

## Press release – Thomas Cook bankruptcy: Better consumer and employee protection needed



In a resolution adopted on Thursday, MEPs express concern over the 600 000 people left stranded, thousands of job losses, difficulties for SMEs and damage to the tourism sector.

Governments should use the European Social Fund and Globalisation Adjustment Fund to help workers made redundant and companies damaged by the travel group's collapse, and the Commission should identify EU instruments that could compensate for the harm caused to the sector, MEPs say.

The Commission and member states should ensure that workers affected by insolvency are guaranteed their earned wages and retirement benefits, they add.

### **Improving response to future crises**

MEPs point out that 32 airlines have gone bankrupt since 2017 and want the Commission to assess if new measures are needed to prevent such situations.

The reasons that led to Thomas Cook going bankrupt should be studied, MEPs say, pointing out that its financial situation was already known to the British authorities, and rules could be changed to better monitor the financial situation of airlines.

As a last resort, state aid could be considered to ease the negative economic impact, they add.

### **Better consumer and employee protection**

To boost consumer protection in cases of business failure, airline guarantee funds or insurance contracts should be included in the EU's passenger rights rules, which are currently under revision and awaiting member states to conclude their position.

MEPs also want the Commission to table a proposal on the rights of workers to receive information and be involved in consultation, and on anticipating and managing restructuring in line with Parliament's [resolution](#) adopted in January 2013.

### **An EU tourism strategy**

Finally, MEPs stress that the tourism sector, which suffered serious damage due to Thomas Cook's collapse, generates more than 10 percent of total EU GDP and acts as a stimulus to other sectors.

It should therefore be included in the Commission's priorities and have a budget line in the next EU budget.

---

## **[Press release – MEPs call for sanctions against Turkey over military operation in Syria](#)**



In a resolution, adopted on Thursday by show of hands, MEPs warn that Turkey's intervention in northeast Syria is a grave violation of international law, undermining the stability and security of the region as a whole.

### **UN-led security zone in northern Syria**

Since Turkey launched its military invasion, alongside a high number of civilian and military casualties, at least 300 000 citizens have been displaced, underline MEPs, quoting UN sources. MEPs advocate that a UN-led security zone should be established in northern Syria.

They firmly reject Turkish plans to establish “a so-called safe zone” along the border in north-east Syria and expressed concern that the US-Turkish agreement on a temporary ceasefire might legitimise the Turkish occupation of this “safe zone”.

### **Risk of ISIS resurgence**

Parliament expressed its solidarity with the Kurdish people, underlining the important contribution of Kurdish-led forces, particularly that of women, in fighting Daesh. MEPs are extremely concerned over reports that hundreds of ISIS prisoners are escaping from camps in northern Syria amid the Turkish offensive, which increases the risk of a resurgence of the terrorist group.

### **Blackmailing by the Turkish president**

MEPs find it unacceptable that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has weaponised refugees and “used them to blackmail the EU”.

They call on the Council to introduce a set of targeted sanctions and visa bans on Turkish officials responsible for human rights abuses, as well as to consider adopting targeted economic measures against Turkey. MEPs also propose that suspending trade preferences in the agricultural products agreement should be considered and as a last resort, the suspension of the EU-Turkey Customs Union.

---

**[Press release – Human rights breaches in Egypt, Uganda and Indonesia](#)**



## **Egypt**

The European Parliament strongly condemns the latest state crackdown on peaceful anti-government protests, as well as the ongoing restrictions on fundamental rights in the country. Egyptian authorities have in the past weeks arbitrarily arrested over 4300 people who have been protesting against systemic corruption, repression and austerity measures, and have demanded the resignation of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

MEPs call for an end to all acts of violence and intimidation, and the immediate release of all human rights defenders detained or sentenced for carrying out their legitimate work. They also express grave concern at the reprisals against those in Egypt who cooperate or seek to cooperate with international human rights organisations or the UN's human rights bodies.

A profound review of the EU's relations with Egypt is necessary, MEPs say. They argue that the human rights situation in the country requires a serious revision of the Commission's budget support operations, which should be restricted to primarily support civil society. The full resolution, adopted by a show of hands, will be available [here](#) (24.10.2019).

## **Uganda**

In an environment which is already highly discriminatory for LGBTI people, MEPs express their deep concern at the possible resurgence of the anti-homosexuality law in the Ugandan political debate, which would, if introduced, include the death penalty for "aggravated acts of homosexuality". They take note of the statement made by Ugandan President Museveni's spokesperson denying that the government has any intention to propose such a new bill, and call on the Ugandan government to stand by this statement .

