



---

## Delegation for relations with Belarus

---

### Joint statement by:

- the Chair of the Delegation for relations with Belarus, MEP Juozas OLEKAS, and
- the European Parliament's Standing Rapporteur on Belarus, MEP Petras AUŠTREVICIUS

### on the politically motivated trials of democratic forces and civil society figures in Belarus

**Brussels, 23 January 2023** – *"We condemn in the strongest terms the trial in absentia that started last week against leaders of the Belarusian democratic forces. The Head of the United Transitional Cabinet, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who is widely considered to be the real winner of the 2020 presidential election is being tried alongside figures of the Coordination Council – Maryia Damos, Volha Kavalkova, Pavel Latushka and Siarhei Dyleuski on trumped-up charges of "inciting hatred" and creating "extremist groups". All five of them went into self-exile during the deadly crackdown on the mass protests triggered by electoral fraud and by Aliaksandr Lukashenka's refusal to concede his defeat and relinquish power.*

*Similarly, we are gravely concerned by the on-going, politically motivated trials of Sakharov Prize and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aleś Bialiatski, who devoted his entire life to promoting democratic change in Belarus, of two members of his Viasna human rights centre, Valyantsin Stefanovich and Uladzimir Labkovich, and of journalist and activist of the Union of Poles in Belarus, Andrzej Poczobut.*

*There is no doubt that these sham trials aim to instigate fear, silence independent voices and close all remaining space for a genuine political debate in Belarus.*

*The number of political prisoners in Belarus, as listed by Viasna, is unprecedented, nearing 1,500. It could be even much higher in reality, as many victims do not reach out to human rights defenders, for fear of further persecution*

*We call on the European Union to step up its support, both inside and outside the country, for all the brave Belarusians who are fighting for a sovereign, peaceful and democratic Belarus, and to impose further sanctions on officials of Lukashenka's illegitimate regime who commit or are complicit in human rights violations, notably so-called law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges, as well as further sanctions on those regime officials who are responsible for Belarus' involvement in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine."*

For further information contact:

Eastern Partnership and Russia Unit, tel. +32 2 284 26 43, e-mail: [D-BY@ep.europa.eu](mailto:D-BY@ep.europa.eu)