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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 Jacek Protasiewicz, Urszula Gacek, Charles Tannock, José Ribeiro e Castro, Filip Kaczmarek, Bernd Posselt, Eija-Riitta Korhola, Tunne Kelam, Laima Liucija Andrikienė

on behalf of the PPE-DE Group

on Arrest of political opponents in Belarus

European Parliament resolution on Arrest of political opponents in Belarus

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Belarus and in particular to its resolution of 21 February 2008,
- having regard to the November 2000 European Commission declaration of 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 the EU Presidency Declaration of 28 March 2008,
- having regard to the EU Presidency statement on the renewed imprisonment and the harassment of political opponents in Belarus of 29 April 2008,
- having regard to the EU Presidency statement on the recent developments in the relationship between Belarus and the United States of 6 May 2008,
- having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas it has repeatedly condemned the failed presidential, parliamentary and local elections in Belarus,

B. whereas it has called on the Council and the Commission to make proposals to put further pressure on Lukashenko's regime within international organisations and has demanded that a complete package of specific, targeted sanctions – severely punishing the perpetrators of oppression without adding to the suffering of the citizens of Belarus – be put forward,

C. whereas it has particularly condemned the unjustified and politically motivated sentences imposed in April 2008 by Belorussian authorities on the participants of the Entrepreneur's Rally that took place in Minsk on 10 January 2008,

D. whereas it has condemned the use of violence and arrests of large number participants on the occasion of the Freedom Day in Minsk and other Belarusian cities on 25 March 2008,

E. whereas the decision of the Government of Belarus to declare 10 United States diplomats personae non gratae and the forced removal of US Ambassador to Minsk is a measure which is both unjustified and harmful to the interests of the people of Belarus,

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, notably the recent temporary detention and trial of Aleksander Milinkevich, 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 sentences imposed on Syarhei Parsyukevich and Andrei Kim on 22 and 23 April 2008 in Minsk for their participation in the entrepreneurs' demonstrations of 10 January 2008; at the same time, deplores the reportedly excessive force used by Belarusian security forces against and arrests of peaceful citizens gathered in Minsk on 25 March 2008 to mark the ninetieth anniversary of Freedom Day and calls on the Belarusian authorities to unconditionally abstain from all forms of use of force against the representatives of democratic opposition;

3. Urges the Belarusian authorities to release immediately and unconditionally the remaining political prisoner, Alyaksandr Kazulin, and to stop using intimidation, harassment, targeted arrests and politically motivated prosecutions against the activists of the democratic opposition and civil society in Belarus;

4. Reiterates that compliance with democratic principles is the key issue in normalizing relations with Belarus;

5. 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;

6. Emphasises that, in order to engage in any substantial dialogue with the EU, Belarus needs to fulfil the remaining conditions laid down in the 'non-paper' entitled "What the European Union could bring to Belarus", which include the release of all political prisoners, the abolition of the death penalty, an assurance of a free media and freedom of expression, the independence of the judiciary and respect for democratic values and for the basic rights of the Belarusian people;

7. Reiterates and condemns the fact that Belarus is the only country in Europe which still has the death penalty, which is counter to European values;

8. Deeply regrets the 2002 Religion Law that contravenes international principles of religious freedom and human rights, including those laid out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and recognises that as result of this legislation, the activities of many religious communities have been restricted and their leaders are subjected to constant harassment, prosecution, fines and imprisonment;

9. 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 in a free and fair manner; calls on the Government to give democratic opposition representatives **free** access to district election commissions, to grant registration to all parliamentary candidates and their observers and to refrain from creating obstacles to a comprehensive and complete international election observation mission;

10. Calls on the Belarusian Government to uphold and ensure the protection of all fundamental human rights and ensure its compliance with international standards and in particular Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);

11. Calls on the Belarusian Government to revise the 2002 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations and restore procedures guaranteeing respect for freedom of religion;

12. Expresses solidarity with the united democratic opposition of Belarus and all Belarusian citizens who strive for an independent, open and democratic Belarus based on the rule of law; encourages the leaders of the opposition to demonstrate unity and resolve in the upcoming parliamentary elections;

13. 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;

14. Expresses its solidarity with the United States and its diplomatic service and 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;

15. 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.