



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2018)0041

Situation in Venezuela

European Parliament resolution of 8 February 2018 on the situation in Venezuela (2018/2559(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Venezuela is a party,
- having regard to the Constitution of Venezuela,
- having regard to its numerous resolutions on Venezuela, in particular those of 27 February 2014 on the situation in Venezuela¹, of 18 December 2014 on the persecution of the democratic opposition in Venezuela², of 12 March 2015 on the situation in Venezuela³, of 8 June 2016 on the situation in Venezuela⁴, of 27 April 2017 on the situation in Venezuela⁵ and of 13 September 2017 on EU political relations with Latin America⁶,
- having regard to the declaration of 12 July 2017 by the Chairs of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Mercosur Delegation and the EuroLat Parliamentary Assembly on the current situation in Venezuela,
- having regard to the Inter-American Democratic Charter adopted on 11 September 2001,
- having regard to the statement of 31 March 2017 by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, on the ruling by the Venezuelan Supreme Court to take over the legislative powers of the National Assembly,
- having regard to the statement by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

¹ OJ C 285, 29.8.2017, p. 145.

² OJ C 294, 12.8.2016, p. 21.

³ OJ C 316, 30.8.2016, p. 190.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0269.

⁵ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0200.

⁶ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0345.

condemning the detention of Enrique Aristeguieta on 2 February 2018,

- having regard to the warnings contained in the reports of 30 May 2016 and 14 March 2017 by the Organisation of American States (OAS) on Venezuela, and to the calls by the Secretary-General of the OAS for the urgent convocation of its Permanent Council under Article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter to discuss the political crisis in Venezuela,
 - having regard to the letter of the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) of 27 March 2017 on the worsening and severe political, economic and humanitarian crises in Venezuela,
 - having regard to the OAS declaration signed by 14 of its member states on 13 March 2017 demanding that Venezuela promptly schedule elections, release political prisoners and recognise its constitution's separation of powers, among other measures,
 - having regard to the resolution of the OAS Permanent Council of 3 April 2017 on the recent events in Venezuela,
 - having regard to the declaration of 'El Grupo de Lima' of 23 January 2018 on the National Constituent Assembly's decision to call presidential elections,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 13 November 2017 and 22 January 2018 on Venezuela, namely imposing an arms embargo and sanctions,
 - having regard to the declaration by the VP/HR on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain third countries concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Venezuela on 7 December 2017,
 - having regard to the declaration by the VP/HR on behalf of the EU on the latest developments in Venezuela, of 26 January 2018, condemning the decision by the Venezuelan authorities to expel the Spanish Ambassador in Caracas,
 - having regard to its decision to award the 2017 Sakharov Prize to the Democratic Opposition in Venezuela,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the illegitimate National Constituent Assembly, which is recognised neither internationally nor by the European Union, called for presidential elections to be held before the end of April 2018; whereas, according to the Venezuelan Constitution, the body responsible for calling an election is the National Electoral Council; whereas Article 298 of the Venezuelan Constitution, which clearly states: 'The law that regulates electoral processes may not be modified in any way in the period between election day and the six months immediately preceding it', has very recently been violated several times;
- B. whereas this decision was taken outside the scope of the national dialogue which has been taking place since December 2017, and regardless of any possible developments achieved in the meeting held between the Venezuelan Government and opposition in Santo Domingo; whereas the date of and process leading up to the elections were two of

the main topics of the Santo Domingo talks; whereas this call for elections runs counter to both democratic principles and good faith as regards dialogue between the government and the opposition;

- C. whereas on 25 January 2018 the Supreme Court decided to exclude the MUD (Mesa de la Unidad Democrática) from the presidential elections; whereas on 4 February 2018 the National Electoral Council excluded the Primero Justicia party from the electoral process; whereas leaders such as Leopoldo López and Henrique Capriles are banned from running for office; whereas these decisions represent a serious breach of the principle of equitable elections, prohibiting opposition candidates from competing freely and on equal terms in the elections;
- D. whereas the MUD was awarded Parliament's 2017 Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought;
- E. whereas such an unconstitutional call for early elections resulted in Mexico's and Chile's withdrawal from the process of national political negotiations between the Venezuelan Government and part of the opposition;
- F. whereas on 13 November 2017 the Council of the EU decided to adopt an arms embargo against Venezuela and a ban on related material that might be used for internal repression;
- G. whereas on 22 January 2018 the Council of the EU decided, by unanimity, to impose sanctions against seven Venezuelan individuals holding official positions in the form of restrictive measures such as travel bans and asset freezes, in response to non-compliance with democratic principles, the rule of law and democracy;
- H. whereas following the adoption of EU sanctions, Venezuela retaliated by expelling the Spanish ambassador in Caracas and declaring him 'persona non grata', accusing Spain of interfering in its internal affairs; whereas the EU has firmly condemned this decision, while at the same time pointing out its full solidarity with Spain, on the understanding that EU decisions in the area of foreign policy, including the imposition of sanctions, are unanimous;
- I. whereas the situation of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela continues to deteriorate; whereas Venezuela is facing an unprecedented political, social, economic and humanitarian crisis, resulting in many deaths; whereas holding free and fair elections with all appropriate guarantees and allowing adequate time to prepare them are fundamental for a start to be made on resolving the many problems Venezuela faces; whereas almost 2 million Venezuelans have fled the country; whereas host countries are coming under increasing strain in terms of providing assistance and services to new arrivals;
- J. whereas rebel police official Oscar Pérez and six other individuals were extra-judicially executed despite the fact that they had already surrendered;
- K. whereas on 2 February 2018 Enrique Aristeguieta Gramcko was kidnapped from his home at night by the intelligence services, with no information given about his whereabouts, and released the following day;
- L. whereas a growing number of people in Venezuela, including children, are suffering

