



Delegation for relations with Belarus

STATEMENT

on the International day of Solidarity with Belarus

by

- **Malgorzata GOSIEWSKA, Chair, on behalf of the Bureau of the EP Delegation for Relations with Belarus**
- **Helmut BRANDSTÄTTER, AFET standing rapporteur on Belarus**

Four years ago, on 12 November 2020, the Belarusian artist Raman Bandarenka passed away due to serious injuries inflicted on him by the Belarusian security forces. His death has never been investigated nor have those responsible ever been brought to justice. Since then, at least seven more political prisoners have died - Mikalai Klimovich, Ales Pushkin, Vadzim Khrasko, Ihar Lednik, Aliaksandr Kulinich and Dzmitry Dudoits and 21-year old Dmitriy Schletgauer, who passed away on 11 October 2024.

In the memory of Raman Bandarenka and hundreds of other courageous Belarusians who lost their lives or freedom in upholding the democratic legacy of the independent Belarusian state, 12 November has been marked as the International Day of Solidarity with Belarus.

On this occasion, we reiterate our unwavering support and solidarity with the people of Belarus in their quest for a free, democratic and independent future of their homeland, part of the European family. We reaffirm our determination to strengthen ties with Belarusian democratic forces, led by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya in their struggle for democratic transition in Belarus.

Four years after the 2020 peaceful protests, the democratic aspirations of the people in Belarus have been met with brutal repression and persecution. Today,

still more than 1.300 opponents remain in prison, held in appalling conditions, with no access to proper medical care and with families unaware of their fate.

It is a telling fact that the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialacki is among them. Several prominent opposition figures, like Maksim Znak, Maria Kalesnikava, Viktar Babaryka, Mikalai Statkevich, Siarhei Tsikhanouski, and Ihar Losik have been held in solitary confinement for more than one year, in blunt violation of Belarus's obligations under international law.

According to the UN Special rapporteur, Belarus has persistently failed to follow recommendations of UN human rights bodies and mechanisms, regarding in particular arbitrary detentions, torture, right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association and participation in the conduct of public affairs, as well as, importantly, ensuring accountability for grave human rights violations. The Lukashenka regime has a full support of this policy from the Russian government. In this regard, we condemn in the strongest possible terms the systematic persecution of political opponents, civil society organisations, independent media, human rights defenders and trade unions, which may amount to crimes against humanity and be punished according to international law and by mechanisms, such as sanctions.

In the run-up to the upcoming so-called presidential elections scheduled to take place on 26 January 2025, the human rights situation has deteriorated rapidly. The regime has stepped up persecutions of candidates, initiative groups, observers, activists and citizens who in 2020 have supported the nomination of independent candidates with their signatures. Recently, an alarming increase in arbitrary detentions, which could amount to enforced disappearances, has been reported. In this situation, the mockery staging in January 2025 cannot be regarded as elections.

In this regard we reiterate our demand on the regime in Belarus to fully respect human rights, the right to freedom of association, including for political parties and to fully comply with the OSCE international standards of elections, as adopted by the UN Committee on Human rights. The right of each citizen, resident in Belarus or outside, to vote, and to be elected, as well the right to have access to public service must be fully respected.

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