

Buzek demands immediate release of presidential candidates in Belarus

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The President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek has spoken on the phone with Eva Neklayeva, the daughter of the presidential candidate Uladzimir Neklayev, who was severely beaten on the night of the elections. He and other independent candidates are in prison. They have been charged for organising mass disturbances and potentially face a sentence by to 15 years. After the phone call President Buzek said:

"I want to express the deeply felt solidarity of the European Parliament with Eva Neklayeva and her family. She is a strong and brave woman. I admire her courage in these extremely hard times. Eva Neklayeva is worried about the health of her father, whose condition is deteriorating fast. We do not forget about the families of all the others detained. Our solidarity goes to them as well.

On behalf of the European Parliament I demand from the authorities in Minsk to immediately release all the remaining five presidential candidates as well as all other protesters from jail. The charges against them must be dropped. Proper medical attention and if needed immediate hospitalisation must be provided to Uladzimir Neklayev, Andrei Sannikau, Anatol Lebedko and others, who have been severely beaten. All of them have to be granted unrestricted access to their lawyers.

The intimidation against one's own population must come to an end in Belarus. This is unacceptable in Europe of the XXI century and is against the best interest of the country. It is so regrettable that the Belarusian regime, by its undemocratic actions, continues to deny the Belarusian people their well-deserved European future.

After what the international community is witnessing in Belarus following the presidential elections a serious revision of the EU policy towards Minsk is necessary. Our gradual re-engagement and conditional dialogue with the Belarus government must be accompanied by real progress in the field of democracy and clear signs of respect of human rights. The meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council in January will be a good opportunity to take initial steps.

The European Parliament will conduct its own extraordinary meeting on Belarus on Wednesday 12 January. It will comprise of all relevant bodies involved in relations with

Belarus. We will discuss our own ideas and proposals how to help the Belarusian people in these very difficult times for them. We always stand on the side of the people. Today we stand on the side of the Belarusian people".

Note to editors:

The extraordinary meeting on Belarus in the EP will consist of the President, the Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Human Rights, Delegation to the Euronest PA and the Delegation for relations with Belarus.

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