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P8_TA(2018)0436

Situation in Venezuela

European Parliament resolution of 25 October 2018 on the situation in Venezuela (2018/2891(RSP))

(2020/C 345/13)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Venezuela, in particular those of 27 February 2014 on the situation in Venezuela ⁽¹⁾, of 18 December 2014 on the persecution of the democratic opposition in Venezuela ⁽²⁾, of 12 March 2015 ⁽³⁾, of 8 June 2016 ⁽⁴⁾, of 27 April 2017 ⁽⁵⁾ and of 8 February 2018 ⁽⁶⁾ on the situation in Venezuela, of 3 May 2018 on the elections in Venezuela ⁽⁷⁾, and of 5 July 2018 on the migration crisis and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and at its terrestrial borders with Colombia and Brazil ⁽⁸⁾,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
 - having regard to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC),
 - having regard to the statement of 8 February 2018 by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, on opening preliminary examinations into the situations in the Philippines and in Venezuela, and of 27 September 2018 on the referral by a group of six States Parties regarding the situation in Venezuela,
 - having regard to the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 15 October 2018,
 - having regard to the appointment on 19 September 2018 of Eduardo Stein as the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UN Migration Agency (IOM) Joint Special Representative for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the region,
 - having regard to the statement of 9 October 2018 by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on the death of municipal councillor Fernando Albán in Venezuela,
 - having regard to the statement of 10 October 2018 by its Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Subcommittee on Human Rights with regard to Fernando Albán's death,
 - having regard to the report of its mission focused on the migration crisis and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and at its terrestrial borders with Colombia and Brazil,
 - having regard to its decision to award the 2017 Sakharov Prize to the democratic opposition and political prisoners in Venezuela,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the situation of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela continues to seriously deteriorate; whereas Venezuela is facing an unprecedented social, economic and humanitarian crisis as a result of a political one, causing a huge number of deaths and around 2,3 million migrants and refugees;

⁽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⁾ OJ C 86, 6.3.2018, p. 101.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 298, 23.8.2018, p. 137.

⁽⁶⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0041.

⁽⁷⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0199.

⁽⁸⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0313.

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- B. whereas 87 % of the population of Venezuela is affected by poverty, with the level of extreme poverty standing at 61,2 %; whereas maternal mortality has increased by 60 % and infant mortality by 30 %; whereas 89 % of the Venezuelan population do not have sufficient financial resources to buy enough food for their families; whereas according to the IMF, inflation is predicted to reach a level of 1,4 million % in 2018 and 10 million % in 2019;
- C. whereas despite the readiness of the international community, the Venezuelan Government regrettably remains obstinate in its refusal to openly receive and facilitate the distribution of international humanitarian aid and is thus neglecting any responsibility it has towards its own citizens;
- D. whereas on 8 October 2018 the Venezuelan opposition politician Fernando Albán was allegedly tortured and murdered on the premises of the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN), the Venezuelan political police; whereas despite calls from the UN and the EU, the authorities have refused to allow an independent investigation into the causes of his death, including an international autopsy carried out by an independent forensic team; whereas Mr Albán was in custody on the premises of SEBIN, and the Venezuelan authorities are therefore to be held accountable for his whereabouts;
- E. whereas on 13 October 2018, 2017 Sakharov Prize laureate Lorent Saleh was released, driven directly to the airport and immediately expelled to Spain in an act of forced exile; whereas he had been in jail for four years, where he suffered horrible torture and was held without trial, his judicial hearings delayed at least 53 times; whereas his testimonies, along with those of many other victims, confirm systematic repression and cruel and inhumane treatment of political prisoners in Venezuela;
- F. whereas more than two hundred political prisoners remain in jail in Venezuela; whereas the Member of the National Assembly Juan Recasens was arbitrarily arrested and subjected to torture, and remains incommunicado, in permanent and illegal violation of his political immunity;
- G. whereas former President of the National Assembly and 2017 Sakharov Prize laureate Julio Borges, former Prosecutor General Luisa Ortega Diaz and former Prosecutor of the Public Ministry of Venezuela Zair Mundaray Rodriguez are the subjects of an unfounded accusation of involvement in an attempted plot to kill the President of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro; whereas the Venezuelan authorities have issued through Interpol international arrest warrants for the three of them;
- H. whereas there is a climate of increasing violence and total impunity in Venezuela, on account of the authorities' failure to hold to account perpetrators of serious human rights violations, including murder, the use of excessive force against demonstrators, arbitrary detention, torture, and other degrading and inhuman treatment, but also criminal violence;
- I. whereas on 8 February 2018 the Prosecutor of the ICC opened preliminary examinations into the situation in Venezuela; whereas on 27 September 2018 a group of six States Parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC (Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Chile, Paraguay and Peru) requested that the Prosecutor initiate an investigation into crimes against humanity committed within the territory of Venezuela; whereas France and Costa Rica also backed calls for such investigations; whereas this constituted the first ever referral submitted by a group of States Parties concerning a situation on the territory of another State Party; whereas Parliament has made this same call on two occasions, in its resolution of 8 February 2018 on the situation in Venezuela and its resolution of 13 September 2017 on EU political relations with Latin America ⁽¹⁾;
- J. whereas on 13 November 2017 the Council decided to adopt an arms embargo against Venezuela and a ban on related material that might be used for internal repression; whereas on 22 January 2018 it 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; whereas on 25 June 2018 the sanctions were extended to eleven more Venezuelan officials responsible for human rights violations and undermining democracy and the rule of law;
- K. whereas the EU, together with other democratic bodies, recognised neither the presidential nor the Constituent National Assembly elections, nor the authorities put in place by these illegitimate processes; whereas the National Electoral Council (CNE) has set 9 December 2018 as the date for the election of the country's municipal councils; whereas the main and biggest opposition political parties, Acción Democrática (AD), Primero Justicia (PJ), Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNT) and Voluntad Popular, will not be allowed to participate; whereas the international community will not accept the election results while opposition leaders are imprisoned and political parties banned from running;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 337, 20.9.2018, p. 71.

