigenous communities, and also against those communities themselves,
- C. noting that the failure of the Guatemalan legal system to deliver on the compromises of the 1996 Peace Accords is a major contributory factor to Guatemala's human rights abuses,
1. Condemns all acts of violence and intimidation in Guatemala carried out by persons wishing to cover up the crimes and atrocities committed during the bloodstained period of the civil war, and expresses its deep concern at these acts;
 2. Deplores the abuses by the alliance of certain national and international economic actors, who control newer illegal or 'black' industries such as drugs and arms trafficking, money laundering, car theft rings, kidnapping for ransom and illegal use of protected state lands;
 3. Deplores the fact that women's rights are violated in the workplace, where they are frequently subjected to sexual assault and other abuses by their employers, have no right to minimum wages or regulated hours, are rarely given access to any employee health care system, and are fired in case of pregnancy;
 4. Calls on the Guatemalan government to assume its responsibilities concerning the control and punishment of clandestine groups, the safety of its citizens and the investigation of the numerous cases of human rights violations, some of which have been pending for a decade, and to act to dissolve the abovementioned groups pursuant to the terms of the Peace Accords;

¹ OJ C 53 E, 28.2.2002, p. 403.

5. Repeats its call for the legal authorities to be guaranteed full independence and freedom when trying the crimes identified by the Commission for Historical Clarification; stresses the need to increase pressure on Guatemala, to demand an end to the civil impunity of certain elites and to underscore freedom of expression and the right to disseminate information for all citizens, when it is undermined by some groups in the private sector; deplores the fact that the extent of corruption in the legal system is preventing the rule of law from prevailing in the present circumstances, and considers that a genuine judicial personnel and witness protection programme must be established to ensure that Guatemala's judicial system operates effectively and equitably;
6. Urges the official institutions and agencies to cooperate fully with all efforts to clarify human rights violations, including those directed against human rights defenders; urges that the results of those investigations be made public;
7. Expresses its support for the Guatemalan people and authorities in their continued endeavours to ensure the rule of law and secure the economic, social and political development of their country, in the interests of peace and historical reconciliation;
8. Calls for the immediate launch of a dialogue and for the establishment of negotiating structures with a view to a peaceful settlement of the agrarian question, pursuant to the Peace Accords;
9. Calls on the Guatemalan government to undertake the legislative reforms required under the Peace Accords, on the basis of a clear timetable, and to allocate the necessary resources to social policy and to the reform of the legal system, again as required under the Accords;
10. Calls on the international community to redouble its efforts to press for implementation of the human rights elements of the Global Accord on Human Rights;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Government of Guatemala, the UN Secretary-General, the Secretary-General of the Organisation of American States and the Central American Parliament.