



RESOLUTION

Condemning political prosecution in Republic of North Macedonia and protecting the rule of law

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in Prague, 23.02.2019

Acknowledging that:

- For more than 2 years North Macedonia and its political and judiciary organs have been usurped by a political regime under the leadership of the populist Social Democrat Union of Macedonia and their leader Zoran Zaev.
- The opposition has been under constant pressure from the state apparatus. This has resulted with numerous attempts to strike fear in the public with, excessive force used by police during protests and with the arrest of 8 members of parliament from VMRO-DPMNE, to set an example for the rest of the country and to stifle freedom of expression.
- The rule of law has significantly suffered since Zoran Zaev came in to power in May 2017, and only 6 months later in December the US Department of State in their 2017 Human Rights report described the situation in the courts as: "Failure to demonstrate independence and impartiality, and judges were subject to political influence and corruption. The outcomes of many judicial actions appeared predetermined, particularly in cases where defendants held views or took actions in opposition to the government"¹. In the latest Freedom House report it is stated: "North Macedonia has not made any progress in respecting human rights"² and is classified in the group of partially free countries, along with Ukraine, Hong Kong, and Burkina Faso.
- On the 20th of February of 2019, 2 former ministers of VMRO-DPMNE and the former President of the Parliament were arrested during the night. The following day the ex-ministers were assaulted and beaten in the detention facility by a convicted terrorist involved in the attack in Kumanovo in 2016, a conflict where 9 police officers lost their lives and a dozen others were badly injured. This has only led the public and the opposition to suspect that not only was this planned but allowed by the prison authorities. In turn the government has outlandishly accused the ex-ministers of being at fault by inciting the beating and bringing it upon themselves.
- This and other events have been a part of a long-lasting prosecution of members of VMRO-DPMNE, three other MP's of the VMRO-DPMNE parliamentary group were

¹ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/treaty/pdf/amst-en.pdf>

² <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/Macedonia>

arrested and held in house arrest for more than a year, only to be amnestied with a special law, a day before the final vote in the parliament on the constitutional change of the name of the country.

- Furthermore, the constant harassment from the police of members of the party, has reached disgraceful levels. Party members are called in for police questionings over Facebook posts which is meant to discourage ordinary citizens from future criticism of the government and repress freedom of speech.

Recognizing that:

- In the 2018 European Commission Report on North Macedonia it is pointed out that the country should: "adopt and implement measures included in the judicial reform strategy on appointment and promotion systems in the judiciary, and shield the judiciary from political interference³"
- According to the 2018 European Commission Report on North Macedonia, there is need of: "concrete steps to improve the situation in prisons and other places of detention and take measures to promote an enabling an environment for freedom of expression to foster professionalism and accurate reporting, including thorough strengthened independence of the public broadcaster⁴".
- There need to be: "make commitments to improve the situation in prisons and other places of detention into concrete actions⁵", effectively addressing outstanding recommendations of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and ensuring appropriate follow-up of all cases of alleged ill-treatment.

YEPP calls for:

- The EPP to condemn recent political prosecution and violence in North Macedonia
- The EPP and the European Commission to follow future developments in North Macedonia, and closely observe the upcoming presidential elections in North Macedonia in order to provide support for fair elections

³ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/package_en

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