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- L. whereas the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 15 October 2018 include a reference to a political solution to the current crisis, to be sought by exploring the possibility of establishing a contact group whose objective would be to promote an initiative to be led jointly with key regional and international partners in order to create conditions that can lead to a political process;
- M. whereas two attempts to build a national dialogue between the government and the opposition facilitated by the Vatican and international mediators with a view to finding a way out of the crisis failed on account of the lack of seriousness of the Venezuelan authorities, who exclusively focused on trying to gain time and international recognition;
1. Expresses its sincere condolences to Fernando Albán's family and friends; condemns, in this regard, the crimes committed by the Venezuelan authorities and calls in this particular case for an immediate independent investigation into the government, including an international autopsy carried out by an independent forensic team; recalls that it is the duty of the state to ensure the safety and physical integrity of all people in custody;
 2. Condemns the use of arbitrary detention and judicial and administrative harassment to persecute thousands of human rights defenders, elected members of the opposition and independent civil society organisations; urges the Venezuelan authorities to halt all human rights violations, and to hold those responsible accountable, and to ensure that all fundamental freedoms and human rights are fully respected;
 3. Recalls that two previous attempts aimed at reaching a political solution to the crisis in Venezuela through mediation with the Vatican and through national political dialogue which took place in the Dominican Republic have clearly failed;
 4. Recalls the previously stated position of the Union and Parliament that any further political development must include the following non-renounceable demands: the immediate release of all political prisoners and an end to the torture, ill-treatment and harassment of political opponents, human rights activists and peaceful protesters; a new independent National Electoral Council elected by the National Assembly; the holding of free and fair elections in compliance with international standards for a credible process respecting political pluralism, with the presence of democratic international observers and recognise the power of the legitimate National Assembly and dissolution of the Constituent National Assembly;
 5. Notes with interest the Council Conclusions regarding the possible launching of contacts with regional and international partners to explore the possibility of establishing a contact group; recalls, in this regard, that the role of international mediation or a contact facilitator group must be unbiased and be accepted by both sides; considers that the aim of this exploratory contact group should be to contribute to finding a democratic and political solution to the Venezuelan conflict by peaceful means, decided solely by the Venezuelan people; underlines to the VP/HR that, while exploring the possibility of launching the contact group, contacts need to be made with legitimate representatives of the Venezuelan democratic opposition in order to verify whether there is a majority in favour of such an initiative;
 6. Fully supports the preliminary statement of the ICC on the extensive crimes and acts of repression perpetrated by the Venezuelan regime against its own citizens; urges the Union and the Member States to join the initiative of the ICC State Parties to investigate crimes against humanity committed by the Venezuelan government in the territory of Venezuela and so to hold those responsible accountable; recalls the EU's commitment to multilateralism, in the framework of the UN doctrine, and the ICC's role in the fight against impunity for serious crimes against humanity and in bringing their perpetrators to justice;
 7. Welcomes the EU's imposition of additional targeted and reversible sanctions, which will cause no harm to the Venezuelan population, for the holding of elections on 20 May 2018 that were illegitimate and not internationally recognised; calls for these sanctions to be strengthened if the situation of human rights and democracy in the country continues to deteriorate;
 8. Commends the Colombian Government for its prompt reaction and the support it has provided to all incoming Venezuelans; equally praises Brazil, Peru and other countries in the region, particularly those that have signed the Declaration of Quito on Human Mobility of Venezuelan citizens, as well as regional and international organisations, private and public entities, the Catholic church and the citizens of the whole region for their active help for and solidarity towards Venezuelan migrants and refugees; calls on the Member States faced with the influx of Venezuelans to provide them with access to basic services and grant them temporary protected status and special residence rights;

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9. Reiterates the very worrying findings of its mission of June 2018 to Venezuela's terrestrial borders with Colombia and Brazil and calls for an ad hoc delegation to be sent to Peru in 2019 to assess the impact of the Venezuelan migration crisis on the ground; reiterates its call on the Venezuelan authorities, as a matter of urgency, to allow unimpeded humanitarian aid into the country in order to prevent the aggravation of the humanitarian and public health crisis and to implement a short-term response to counter malnutrition;

10. Calls on the Council and the VP/HR to mobilise more funds and assistance in coordination with the recently appointed Joint Special Representative of the UNHCR and the IOM for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the region, Eduardo Stein; welcomes, in this regard, his appointment, which clearly reflects the regional and global scale of the on-going crisis in Venezuela;

11. Recalls that Interpol is the international police organisation devoted chiefly to fighting international crime; calls on Interpol to carefully consider that the Venezuelan Government's requests against Mr Borges, Ms Ortega Diaz and Mr Mundaray Rodriguez are purely politically motivated;

12. 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 governments and parliaments of the Republic of Colombia, the Republic of Brazil and the Republic of Peru, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, the Secretary-General of the Organisation of American States and the Lima Group.
