

Freedom for Belarus!



A. Whereas the escalation of the international crisis in Belarus in the form of the persecution and gross violence against human rights of the civilians, representatives of the opposition, the free media, and civil society led to more citizens being harassed, intimidated and tortured for contesting the results of the falsified elections and expressing their opposition to the illegal and illegitimate regime;

B. whereas more than 34 000 Belarusian are estimated to have been detained so far as consequence of the 9 August 2020 elections; whereas there are over 490 political prisoners in Belarus, including the minors, and the number continues to grow; whereas some 3 000 politically motivated criminal cases have been opened against protestors, and there are 4 600 claims of torture, violence and ill-treatment;

C. whereas the Belarusian regime continues their assault on the freedom of media and harasses and intimidates independent journalists and engages in deliberate attempts to hamper objective reporting; whereas hundreds of journalists were arrested and are facing administrative detention, were subjected to violence and several have been fined; whereas journalists have been placed in pre-trial detention and faced criminal charges; whereas there the accreditation of independent journalists has been revoked, including foreign media correspondents, several of whom have been arrested and expelled from Belarus; whereas on 18 May 2021 Belarusian authorities raided the offices of Tut.by, the largest independent Belarusian news site, arrested many of its staff and blocked its website;

D. whereas more than 460 students have been detained, almost a third of whom are women, and more than 150 students have been arbitrarily expelled from universities, with many fleeing to neighbouring countries fearful for their safety;

E. whereas politically-motivated trials against political prisoners and civic activists take place behind the closed doors, as evidenced by the conviction of the Belarusian Christian Democracy Party (BCD) co-chairman Pavel Seviarynets at a court hearing behind closed doors to 7 years in prison, the criminal process against the leader of the United Civic Party (UCP) Mikalai Kazlou, the arrest of Anatol Liabedzka (UCP) for 30 days, death under unexplained circumstances in prison of the regional leader of the Movement "For Freedom" (MFF) Vitold Ashurak, as well as numerous other outrageous acts, whereas in many of these cases the inhuman treatment against the detainees was evidenced, including physical violence and acts against human dignity;

F. whereas on 23 May 2021 a Polish-registered aircraft serving Ryanair flight FR4978, while in Belarusian airspace, was forcefully diverted on the orders of Aliaksandr Lukashenka to Minsk National Airport based on the false pretence of a bomb threat, jeopardising the safety of the more than 170 passengers and crew on board; whereas Belarusian journalist Raman Pratasevich and student of European Humanities University Safia Sapieha were abducted and arrested, whereas the Belarusian regime grossly violated the international norms and became a threat to the security in Europe;

G. whereas the recently adopted laws on mass events, advocacy and legal practice, the media and on extremism grossly violate human rights and will lead to irreversible negative consequences for active citizens of Belarus;

H. whereas the ongoing repression against the Coordinating Council, whose goal is to help overcome the political and social crisis, create the form of state orchestrated violence against the legitimate political opposition;

I. whereas the 2020 presidential elections were held in flagrant violations of OSCE/ODIHR standards, their results were heavily falsified and as a result, the current Belarusian regime is illegal and illegitimate and

its representatives can not be recognised by the international community as official representatives of Belarus;

J. whereas the fundamental human rights are universal as proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, crossing the boundaries of states and applicable to all human beings;

K. Recalling the obligations assumed by Belarus by signing the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

The European People's Party

1. Expresses the homage to the people of Belarus for expressing their opinion and peacefully manifesting their desire for a free, democratic and sovereign Belarus;

2. Stands in solidarity with its member parties in Belarus – United Civic Party (UCP), Belarusian Christian Democracy Party (BCD), Movement “For Freedom”. Expresses indignation over the conviction of the BCD co-chairman Pavel Seviarynets at a court hearing behind closed doors to 7 years in prison, the criminal process against the UCP leader Mikalai Kazlou, the arrest of Anatol Liabedzka (UCP) for 30 days. We mourn the death under unexplained circumstances in prison of the regional leader of the Movement “For Freedom” (MFF) Vitold Ashurak.