from malnutrition as a consequence of limited access to quality health services, medicines and food; whereas, regrettably, the Venezuelan Government persists in denying the problem and refusing to receive and facilitate the distribution of international humanitarian aid; whereas Venezuelans have been seeking to buy food and essential supplies on the Caribbean islands owing to severe shortages at home;

1. Deplores the unilateral decision by the illegitimate National Constituent Assembly, which is recognised neither internationally nor by the EU, to call early presidential elections by the end of April 2018; deeply deplores the Venezuelan Supreme Court's recent ruling prohibiting MUD representatives from competing in the upcoming elections; points out that many potential candidates will be unable able to run for elections because they are exiled, subject to administrative disqualifications, imprisoned or under house arrest; insists that no obstacles or conditions should be imposed as regards the participation of political parties and calls on the Venezuelan authorities to fully restore their eligibility rights;
2. Insists that only elections based on a viable electoral calendar, agreed in the context of the national dialogue with all relevant actors and political parties, and respecting equal, fair and transparent conditions of participation – including the lifting of bans on political opponents, without political prisoners, and ensuring the National Electoral Council is balanced in composition and impartial and with the existence of sufficient guarantees, including monitoring by independent international observers – will be recognised by the EU and its institutions, including the European Parliament; recalls its readiness to send an Electoral Observation Mission if all the necessary conditions are met;
3. Strongly condemns the decision by the Venezuelan authorities to expel the Spanish Ambassador in Caracas and declare him 'persona non grata', and insists that the Venezuelan Government immediately restore its normal diplomatic relations with Spain; recalls that all EU decisions in the area of foreign policy, including imposing sanctions, are taken by unanimity; calls, in this regard, for full solidarity with Spain;
4. Considers the imposition by the Council of the EU of the arms embargo, and the sanctions levied against seven Venezuelan officials to be appropriate measures in response to grave breaches of human rights and democracy, but calls for them to be extended against those mainly responsible for the increased political, social, economic and humanitarian crisis, namely the President, the Vice-President, the Minister of Defence, members of the high military command, and members of their inner circles, including family members; suggests that, if the human rights situation continues to deteriorate, further diplomatic and economic actions could be explored and adopted, including those related to the state-owned oil company *Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.* (PDVSA);
5. Condemns in the strongest terms the continued violation of the democratic order in Venezuela; reiterates its full support of the National Assembly as the only legally constituted and recognised parliament in Venezuela, and calls on the Venezuelan Government to restore its full constitutional authority; rejects any decisions taken by the National Constituent Assembly as being in breach of all democratic standards and rules; expresses its support for the political solution in the context of all relevant actors and political parties; recalls that separation and non-interference between the branches of government is an essential principle of democratic states guided by the rule of law;

6. Calls on the ICC Prosecutor, under the Rome Statute provisions, to open investigations into the human rights violations perpetrated by the Venezuelan regime, and calls for the EU to play an active role in this regard;
7. Reiterates its previous calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, respect for democratically elected bodies and the upholding of human rights;
8. Expresses its solidarity and full support to the people of Venezuela who are suffering the effects of a severe humanitarian crisis; calls for immediate agreement to be reached on a humanitarian emergency access plan for the country, and calls on the Venezuelan authorities to allow unimpeded humanitarian aid as a matter of urgency, and to grant permission to international organisations that wish to assist the public; calls for the rapid implementation of a short-term response to counter malnutrition among the most vulnerable groups, such as children; calls for the EU to help neighbouring countries, and in particular Colombia, to address the situation of the Venezuelan refugees; calls on the Venezuelan Government to provide Venezuelans living abroad and entitled to receive such social security rights with their pensions;
9. Reiterates its request for a European Parliament delegation to be sent to Venezuela and to hold a dialogue with all sectors involved in the conflict 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.