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*Plenary sitting*

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8.9.2015

B8-0879/2015

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Belarus  
(2015/2834(RSP))

**Victor Boştinaru, Richard Howitt, Eric Andrieu, Zigmantas Balčytis, Hugues Bayet, Brando Benifei, José Blanco López, Nicola Caputo, Andi Cristea, Doru-Claudian Frunzulică, Neena Gill, Ana Gomes, Sergio Gutiérrez Prieto, Cătălin Sorin Ivan, Liisa Jaakonsaari, Afzal Khan, Kashetu Kyenge, Javi López, Andrejs Mamikins, Juan Fernando López Aguilar, Marlene Mizzi, Sorin Moisă, Alessia Maria Mosca, Victor Negrescu, Jens Nilsson, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Emilian Pavel, Vincent Peillon, Tonino Picula, Kati Piri, Miroslav Poche, Inmaculada Rodríguez-Piñero Fernández, Jutta Steinruck, Tibor Szanyi, Elena Valenciano, Julie Ward**

on behalf of the S&D Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Belarus  
(2015/2834(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Belarus, and in particular those of 29 March 2012<sup>1</sup>, 16 February 2012<sup>2</sup>, 12 May 2011<sup>3</sup>, 10 March 2011<sup>4</sup> and 20 January 2011<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to its recommendation of 12 September 2013 to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service on EU Policy towards Belarus<sup>6</sup>,
- having regard to the statement of 22 August 2015 by EU High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini and the Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, on the release of political prisoners in Belarus,
- having regard to the dialogue on human rights between the European Union and the Republic of Belarus of 28 July 2015,
- having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Belarusian authorities have recently released the remaining political prisoners, with the last six including former presidential candidates;
- B. whereas despite the recent intensification of contacts between Belarus and the European Union, positive change with regard to human rights and democracy in Belarus still remains to be confirmed;
- C. whereas cases of pressure on and intimidation of human rights defenders and civil society and pro-democracy activists persist in Belarus, with police raids and the seizure of equipment, as well as the forceful removal from Belarus of activists, still an everyday occurrence;
- D. whereas the authorities still use the practice of administrative prosecution of freelance journalists working with foreign media without accreditation, with several cases having been documented during the last months;
- E. whereas Belarus remains the only country in Europe to apply capital punishment;
- F. whereas on 2 April 2015 President Lukashenko signed Decree No. 3 ‘On the prevention of social dependency’, which provides for compulsory labour for unemployed persons under the threat of payment of a special fee to the state budget or administrative liability

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 257 E, 6.9.2013, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 249 E, 30.8.2013, p.57.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 377 E, 7.12.2012, p. 162.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 199 E, 7.7.2012, p. 182.

<sup>5</sup> OJ C 136 E, 11.5.2012, p. 57.

<sup>6</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0382.

in the form of a fine or administrative arrest;

- G. whereas the first official visit since 2002 of the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with Belarus took place on 18-19 June 2015 in Minsk;
- H. whereas progress has been noted in sectoral cooperation with Belarus in the areas of higher education, vocational training, the digital market, the energy sector, food safety and culture, among others;
- I. whereas Belarus's involvement as facilitator in the attempts to find a resolution to the conflict in Ukraine has been positively assessed;
1. Remains deeply concerned by the continued prejudice to human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as by the serious shortcomings observed during previous elections by independent international observers in Belarus;
  2. Reiterates its call on the Belarusian authorities to ensure, in all circumstances, respect for democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Belarus;
  3. Welcomes the release of the remaining political prisoners and considers this as a potential first step towards improving relations between the European Union and Belarus;
  4. Calls on the Belarusian authorities to rehabilitate the released political prisoners and to fully restore their civic and political rights, enabling them and their families to fully enjoy all their rights as citizens;
  5. Expresses its concern about the recent detention and ongoing criminal prosecution of youth activists Maksim Piakarski, Vadzim Zharomski and Viachaslau Kasinerau on suspicion of 'malicious hooliganism' as disproportionate, and strongly condemns the violence they have suffered;
  6. Recalls that past opportunities for improving relations between Belarus and the European Union did not materialise since specific steps taken by the Belarusian authorities were followed by renewed restrictive and punitive measures within Belarus;
  7. Expresses, accordingly, its measured hope that the present opportunity will be seized and followed by both immediate and long-term additional measures providing grounds for a breakthrough in bilateral relations;
  8. Stresses the need for Belarus to conduct the upcoming presidential elections in accordance with internationally recognised standards, to give the opposition unfettered access to all government-controlled means of communication and to allow it to participate in the elections on an equal footing;
  9. Is concerned by prior measures that have invalidated the participation in the upcoming presidential elections of previously sentenced and imprisoned political opponents and have denied registration to non-governmental and civil society associations and political

parties;

10. Urges the Belarusian authorities to implement changes and amend electoral norms so as to guarantee the representation of political opposition in election committees, the openness and transparency of vote-counting, including by opposition observers, and the right to appeal against the decisions of election committees;
11. Urges the Belarusian authorities to stop the harassment of independent media for political reasons, including the practice of administrative prosecution and arbitrary use of Article 22(9)(2) of the Administrative Code against freelance journalists for working with foreign media without accreditation, thereby restricting the right to freedom of expression and the dissemination of information;
12. Deplores the fact that capital punishment has been carried out on ten people since 2010, with three executions in the last year alone and the most recent death sentence handed down on 18 March 2015; urges Belarus, as the only country in Europe still applying capital punishment, to join a global moratorium on the execution of the death penalty as a first step towards its permanent abolition;
13. Calls on the Government of Belarus to respect the recommendations of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the abolition of elements of forced labour in the country;
14. Reiterates its call on the Commission to support, with financial and political means, the efforts and democratic aspirations of Belarusian civil society, independent media and non-governmental organisations in Belarus;
15. Welcomes Belarus's cooperation with the European Union and other relevant actors in finding a solution to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, including hosting negotiations on ceasefire agreements;
16. Welcomes the progress observed in sectoral cooperation with Belarus in the areas of higher education, vocational training, the digital market, the energy sector, food safety and culture, among others;
17. Calls on the European Commission to perform a detailed assessment of European Union financial assistance to Belarus to date, including its disbursement and use by the Belarusian authorities;
18. Expresses its concern at the economic hardship and deterioration of living standards endured by the population of Belarus, and emphasises that a continued policy of restrictions and repression of pro-democracy, human rights, civil society and opposition activists can only serve as a disincentive for economic cooperation between the European Union and Belarus;
19. Notes the increase in the use of the Belarusian language in public life and the Belarusian Ministry of Education's plans to foster the use of the Belarusian language in education, as well as the publication of legislative acts by the Constitutional Court in both Russian and Belarusian;

20. Is determined to continue to contribute to the European Union's policy of 'critical engagement' towards Belarus;
21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President / High Representative, the Council, the Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe and the Belarusian authorities.