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*Plenary sitting*

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**B8-0258/2017**

4.4.2017

## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

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

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on Belarus  
(2017/2647(RSP))

**Rebecca Harms, Heidi Hautala, Bronis Ropė, Igor Šoltes, Davor Škrlec,  
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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

**B8-0258/2017**

**European Parliament resolution on Belarus  
(2017/2647(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolution on the situation in Belarus,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on the European Neighbourhood Policy with regard, in particular to the Eastern Partnership countries,
- having regard to the statement by the Spokesperson of the VP/HR for CFSP on the events in the run up to and during Freedom Day in Belarus of 25 March 2017,
- having regard to the Council's decision to prolong the restrictive measures against Belarus for one year, until 28 February 2018 including an arms embargo and an asset freeze and a travel ban against four people listed in connection with the unresolved disappearances of two opposition politicians, one businessman and one journalist in 1999 and in 2000,
- having regard to the Council decision of 29 October 2015 to suspend an asset freeze and a travel ban for 170 individuals and a freeze on the assets of three companies in Belarus in response to the release of all Belarusian political prisoners on 22 August 2015, and in a context of improved EU-Belarus relations,
- having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
- having regard to the statement of The UN Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on human rights in Belarus of 28 March 2017,
- having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas over the course of March 2017 mass peaceful protests of citizens have been taking place in Belarus as a reaction to the adoption of the Presidential Decree No. 3 "On preventing social dependency",

B. whereas in disregard of the Constitutional provisions on freedom of speech and assembly, these demonstrations have been followed almost daily by mass arbitrary arrests with excessive use of force against protesting citizens, civic activists, politicians, human rights defenders, as well as journalists covering socially significant events in many cities all over Belarus,

C. whereas on 25 March at least 57 persons involved in the monitoring of ongoing peaceful protests, including foreign nationals from France, Germany, Ukraine and Russia, were arrested at the office of Human Rights Centre "Viasna" in Minsk after masked and armed members of the special police unit stormed the building,

D. whereas on 25 March an unprecedented strong police forces blocked off a large area of central Minsk where opposition activists had planned to stage a demonstration; whereas police officers barred people from walking towards the site of the planned demonstration and trains did not stop at the subway station in the area and the two closest stations; whereas authorities had warned the previous day that any “mass events” in Minsk on Saturday would be viewed as illegal and their participants would be punished,

E. whereas several hundred people attempted to walk in a procession towards Yakub Kolas Square but baton-wielding riot police armed with shields blocked them from reaching the square and started to grab demonstrators, breaking the crowd into groups; whereas people were hit with batons and pulled by their legs and arms to prisoner transport vans; whereas police officers in riot gear grabbed people at random and bundled them into prisoner transport vans,

F. whereas about 700 people were detained during this protest in central Minsk including dozens domestic and foreign journalists; whereas some reporters were soon released while other detainees were taken to police departments either without charges or after facing charges of participating in unsanctioned demonstrations; whereas around 100 protesters spent the night in custody; whereas the crackdown on the demonstration was marred by police brutality; whereas dozens were detained ahead of the protests across the country,

G. whereas in the morning of 27 March after denying they knew where he was, Belarus KGB released opposition politician Mikolai Statkevich who had expressed his determination to lead a march through downtown Minsk on Saturday but never showed up; whereas Uladzimir Nyaklyayew, another presidential candidate of 2010, was illegally detained prior to the rally of March 25 and was, as a consequence, hospitalised due to his health condition,

H. whereas courts across the country handed out fines and time in prison (3 to 25 days) to people detained over weekend protests; whereas more than 170 trials have taken place in Minsk, Homiel and Vitsebsk,

I. whereas on 31 March the police raided and searched the offices of Belsat TV seizing and taking out some equipment,

J. whereas this new wave of repression is taking place exactly one year after the EU’s decision to enter into a so-called re-engagement policy relations with Belarus,

K. whereas due to its persisting poor human rights record Belarus is the only country in Europe without framework contractual relations with the EU,

L. whereas Belarus carried out a number of death penalty sentences and executions throughout 2016, including one case already this year,

1. Strongly condemns the new wave of repression launched by the Belarus authorities against peaceful demonstrators, human rights activists and opposition members and deplores the aggression of the police and special forces in the streets of cities across Belarus;

2. Reminds Belarus of its international obligations to respect the right to freedom of speech and assembly and reiterates its view that the use of force against anyone exercising her/his

right to peaceful protest cannot be justified under any circumstances;

3. Calls for the immediate release of all those arrested and detained in relation to the peaceful protests against Decree No. 3 and to drop all judicial charges against them; calls, in particular, for the release and for charges to be dropped against human rights defenders Pavel Levinau and Eduard Balanchuk.

4. Calls on the Belarusian authorities to carry out prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into all allegations of arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and other violations of the rights of protesters, passers-by, journalists, human rights defenders and political activists in connection with the protests;

5. Urges the Belarus authorities to stop detentions and other measures aimed at hindering professional activities of journalists and independent media;

6. Calls on the Council to reconsider the policy of reengagement with the Belarus regime putting on hold the recently increased financial support dedicated to fund activities of the Belarusian government and other state structures and setting clear conditions for the resumption of cooperation;

7. Calls, furthermore, to take into account the possibility of adopting adequate restrictive measures against all those Belarusian officials responsible for the repression and persecution of peaceful demonstrators and human rights activists and stresses the importance of increasing its assistance aimed at strengthening the civil society, independent media and democratic forces;

8. Calls on the EEAS and the embassies of the EU Member States in Minsk to closely monitor the situation as regards violations of citizens' rights and freedoms in Belarus and explicitly express their attitude towards the actions of the Belarusian authorities;

9. Urges the EEAS To take necessary measures to prevent further escalation of the situation, use all possible formats and tools in the context of the EU-Belarus relations to guarantee the government's respect for the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens;

10. Calls on the HR/VP and the EEAS to act as moderators in facilitating the dialogue between the Belarusian authorities and civil society;

11. Expects the Belarus authorities to take concrete steps towards the introduction of a moratorium on the death penalty;

12. Calls for the renewal of the UN Special Rapporteur's mandate on the human rights situation in Belarus at the 35th Session of the UN Human Rights Council; calls on the Belarusian government to recognise the mandate, cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur, facilitate a visit to the country, and commit to engagement in long-overdue reforms to protect human rights, including by implementing the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur;

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the EEAS and the

Commission, to the President, the government and the parliament of Belarus and to the OSCE and the Council of Europe.