3. Deplores the state orchestrated violence, prosecution and intimidation of the Belarusian regime against its own population and the state terrorism against which undermines the international order and cooperation;

4. Urges the Lukashenka regime to:

- Immediately stop the persecution and intimidation of all persons participating in the democratic movement, as well as independent media and civil society; to respect fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of opinion, expression and assembly, in accordance with international and domestic obligations;
- Immediately end all arbitrary detentions, torture and inhuman treatment of peaceful protesters and political prisoners;
- Immediately release and rehabilitate all political prisoners and unjustly detained;
- Immediately stop violations of the right to freedom of religion and political persecution of believers in Belarus, in particular the forced expulsion of believers from the building of the New Life church in Minsk;
- Immediately stop all repressions against the Polish minority in Belarus;
- Start a credible and inclusive dialogue with the opposition parties that would start a process leading to free and fair elections under the supervision of the OSCE/ODIHR and the international monitors;
- Guarantee the right to freedom of association, allowing the legal status for political parties, in particular, the possibility of their registration.

5. Calls on the European Union and its member states to continue providing unwavering support to the Belarusian people, their desire to live in a free democratic and sovereign Belarus, to the victims of the repressions in Belarus including their rehabilitation through the MEDEVAC health and humanitarian program, to provide asylum to those who flee from Belarus and to support democratic opposition and civil society and

providing direct financial assistance for the independent Belarusian media operating from the EU territory. In this regard call on the European Commission and the Member States to coordinate their help to the Belarusian students who were expelled from the Universities and other education facilities and to tailor special programmes for them, offer them the scholarship so they could continue their studies on the EU territory; stresses the non-recognition of the election of Aliaksandr Lukashenka to the post of President of Belarus, and considers the regime illegitimate, illegal and criminal;

6. Supports the European Parliament's call on the European Council to extend targeted EU sanctions against all individuals and entities complicit in electoral fraud and repressions, and to swiftly adopt and implement sectoral economic sanctions including:

- Targeting public and private companies controlled by the Lukashenka regime or closely entangled with the regime's business interests or known for dismissing their employees for participating in strikes or protests;
- Imposing sectoral sanctions targeting in particular the crude oil and oil-products, potash, steel and wood-processing industries;
- Denying any financial support to the Lukashenka regime and terminating the cooperation and financing for Belarusian state-owned banks and for limiting credit lines from international banks for subsidiary banks in Belarus and suspending Belarus from the SWIFT system;
- Calling on the EU-registered companies to immediately halt its collaboration with the Belarusian authorities through sharing technology and know-how;
- Calling on the Member States and the EU institutions to tackle cigarette smuggling from Belarus into the EU, which provides funds to the Lukashenka regime;

7. Welcomes the creation of International Accountability Platform for Belarus by 19 states (Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America), encourages other EU countries to join this initiative and urges a prompt investigation of human rights violations and bringing to justice those who sanctioned and committed acts of violence, torture, inhuman treatment and illegal actions that led to bodily harm, injury, death of people, as well as to the formation of a general atmosphere of lawlessness in the country;

8. Calls on the international sport organisations to relocate the sport events should they have taken place in Belarus to other countries. Demands the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) to remove broadcasting rights for the EURO 2020 football tournament from Belarusian state television TVR and assign them to the independent Belsat TV free of charge;

9. Supports the call for a comprehensive investigation into the crimes committed by the Lukashenka regime against the people of Belarus;

10. Encourages the European public to support the Belarusian people prosecuted by the illegal regime and to support the political prisoners in Belarus by writing them messages and letters of support and solidarity;

11. Appeals to the EPP member parties and partners to provide unwavering and comprehensive support, including financial and material support where possible, to the Belarusian members of the EPP family - BCD, UCP, RFF, united in a Center-right coalition - and to develop bilateral cooperation with our Belarusian colleagues in the name of supporting freedom and democracy.

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**If you have any question you
would like to ask please contact us.**