



**JOINT STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS
WITH BELARUS, MEP Robert BIEDROŃ, AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S
STANDING RAPPORTEUR ON BELARUS, MEP Petras AUŠTREVICIUS**

**on the on-going crackdown on opposition figures and civil society activists
in the run-up of the Presidential election in Belarus**

Brussels, 27 May 2020 - “As the date of the Presidential election in Belarus –9 August– is coming near, the campaign season has seemingly started off with a nationwide crackdown on peaceful protesters and civil society activists. For example, dozens have been arrested across the country while they were attending meetings of video blogger Siarhiej Cichanouski or protesting his recent detention.

Also, we are deeply worried by the persistent discriminatory approach to the composition of the territorial election commissions, as the number of opposition parties’ nominees admitted to these commissions has significantly dropped compared to previous elections. A well-balanced composition of the commissions is a safeguard for genuinely free and democratic elections.

Last but not least, we are disquieted by the Central Election Commission’s decision to reject, on technical grounds, the registrations filled by some prominent opposition figures.

Past elections in Belarus have been marred by a number of malpractices and shortcomings. As this year’s electoral process will take place in a very peculiar context, with the attention of the international community still grabbed by the Covid-19 pandemic, we call on the Belarusian authorities to create at last the conditions for a real level-playing field between the candidates, and to address the long-standing recommendations made by the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR, including those related to the blatantly unbalanced composition of territorial election commissions, administrative chicaneries during the candidacy registration process and the lack of transparency during the counting process. With the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic in mind, we also urge the responsible authorities to ensure a safe environment for the Presidential

election by providing protective personal equipment for election personnel, adjusting the voting facilities to guarantee health and safety of participating citizens and ensuring undisturbed work of the election observers.”

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