$BS - 427/02$

By Mr. Sacredeus, Mr. Goodwill and Mr. Posselt on behalf of the EPP-ED Group

On: freedom of press in Belarus

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the freedom of press in Belarus,

- having regard to the activities and reports of the Parliamentary Troika on Belarus of the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,

- having regard to the Partnership Agreement with Belarus, which was signed in March 1995, but could not enter into force because of the lack of democracy in Blears,

A. Deeply concerned about the sentencing by the Leninsky District Court of two journalists to restricted freedom for their criticism of Belarus President Lukashenka,

B. Recalling that the Parliamentary Troika on Belarus of the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly have repeatedly stressed on the necessity of free mass media in the democratization process in Belarus,

1. Strongly condemns the prosecution by the Leninsky district court of two Belarus journalists to restricted freedom ;

2. Expresses its growing concern on the persistent lack of freedom of press and free opinion , the use of criminal law against journalists and the freezing of bank accounts of independent news papers in Belarus;

3. Demands the Belarus authorities to cancel the sentence of Mr. Markevitch and Mr.Mazheya , to stop the criminal prosecution of journalists and to fulfill international commitments regarding the freedom of press and free opinion;

4. Calls on the President and the Government of Belarus to amend the Belarus law on mass media in the light of the international standards regarding the right of freedom of expression;

5. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, the OSCE Presidency and the Government and Parliament of Belarus and the Government and Parliament of Russia.

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