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## Delegation for relations with Belarus

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### 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 ongoing repression and waves of arbitrary detentions of family members of political prisoners in Belarus

**Brussels, 31 January 2024** – *“We strongly condemn the ongoing wave of repression by Lukashenka’s regime against democratic opposition, human right defenders, political prisoners, as well as the constant persecution of their relatives and lawyers. The recent raids and searches at the houses of political prisoners by the regime’s security apparatus resulted in more than 200 arrests. According to the human rights centre “Viasna” majority of the arrested are women, wives and mothers of political prisoners including Maryna Adamovich, wife of political prisoner, former presidential candidate, and 2020 Sakharov Prize laureate Mikalai Statkevich. We are appalled by such gender-based targeting and call upon immediate and unconditional release of arrested women and other family members of political prisoners.*

*At the same time, additional charges were added to the case of 20 renowned Belarusian political scientists, journalists and experts, the so-called Tsikhanouskaya analysts, who are being charged in absentia and could even lose their Belarusian citizenship if convicted. These latest criminal acts must be met with a complementary response from the EU and the West in the form of increased pressure on the regime in the form of sanctions.*

*The extent of human rights violations in Belarus has been so substantial that according to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, some of these actions might constitute “crimes against humanity”. We therefore urge Belarusian authorities to immediately cease all repression, persecutions and arbitrary detentions of Belarusian people, to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners and their family members, and to abide by its international obligations.*

*We stand in solidarity with people of Belarus and will continue to support their legitimate aspirations for democratic and European future. We remain committed to work tirelessly with representatives of democratic forces, civil society and independent media in benefit of the people in Belarus.”*

*For further information contact:*

*Eastern Partnership and Russia Unit, tel. +32 2 283 26 40, e-mail: [D-BY@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:D-BY@europarl.europa.eu)*