

Thursday 17 May 2001

15. Human rights: Press freedom throughout the world

B5-0356, 0364, 0378 and 0388/2001

European Parliament resolution on press freedom in the world

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the previous resolutions it has adopted on press freedom,
 - having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union which the Presidents of the Council, Commission and Parliament signed and proclaimed in Nice on 7 December 2000 ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 16 March 2000 on the Annual Report on International Human Rights and European Union Human Rights Policy, 1999 ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the human rights clause included in the Association Agreements between the EU and non-member States and in the Cotonou Agreement,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, at its 57th session, on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, on the independence and impartiality of the judiciary and on arbitrary detention and executions,
 - having regard to the 11th World Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2001,
- A. whereas press freedom and freedom of information are extremely precious and disregarding or impeding them is an attack on humanity, violates mankind's quest for truth and prevents its full development,
- B. whereas press freedom and independent media promote democracy in the world,
- C. whereas press freedom includes freedom of opinion and the freedom to receive or communicate information or ideas without interference from public authorities and without regard for frontiers, and whereas this freedom cannot be infringed on the grounds of special historical, cultural or geographical circumstances,
- D. whereas access to a diversity of independent sources of information, like freedom of expression, is still too rarely recognised on this planet,
- E. whereas censorship, like physical punishment, constitutes an unacceptable attack on free expression and the dignity of the individual,
- F. whereas, under Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, every individual has the right to free expression, and whereas the Member States respect the freedom and pluralism of the media,
- G. whereas at present 86 journalists are being detained arbitrarily, and their cases have not received a fair trial under international law,
- H. whereas 36 journalists have been killed or have disappeared since the beginning of 2000 and, since 1 January 2001, four journalists have been killed,
- I. noting that the conditions imposed on the independent press in Russia have worsened,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 364, 18.12.2000, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 377, 29.12.2000, p. 336.

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- J. concerned about the campaign conducted by some repressive regimes, namely Pakistan, Iran and China, to deny and penalise their citizens' access to the Internet in order to prevent the distribution of embarrassing information and communications about them,
 - K. taking into account the OSCE statement on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, expressing its deep concern about the media situation in the OSCE region,
 - L. deeply concerned by the concentration of media ownership, which is a threat to the press within the EU as well,
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- 1. Reminds governments that freedom of expression is a key aspect of democracy and one of the main rights of every human being;
 - 2. Firmly supports journalists who have been detained or have disappeared and their families;
 - 3. Calls on all States to respect and defend the right of every person to exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression;
 - 4. Expresses its solidarity with the journalist Mr Landaburu, who was a victim of a recent attack by the ETA terrorist group, and strongly rejects all violence, intimidation or threats which may affect the free exercise of the profession of journalist;
 - 5. Calls on governments and all regional and local authorities to guarantee journalists' safety and to ensure that crimes committed against them do not go unpunished;
 - 6. Calls therefore for the immediate, unconditional release of the excessive number of journalists being arbitrarily detained;
 - 7. Is deeply concerned at the unexplained disappearance of journalists, and urgently calls on the governments of the countries concerned to do everything possible to discover their whereabouts;
 - 8. Stresses the need for independence and impartiality of the judiciary, pursuant to the resolution of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights;
 - 9. Calls on the governments of the countries concerned to ensure that the journalists who have been detained are given a fair trial on the basis of a thorough and impartial enquiry in line with international norms;
 - 10. Therefore calls for these trials to be held in public and for the presence of international observers to be authorised at the opening and throughout the whole course of the trial;
 - 11. Deplores the attacks on the diversity and freedom of the press in Russia and calls on the competent authorities to do everything possible to re-establish press freedom in that country and to provide clear assurance that pluralism in the Russian media is a political priority;
 - 12. Calls upon the EU to support continuously — in cooperation with the UN and the OSCE — monitoring of the implementation of laws on freedom of expression;
 - 13. Calls on the Council and Commission to institute a European Year of Press Freedom in which initiatives would be organised at Community and national levels;
 - 14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the OSCE.
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