

## Press release – European values must prevail, even in a state of public emergency, MEPs say



On Friday, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) that takes stock of the state of European democratic values in the context of national measures to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, with 496 votes to 138 and 49 abstentions.

In [Thursday's debate](#) with Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders, almost all speakers expressed concerns regarding the rights of citizens and vulnerable groups in a number of EU countries where state of emergency measures have been taken.

### **Uphold democratic principles and fundamental rights**

In the resolution, Parliament points out that emergency measures pose a “risk of abuse of power” and stresses that they must be necessary, proportional and of a temporary nature when they affect [democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights](#). National governments should “not abuse emergency powers to pass legislation unrelated to the COVID-19 health emergency”.

Furthermore, members call on EU countries to

- end their “state of emergency”, or at least clearly define the delegation of powers to their executives, and ensure appropriate

- parliamentary and judicial checks and balances;
- refrain from unduly restricting the freedom of assembly or banning demonstrations to adopt controversial measures;
  - refrain from adopting measures that profoundly impact on fundamental rights, e.g. sexual and reproductive health and rights (such as the *de facto* ban on abortion in some member states), while public health concerns do not allow for due democratic debate and safe protest;
  - uphold the right to free and fair elections, especially in relation to changes to electoral legislation;
  - ensure equal rights for those standing for election and campaigning, and consider alternative forms of voting;
  - exercise utmost restraint in restricting the freedom of movement, especially in relation to the right to family life;
  - guarantee the right to education by ensuring students have access to learning;
  - guarantee access to asylum procedures despite the pandemic, and immediately evacuate the camps on the Greek islands and relocate asylum seekers to other EU countries; and
  - find solutions to safeguard the rights of defendants through technology or judicial cooperation, and protect the rights of prisoners.

### Quote

The rapporteur [Juan Fernando López Aguilar](#) (S&D, ES), stated: “This pandemic is turning out to be the worst crisis in the history of the European Union. Nevertheless, the European Parliament is fulfilling its duty towards citizens by fighting for their rights and freedoms, especially where governments are using the pandemic as an excuse to attack EU values. The Commission and the member states must step up their efforts to uphold fundamental rights, democracy and rule of law during this crisis and ensure that governments uphold democratic principles in their measures”.