

**Question for written answer E-002100/2017
to the Commission**

Rule 130

Ilhan Kyuchyuk (ALDE)

Subject: Repression of civil society activists and opposition politicians in Belarus

Belarusian authorities have recently detained authors, publishers and journalists in a systematic crackdown on the freedom of expression and thought in the former Soviet republic. The recent wave of public discontent was triggered by the government's decision to impose a controversial tax on the unemployed. The imposition of the so-called 'parasite tax' has in fact provoked the largest protests in Belarus since President Lukashenko came to power in 1994. Public anger at the unpopular tax on the unemployed has been stoked by failing living standards in Belarus and the iron rule of President Lukashenko.

What action will the Commission take to force the Belarusian authorities to respect the rights and freedoms of Belarusian citizens, in particular human rights such as the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly?

What steps will the Commission take to protect and support civil society activists and opposition politicians in Belarus?