

Thursday 15 September 2016

P8_TA(2016)0351

Zimbabwe

European Parliament resolution of 15 September 2016 on Zimbabwe (2016/2882(RSP))

(2018/C 204/16)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Zimbabwe,
 - having regard to the local EU statement on violence of 12 July 2016,
 - having regard to the local EU statement on the abduction of Itai Dzamara of 9 March 2016,
 - having regard to Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/220 of 15 February 2016 amending Decision 2011/101/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against Zimbabwe⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the Global Political Agreement signed in 2008 by the three main political parties, namely ZANU PF, MDC-T and MDC,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of June 1981, which Zimbabwe has ratified,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 1948,
 - having regard to the Constitution of Zimbabwe,
 - having regard to the Cotonou Agreement,
 - having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the people of Zimbabwe have suffered for many years under an authoritarian regime led by President Mugabe that maintains its power through corruption, violence, rigged elections and a brutal security apparatus; whereas the people of Zimbabwe have not experienced true freedom in decades and many under the age of thirty have therefore only known lives of poverty and violent repression;
- B. whereas unrest is growing once again in crisis-ridden Zimbabwe against a background of cash shortages, widespread unemployment, state corruption and efforts by the authorities to suppress freedom of expression and political opposition; whereas the various groups are now positioning themselves in expectation of the post-Mugabe era;
- C. whereas, since the fall of the coalition government in 2013, the work of Tendai Biti in stabilising the economy and increasing government revenues has been undone by a return to the system of patronage and kleptocracy and a state of fear; whereas Zimbabwe is now experiencing the worst economic crisis since the hyperinflation of 2008; whereas the government is effectively bankrupt;
- D. whereas since May 2016 thousands of demonstrators — informal traders, unemployed young people and, now, professional people — have taken to the streets in a number of urban centres across Zimbabwe to protest against job losses, mass unemployment and the government's failure to meet people's basic economic expectations, namely a labour market that provides jobs, a public workforce that is paid on time, a trustworthy stable currency and an affordable price regime; whereas only the army are being paid regularly and with a currency of worth;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 40, 17.2.2016, p. 11.

Thursday 15 September 2016

- E. whereas the protest movement led by clergyman Evan Mawarire, using the hashtag #ThisFlag, has drawn support from churches and the middle class, which had hitherto tended to steer clear of street politics;
- F. whereas on 6 July 2016 the opposition movement #ThisFlag called for a national 'stay-away' day in protest against the government's inaction against corruption, impunity and poverty; whereas this resulted in a massive shutdown of most shops and businesses in the capital and led to a severe crackdown by the authorities;
- G. whereas Promise Mkwanzani, the leader of #Tajamuka, a social movement linked to the July stay-away, who was arrested and charged for inciting public violence, has been released on bail; whereas another #Tajamuka activist, Linda Masarira, was arrested during the protest in July 2016 and has remained in detention ever since;
- H. whereas many demonstrations are now organised through social media, and whereas the Zimbabwean authorities have blocked internet access and WhatsApp text messaging to obstruct protest;
- I. whereas hundreds of people have been arrested during demonstrations; whereas on 26 August 2016 bloody clashes took place in the capital, Harare, when the police ignored a court order and bludgeoned thousands of protesters who had gathered under the auspices of National Election Reform Agenda (Nera) to express their opposition to outstanding electoral reforms ahead of the country's eagerly anticipated 2018 national elections; whereas many of those who were detained are still in custody, and the precise whereabouts of many is unknown;
- J. whereas President Mugabe has been in power since independence in 1980 and is seeking re-election, and whereas several members of his government have denounced calls for electoral reform ahead of the 2018 elections;
- K. whereas the veterans of the independence struggle, formerly close allies of Mugabe in the ruling party, boycotted his speech on 8 August 2016, denouncing his dictatorial drift and his failure to solve the grave economic crisis plaguing the country since 2000; whereas the President saw this boycott as a betrayal and, in retaliation, arrested three members of the National Association of Independence Veterans;
- L. whereas on 2 September 2016 the police invoked Statutory Instrument 101A to ban all demonstrations in central Harare, a few hours before 18 political parties were due to hold a major demonstration in the capital;
- M. whereas on 7 September 2016 the High Court suspended this ban for seven days and whereas this ruling came only a few days after President Mugabe interfered in the judiciary's independence by blasting Zimbabwe's judges for 'reckless' rulings which allowed demonstrations against his rule;
- N. whereas the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission has said that food aid, mobilised to assist hungry villagers affected by drought conditions across the country, was being distributed along party lines, with Zanu PF officials denying food aid to opposition party supporters; whereas the Government of Zimbabwe declared a state of disaster in February 2016, estimating that some 4,5 million people would need food aid by January 2017 and that up to half the rural population faced starvation;
- O. whereas 9 March 2016 marked the first anniversary of the abduction of human rights defender Itai Dzamara; whereas the High Court ordered the government to search for Dzamara and report progress to the Court every fortnight until his whereabouts were determined;

