

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Session document

20.5.2008

B6-0239/2008

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for the debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 115 of the Rules of Procedure

by Pasqualina Napoletano, Jan Marinus Wiersma, Justas Vincas Paleckis

on behalf of the PSE Group

on the situation in Belarus

European Parliament resolution on the situation in Belarus

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Belarus and in particular to its resolution of 6 April 2006 on the situation in Belarus after the presidential elections of 19 March 2006 and resolution of 21 February 2008,
 - having regard to the Commission's declaration of 21 November 2006 on the European Union's readiness to renew its relationship with Belarus and its people within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP),
 - having regard to its Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought, which was awarded to the Belarusian Association of Journalists on 14 December 2004 and to Aleksander Milinkevich on 13 December 2006,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the leader of the movement "For Freedom", Aliaksandr Milinkevich, was detained on 15 May 2008, accused of breaking the law on public meetings, whereas the court found him guilty and ruled in favour of imposing on him a fine of 700 000 Belarusian rubles (i.e. EUR 220),
- B. whereas Andrey Kim and 7 other opposition activists were arrested for having participated in a peaceful demonstration in Minsk on 10 January 2008,
- C. whereas two Belarus pro-democratic activists, Andrei Kim and Siarhei Parsyukevich, were sentenced to severe sentences for taking part in peaceful entrepreneurs' demonstrations on 10 and 21 January 2008,
- D. whereas the agency Reuters published an interview with Belarus' President Aliaksandr Lukashenko where he threatened the EU with energy sanctions for the first time should it adhere to the sanctions imposed by the US against Belarus,
- E. whereas the office of the European Commission's delegation in Minsk were opened recently,
1. Deeply regrets that the situation of democracy, human rights and the rule of law is not improving in Belarus; points out that continuous arbitrary arrests of members of civil society and opposition activists and the clampdown on the independent media contradict the recent rhetoric of the Belarusian Government concerning their wish to improve relations with the European Union;
 2. Condemns the severe sentencing of two Belarus entrepreneurs, who were apprehended

for taking part in entrepreneurs' demonstrations on 10 and 21 January 2008; recalls that taking part in protests is an inalienable democratic right; believes the trials against the two, who were sentenced on 22 and 23 April 2008 respectively, were politically motivated and that the sentences passed on them seem disproportionate to the charges; urges Belarus to re-examine the sentences and to immediately release the two imprisoned entrepreneurs;

3. Furthermore, expresses great concern over the increased harassment of human rights defenders and independent media representatives in Belarus and reminds Belarus of its commitment to respect the rights of human rights defenders and create an environment where they may work without constraints;
4. Is concerned over recent developments in the relationship between Belarus and the United States; regrets, in particular, the decision of the Government of Belarus to declare 10 United States diplomats *personae non gratae*; expresses its solidarity with the United States and its diplomatic service; calls on the Government of Belarus to reconsider its decision and to take immediate steps allowing for a normalization of the relationship between Belarus and the United States on the basis of mutually beneficial cooperation;
5. Condemns attempts at energy blackmail expressed by President Lukashenko in his interview with Reuters and warns that such rhetoric goes against the interests of the people of Belarus;
6. Condemns the fact that Belarus is the only country in Europe which still has the death penalty, which is counter to European and universal values;
7. Urges the Belarusian authorities to revoke Decree No 70 of 8 February 2008, provisions of which violate the right to education of Belarusian citizens by creating barriers to entry into higher education institutions;
8. Urges the Belarusian authorities to implement Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) standards in the organisation of the forthcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for 28 September 2008; calls on the government to give democratic opposition representatives access to district election commissions, to grant registration to all parliamentary candidates and observers and to refrain from creating obstacles for a comprehensive and complete international election observation mission;
9. Recalls that on 21 November 2006 the Europe Union declared its readiness to renew its relationship with Belarus and its people within the framework of the ENP as soon as the Belarusian Government demonstrates respect for democratic values and for the basic rights of the Belarusian people;
10. Calls on the Council and the Commission to take further steps towards the facilitation and liberalisation of visa procedures for Belarusian citizens, as only such action can help to fulfil the main goal of EU policy towards Belarus, namely to facilitate and intensify people-to-people contacts and to democratise that country; urges them, in this context, to consider the possibilities of lowering the cost of visas for Belarusian citizens entering Schengen territory, which is the only way to prevent Belarus and its citizens from becoming increasingly isolated;
11. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the international community as a whole to

extend more support to the civil society of Belarus and, in particular, to increase financial aid to the independent media, to non-governmental organisations and to Belarusian students studying abroad; welcomes the financial support given by the Commission to the European Humanities University in Vilnius (Lithuania);

12. Deplores the decision of the Belarusian authorities to refuse repeatedly entrance visas to the Members of the European Parliament and national parliamentarians in the last couple of years; calls on the Belarusian authorities not to create any further obstacles preventing the European Parliament delegation for relations with Belarus from visiting the country and from observing and obtaining first-hand experience in Belarus;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, and the Belarusian authorities.