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Situation in Venezuela

European Parliament resolution of 27 February 2014 on the situation in Venezuela (2014/2600(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Venezuela, including those of 24 May 2007 on the Radio Caracas TV channel case in Venezuela¹, 23 October 2008 on political disqualifications in Venezuela², 7 May 2009 on the case of Manuel Rosales in Venezuela³, 11 February 2010 on Venezuela⁴, 8 July 2010 on Venezuela, in particular the case of Maria Lourdes Afiuni⁵, and 24 May 2012 on the possible withdrawal of Venezuela from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights⁶,
 - having regard to the statement by the spokesperson for Catherine Ashton, Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), of 14 February 2014,
 - having regard to the statement by VP/HR Catherine Ashton of 21 February 2014 on unrest in Venezuela,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Venezuela is a party,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to Rule 110(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. having regard to the seriousness of the current situation in Venezuela; whereas since 12 February 2014 peaceful marches led by students have taken place across Venezuela and have ended in deadly violence, with at least 13 deaths and more than 70 people being injured and hundreds detained; whereas the students' demands relate to the failure of President Maduro's government to solve the problems of high inflation, crime and shortages of some staples, as well as to increasing levels of corruption and the intimidation of the media and the democratic opposition; whereas the government has blamed the shortages on 'saboteurs' and 'profit-hungry corrupt businessmen'; whereas Venezuela is the country with the largest energy reserves in Latin America;
- B. whereas in recent days the number of demonstrations has not diminished, but has in fact risen, leading to an increase in the number of people killed, injured and arrested as a result of the suppression of the protest movement by the state authorities and illegal armed groups;

¹ OJ C 102 E, 24.4.2008, p. 484.

² OJ C 15 E, 21.1.2010, p. 85.

³ OJ C 212 E, 5.8.2010, p. 113.

⁴ OJ C 341 E, 16.12.2010, p. 69.

⁵ OJ C 351 E, 2.12.2011, p. 130.

⁶ OJ C 264 E, 13.9.2013, p. 88.

- C. whereas the political tension and polarisation is increasing in Venezuela; whereas the Venezuelan authorities, instead of contributing to the maintenance of peace and calm, have threatened to conduct an ‘armed revolution’;
 - D. having regard to the acts of repression against, in particular, students, journalists, opposition leaders and peaceful civil society activists, who have been persecuted and deprived of their freedom;
 - E. whereas violent and uncontrolled armed pro-government groups have been acting with impunity in Venezuela for a long time; whereas the opposition has accused these groups of inciting violence during the peaceful demonstrations, causing deaths and several injuries; whereas the Venezuelan Government has not yet clarified the events;
 - F. whereas the media are subject to censorship and intimidation, and scores of journalists have been beaten or detained or have had their professional material destroyed;
 - G. whereas freedom of expression and the right to take part in peaceful demonstrations are fundamental to democracy, and whereas equality and justice for all are impossible without fundamental freedoms and respect for the rights of all citizens; whereas the Venezuelan Constitution guarantees the peaceful right of assembly and of association and the right to demonstrate peacefully; whereas the state authorities have a duty to safeguard the fundamental rights of Venezuelan citizens and to guarantee their safety and protect their lives without curtailing those rights;
 - H. whereas only respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, constructive and respectful dialogue and tolerance can help Venezuela to find a way out of this serious crisis and thus overcome future difficulties;
1. Condemns all acts of violence and the tragic loss of life during the peaceful demonstrations of 12 February 2014 and the following days, and expresses its sincere condolences to the families of the victims;
 2. Expresses its strong solidarity with the Venezuelan people and its concern at the possibility that new protests may lead to more acts of violence which would only deepen the gulf between the positions of the government and the opposition and polarise to an even greater degree the sensitive political developments that are taking place in Venezuela; calls on the representatives of all parties and sections of Venezuelan society to remain calm in both actions and words;
 3. Reminds the Venezuelan Government that freedom of expression and the right to participate in peaceful demonstrations are fundamental human rights in a democracy, as recognised in the Venezuelan Constitution, and calls on President Maduro to abide by the international treaties to which Venezuela is a party, in particular the Inter-American Democratic Charter;
 4. Reminds the Venezuelan Government of its obligation to ensure the security of all citizens in the country, regardless of their political views and affiliations; expresses deep concern at the arrests of students and opposition leaders and calls for their immediate release;
 5. Recalls that respect for the principle of separation of powers is fundamental in a democracy and that the justice system cannot be used by the authorities as a means of political

persecution and repression of the democratic opposition; calls on the Venezuelan authorities to withdraw the unfounded accusations and arrest warrants against opposition leaders;

6. Calls on the Venezuelan authorities to immediately disarm and dissolve the uncontrolled armed pro-government groups and to put an end to their impunity; calls for clarification regarding the deaths that have occurred so that the perpetrators are held accountable for their actions;
7. Encourages all parties, in particular the Venezuelan authorities, to pursue peaceful dialogue, reaching out to all segments of Venezuelan society in order to define points of convergence and to allow political actors to discuss the most serious problems facing the country;
8. Emphasises that respect for freedom of the press, information and opinion and political pluralism are fundamental to democracy; regrets the existence of media and web censorship and the fact that access to some blogs and social networks is limited; condemns the harassment suffered by a number of newspapers and other audiovisual media outlets, such as the television channel NTN24 and Spanish CNN, and regards these practices as contrary to the Venezuelan Constitution and the undertakings given by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;
9. Calls for an ad hoc European Parliament delegation to be sent to assess the situation in Venezuela as soon as possible;
10. 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 Government and National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretary-General of the Organisation of American States.