The European Parliament regrets emphatically the use of the death penalty under any circumstances and reminds the Ugandan government of its obligations under international law and the Cotonou Agreement, which calls for universal human rights to be respected. MEPs also call on the EU delegation in the

country to continue to monitor the situation for LGBTI people closely and to actively support civil society organisations and human rights defenders on the ground. The resolution was adopted by 521 votes in favour, 4 against and 110 abstentions and will be available [here](#) (24.10.2019).

## **Indonesia**

MEPs are deeply concerned about the provisions in Indonesia's draft revised criminal code, which allows for discrimination on the basis of gender, religion and sexual orientation, as well as of minorities. The draft criminal code contains articles which do not list punishable crimes, and which could be used to legitimise hundreds of existing discriminatory sharia laws at local level, says the text.

The resolution welcomes Indonesian President Widodo's order to delay the proposed criminal code's adoption, following large-scale protests, and calls on the Indonesian parliament to substantially revise it and bring all laws in line with international human rights standards and Indonesia's' international obligations .

MEPs also note with concern that free dissemination of vital sexual health information has been restricted in the draft criminal code, and encourage access to uncensored information on contraception and family planning for Indonesian women and girls. The full resolution, adopted by a show of hands, will be available [here](#) (24.10.2019).

---

**[Press release – Get multinationals to disclose where they pay taxes, MEPs tell member states](#)**



The resolution, adopted by 572 votes in favour, 42 against and 21 abstentions, urges member states to agree a position on the legislative proposal requiring public country-by-country reporting of taxes paid by multinationals. This would allow talks between member states and the European Parliament to begin, in view of agreeing on a final text of the rules.

Parliament already [backed](#) this proposed legislation in 2017. EU ministers have, however, failed to adopt a position and, as a result, no law has been adopted as yet.

During the debate on Tuesday, MEPs underlined that corporate taxation is an area of great concern to people and that by not acting for so long, the member states had badly let down citizens. MEPs stressed that citizens have a right to know where multinationals pay their taxes and that this transparency is essential to limit the recurrent scandals which have come to light in recent years. They also said that if the EU was unable to tackle tax havens within its own walls, it would be difficult for Europe to be credible on the international stage when it came to tax matters.

You can watch the debate again [here](#).

## **Background**

The rules should make taxes more transparent by providing the public with a picture of the taxes paid by multinationals, and where those taxes are paid. Currently, multinationals are only required to indicate an aggregate of the taxes they have paid, without detailing what was paid to which tax jurisdiction. The proposal aims to crack down on corporate tax avoidance, which is estimated to cost EU countries EUR 50-70 billion a year in lost tax revenues, according to the European Commission.

---

# Article – Ilham Tohti wins 2019 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought



The winner was chosen by Parliament's political leaders on 24 October 2019.

Announcing the laureate, Parliament President David Sassoli said: "I am very pleased to announce that the European Parliament has chosen Ilham Tohti as the winner of the 2019 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. Tohti has dedicated his life to advocating for the rights of the Uyghur minority in China. Despite being a voice of moderation and reconciliation, he was sentenced to life in prison following a show trial in 2014.

"By awarding this prize, we strongly urge the Chinese government to release Tohti and we call for the respect of minority rights in China."

## **About the winner**

Tohti is a proponent of dialogue and advocate for the implementation of regional autonomy laws in China. In 2014, he was sentenced to life imprisonment on separatism-related charges. Despite this, he remains a voice of moderation and reconciliation. Since 2017, more than one million Uyghurs have been detained in a network of internment camps.

## **Award ceremony**

The prize, consisting of a certificate and €50,000, will be awarded during a

ceremony in the Parliament in Strasbourg on 18 December 2019.

### **The finalists**

Brazilian human rights defenders and Kenyan students were also among the finalists for this year's Sakharov Prize. They will be invited to December's award ceremony [tpp/](#)

[\*Find out more about the other finalists.\*](#)

### **More on the Sakharov Prize**

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, named in honour of the Soviet physicist and political dissident Andrei Sakharov, has been awarded annually since 1988 to individuals and organisations defending human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Last year the prize was awarded to the Ukrainian filmmaker [Oleg Sentsov](#).

Find out how the Sakharov Prize laureate is chosen in our [infographic](#).