Thursday 15 September 2016

- P. whereas Zimbabwe is a signatory to the Cotonou Agreement, Article 96 of which stipulates that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is an essential element of ACP-EU cooperation;
- Q. whereas a small number of EU restrictive measures against the Zimbabwe regime were renewed in February 2016 until 20 February 2017; whereas the asset freeze and travel bans will continue to apply to President Mugabe, Grace Mugabe and Zimbabwe Defence Industries; whereas an arms embargo will remain in place; whereas the EU had previously lifted restrictions on 78 people and 8 entities;
- R. whereas the National Indicative Programme (NIP) for Zimbabwe has been allocated EUR 234 million for the period 2014-2020 under the 11th European Development Fund, to be focused on three main sectors, namely health, agriculture-based economic development, and governance and institution building;
1. Expresses serious concern about the increase in violence against demonstrators in Zimbabwe in recent months; notes with alarm the recently announced one-month ban on demonstrations; calls on the government and all parties in Zimbabwe to respect the right to demonstrate peacefully in order to address genuine concerns, and urges the Zimbabwean authorities to investigate allegations of excessive use of force and other human rights abuses by elements within the Zimbabwe police, and to hold them to account;
 2. Is worried about the rise in the number of arbitrary arrests of human rights defenders and those engaging in peaceful and lawful demonstrations and urges that the rule of law be respected and that the constitution be upheld;
 3. Calls on the Zimbabwean authorities to release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally;
 4. Condemns the recent statements made by President Mugabe attacking the judiciary of Zimbabwe and urges the authorities of Zimbabwe not to interfere with the independence of the judiciary;
 5. Recalls that, under the Global Political Agreement, Zimbabwe is committed to ensuring that both its legislation and its procedures and practices are in accordance with international human rights principles and laws, including the freedom of assembly, association and expression;
 6. Draws attention to the particular plight of many women in Zimbabwe and the need to respect women's rights;
 7. Believes that the Council and Commission should carefully analyse the appropriateness of reimposing certain restrictive measures, while making clear that these will be removed and that a package of assistance will be made available once Zimbabwe is clearly on the path towards democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, and specifying, in particular, that assistance will be provided to support a free and fair electoral process and police reform;
 8. Calls for a peaceful transition of power based on a free and fair electoral process, the rule of law and respect for human rights in order to develop a free, prosperous and pluralist democracy;
 9. Strongly condemns the obstruction of food aid for political gain; stresses its concern about any further measures that would damage agricultural production, and calls for steps to improve food security;
 10. Expresses its continued concern about the abduction of Itai Dzamara; demands that habeas corpus be respected and that those responsible for his abduction be brought to justice;
 11. Insists that the EU must ensure that the funding allocated to Zimbabwe for its National Indicative Programme effectively addresses the sectors concerned and calls on the Government of Zimbabwe to allow the Commission unhindered access to the EU-funded projects and to enhance its openness to technical assistance for jointly agreed projects and programmes;

Thursday 15 September 2016

12. Stresses that it is important for the EU to start up a political dialogue with the Zimbabwean authorities under Articles 8 and 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, thereby confirming the EU's commitment to supporting the local population;
 13. Urges the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Commonwealth to re-engage in helping Zimbabwe back onto the path of democracy;
 14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the European External Action Service, the Government and Parliament of Zimbabwe, the governments of the Southern African Development Community, the African Union, the Pan-African Parliament, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.
-