

Call for a decent Slovakia

Resolution adopted by the EPP Political Assembly, 9-10 April 2018, Brussels



Recalling that

1. on the morning of 26 February, the Slovak daily newspaper Dennik N published the news that investigative journalist Ján Kuciak together with his fiancé, Mária Kušnírová, were killed in their home in Veľká Mača, Slovakia,
2. Ján Kuciak worked for the news website www.aktuality.sk, part of the media group Ringier Axel Springer Media AG and was researching and investigating a number of cases such as the Panama papers, economic crime, potential fraud in distributing EU funds on the national level, VAT fraud, carousel schemes, etc.,
3. Ján Kuciak in his articles revealed the connection between high-level politicians and businessmen (e.g. the tax evasion and tax fraud cases of businessmen close to the ruling coalition party SMER-SD),
4. Ján Kuciak in his last, unfinished article reported about the fraudulent business activities and political connections of Italian entrepreneurs established in eastern Slovakia who, according to the Italian Anti-Mafia Commission (DIA), belong to the Calabrian organised crime syndicate 'Ndrangheta, including their links to high-ranking state officials such as Viliam Jasaň, Secretary of the Security Council of Slovakia, and Mária Trošková, chief state adviser of Prime Minister Robert Fico (SMER-SD),

also recognising that

1. the double murder has triggered an instant and deep shock in the Slovak society and the international public which, given the content of the political relations in series of Ján Kuciak's articles, as well as other serious facts brought to light in the meantime, has led to a major political crisis in Slovakia,
2. three subsequent nationwide and international commemorative gatherings and popular protests took place (under the slogan 'For a Decent Slovakia'), which in their scale were unprecedented since the Velvet Revolution in November 1989, while these protests clearly reflected the longtime and deep mistrust of the Slovak society in state institutions, especially in the police and other public prosecution organs,
3. due to the pressure arising from the public protests, the EPP member parties, the appeal made by Slovak President Andrej Kiska on 4 March for either a radical reconstruction of the government or early elections, the urging of several well-known Slovak personalities and the media, as well as the political opposition, on 12 March Interior Minister Kaliňák announced his resignation from his post,
4. on 14 March PM Fico announced that he was ready to resign too, if President Kiska would respect his conditions on the appointing of the new government, and stated he would remain the chairman of the SMER-SD party,

5. on 15 March PM Fico and his cabinet resigned, and President Kiska authorised Peter Pellegrini (SMER-SD, Robert Fico's nominee) to form a new government,
6. on 16 March the third and largest popular protest took place in Slovakia with the clear demand of the protesters for a change,
7. after voicing his objections to Peter Pellegrini's initial proposal on the composition of the government, President Kiska appointed the new cabinet on 22 March,

also taking note of

1. the assassination of Maltese investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia on 16 October 2017, which shows prominent similarities with Ján Kuciak's case,
2. the series of inexplicable statements of the (now resigned) Minister of Interior Kaliňák and Police Corps President Gašpar, including the claims that the Slovak authorities were not informed by the Italian Anti-Mafia Commission (DIA) about the criminal record of the concerned Italian businessmen active in eastern Slovakia, while, to the contrary, online newspaper *aktuality.sk* revealed that, according to the correspondence between the Slovak Embassy in Rome and the DIA, the Slovak police had received thorough information on the mafia-related connections of the concerned persons (primarily Antonino Vadala) as early as 2013,
3. the fact that in 2015 Mária Trošková, an ex-lover and business partner of Antonino Vadala, became chief state advisor of PM Robert Fico, moreover, that Viliam Jasaň, a long-time business associate of Antonino Vadala, became the head of crisis management and state security at the Government's Office,
4. the fact that the above circumstances are reflected in Manfred Weber's (chairman of the EPP Group in the EP) conclusion based on the findings of the extraordinary mission of the Members of the European Parliament to Slovakia (8-9 March), that reads: 'SMER-SD representatives failed to disprove the media reports on connections between PM Fico's party, and particularly Interior Minister Kaliňák, with the Mafia', and also the general diagnosis of the fact-finding mission concerning the alarming lack of confidence of the Slovak citizens in the state authorities and other law enforcement bodies,
5. the highly unusual manner of public communication of Police Corps President Gašpar during the initial phase of the investigation of the double murder, which has caused serious concerns among the citizens about the objectivity of the ongoing investigation,
6. the general mood, the alarming tension and overwhelming concern of the Slovak society that by means of personal links the new government, the police and other public prosecution organs may remain under the influence and indirect control of those recently removed from the power, which would potentially hinder any meaningful change in the way of exercising power, as desired by the citizens,

the EPP:

1. expresses its deepest condolences to the families of Ján Kuciak and Mária Kušnírová,
2. regrets that after the murder of an investigative journalist in Malta (October 2017) an other murderous attack could take place in an EU member state,
3. resolutely calls on the Slovak authorities to safeguard that the investigation of the double murder is as comprehensive and objective as possible, including the possibility of taking steps towards involving European Parliament monitoring group, the international and EU police bodies in the investigation process, also taking into account the long-time and rapidly growing mistrust of the Slovak society in the Slovak police and other public prosecution organs,
4. calls on the members of the new Slovak government and other representatives of the political leadership to do their utmost to calm down the current tense atmosphere in the society and bear in mind that, under the current circumstances, insufficient and improper measures will only fuel the growth of extremist political forces,
5. draws attention to the necessity of detailed and thorough control and investigation by OLAF of the distribution of payments from EU funds via the Agricultural Paying Agency as there is a suspicion of abuse of funds.
6. calls on the Slovak police, prosecutors and judges to investigate without delay as a matter of priority all cases that Ján Kuciak was writing about.
7. calls on the new government to consider the reasons of longtime mistrust of the Slovak society in state institutions also in the light of the recent events, with special focus on the serious suspicion that there are links between organised crime and top politicians,
8. condemns all attempts to divert attention from the political responsibility by creating and spreading conspiracy theories and questioning the authenticity, sincerity, and legitimacy of the popular protests,
9. calls on the new government to fully respect the role of the media in a democratic society and radically improve the tone of its communication with the representatives of the media,
10. calls on the new government to take meaningful and systematic measures in order to radically reduce the risk of attacks on investigative journalists,
11. considers the resignation of Minister of Interior Kaliňák and PM Fico as a result of the combined pressure exerted by the popular protests, the EPP member parties, President Kiska, the media, the political opposition, and the European Parliament.

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you would like to ask
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