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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 occasion of the Day of Solidarity with Belarus

Brussels, 9 August 2023 – "We mark today the third anniversary of the massively falsified presidential election in Belarus.

To our greatest dismay, Belarus is facing its darkest hours since it re-gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. For his very own, selfish political purposes, self-proclaimed President Lukashenka is allowing a rampant, pernicious absorption of Belarus by Russia, as exemplified by his regime's complicity in Moscow's war of aggression against Ukraine and horrendous crimes, such as the forceful deportation and indoctrination of Ukrainian children, by President Putin's announced decision to deploy Russian tactical nuclear weapons on Belarus' territory, or by the on-going re-location of Wagner Group mercenaries in the vicinity of the EU's and NATO's border.

Inside the country, the human rights situation has become catastrophic and is still further worsening, as illustrated by the provocative decision to place prominent civil society activists and leaders of the democratic forces, including the real winner of the 2020 presidential election, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, on the KGB's so-called 'terrorist list'. The fact that no less than four Sakharov Prize laureates – Ales Bialiatski (also a Nobel Peace Prize winner), Maryia Kalesnikava, Mikalai Statkevich and Siarhei Tsikhanouski – are now imprisoned, with little or no information on their welfare and that of many other political prisoners, is a vivid illustration of this dire situation. Our thoughts also go to Palina Sharenda-Panasiuk, a jailed activist of the European Belarus Civil Campaign, who was severely beaten in prison in June after spending months in a punishment cell and disappeared since then.

We express condolences to all families who have lost loved ones as a result of the repression exerted by the illegitimate regime – in this respect, our thoughts go in particular to Vitold Ashurak, Mikalaj Klimovich and Ales Pushkin, inmates who have lost their lives in the past months because of ill-treatment suffered in prison.

We reiterate our call on the international community to stay firm in further expanding and thoroughly enforcing sanctions against Lukashenka's regime, as well as our call on the EU to implement the remainder of the recommendations formulated in the European Parliament recommendations of 17 September 2020, 26 November 2020, 10 June 2021, 7 October 2021, 19 May 2022, 24 November 2022, 15 March 2023 and 11 May 2023 on Belarus.

We will continue to stand in solidarity for as long as it takes with all those who fight to live in a free, sovereign and democratic Belarus, no matter where they are, and we will spare no effort to see that regime officials who have committed or been complicit in grave human rights violations are brought to justice. To this end, we urge EU Member States and like-minded partners to use extraterritorial and universal jurisdiction to hold them accountable for their crimes.

Zhyve Belarus!"

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