

European Parliament urge for freedom for political prisoners in Venezuela

And respect the Constitution

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USPA NEWS - Venezuela's Government should release all political prisoners immediately and respect the constitution, including the procedures that may lead to the impeachment of the country's President, urged the European Parliament on Wednesday.

In a resolution passed by 501 votes, to 94 against with 73 abstentions, MEPs backed mediation efforts by the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) to launch a national dialogue between Venezuela's government and opposition. MEPs stress that about 2,000 people in Venezuela are in prison, under home arrest or on probation for political reasons, including political leaders such as Leopoldo Lopez and Antonio Ledezma and Daniel Ceballos and that the rule of law and separation of powers are not duly respected in the country. They express "grave concern" at serious deteriorations in democracy, human rights, the economy and society.

The text underlines that Venezuela faces a "serious humanitarian crisis" due to shortages of food and medicine, and that the Government is preventing the entry of humanitarian aid into the country, and boycotting various international initiatives to assist civil society. It also points to the economic crisis, which it attributes to inefficient governance, and to high crime rates due to complete impunity.

"A solution to the crisis can only be found through dialogue with all levels of government, democratic opposition and society", says Parliament, welcoming the UNASUR mediation efforts led by former Prime Minister of Spain Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, former President of the Dominican Republic Leonel Fernandez and former President of Panama Martin Torrijos.

MEPs call upon President Nicolas Maduro to undertake urgent economic reforms in cooperation with the National Assembly "controlled by the opposition Mesa de la Unidad Democratica" in order to overcome the current crisis, and in particular the food and medicine shortages. They also ask EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini to propose an assistance plan and to urge Caracas to allow humanitarian aid into the country.

Reducing today's high levels of impunity should be also an absolute priority, says Parliament, which demands that the Venezuelan authorities investigate the massacre in March this year of 28 miners in Tumeremo, and also the recent murder of journalist Lucia Suarez, events which it suspects may be connected. Finally, MEPs stress their wish to send a European Parliament delegation to Venezuela to hold a dialogue with all sectors involved in the conflict as soon as possible.

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