

Venezuela : Deterioration in human rights situation condemned

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The European Parliament has adopted a Resolution condemning the current regime in Venezuela for its political persecution and deterioration in the quality of democracy there. The concentration of power in the hands of the President and the worsening of the human rights situation in Venezuela have increased the concerns of the Members of the European Parliament.

"We organised a meeting with the Committee in Support of Venezuelan Prisoners represented by its Spokesman, former Bulgarian Prime Minister Philip Dimitrov, and Tamara Suju, a human rights lawyer from Venezuela. We received clear evidence from human rights activists from Venezuela about the aggravating state of political prisoners under President Hugo Chavez's regime. Some of them, detained for years without charges, others recently sentenced to as much as 30 years of imprisonment on made-up charges", said Jana Hybšková MEP.

The cases of Manuel Rosales, Eligio Cedeno and Nixon Moreno are disturbing as none of them can be sentenced, even by Chavez's controlled courts. "Because of this, the risk for their lives has increased with the inability of the regime to take legal revenge on them", said Nickolay Mladenov MEP.

Eligio Cedeno, a philanthropist who developed social programmes and supported the opposition, is imprisoned on charges which even the prosecution admits to be "needing more investigation" in order to be supported. Nevertheless, he has been in prison for over three years now. Nixon Moreno, after receiving asylum at the Papal Nunciature was assaulted several times by Chavez's hooligans, finally escaped and is in hiding in fear of his life. The same fate is shared by Manuel Rosales, the Mayor of Maracaibo and the opposition's defeated candidate in the 2006 presidential elections, who was forced to go into hiding to avoid arrest on corruption charges.

Both MEPs assured that the EPP-ED Group will continue to closely follow the situation in Venezuela and will not remain silent in light of the breaches to human rights.