

Monday, 7 March - 18:30

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

7 March 2005

B6-0193/2005

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 115 of the Rules of Procedure, by

– Bogdan Adam Klich; Aldis Kušķis; Bernd Posselt and Árpád Duka-Zólyomi;

on behalf of the EPP-ED Group;

on Belarus

PE 356.349

EN

EN

B6-0193/2005

European Parliament resolution on the situation of political prisoners in Belarus

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Belarus,
- having regard, in particular, to its resolution of 13 September 2004 on the situation in Belarus,
- having regard to the opinion on the referendum of 17 October 2004 in Belarus, adopted by the 60th Plenary Session of the Venice Commission on 8-9 October 2004,
- having regard, in particular, to its resolution of 27 October 2004 on the situation in Belarus after the parliamentary elections and referendum of 17 October 2004,
- having regard to the final conclusions of the International Election Observation Mission of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly of 9 December 2004.
- having regard to the resolutions by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the situation in Belarus and, in particular, to its resolution of 28 April 2004 on the persecution of the press in the Republic of Belarus,
- having regard to the declaration of the Head of the OSCE Office in Minsk on the prison sentences passed on two members of the Belarus opposition accused of defaming the President of Belarus,
- having regard, in particular, to the 'EU action plan for promoting democracy in Belarus' adopted by the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with Belarus on 23 February 2005,
- having regard, in particular, to its resolution of 11 February 2003 on relations between the European Union and Belarus: towards a future partnership,
- having regard to its Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought which has been awarded in December 2004 to the Belarusian Association of Journalists,
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 11 May 2004 on the European Neighbourhood Policy (COM(2004)0373),
- having regard to the resolution adopted by the UN Commission on Human Rights in April 2004,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in particular to articles 19 and 21 which guarantee the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly,
- having regard to the EU sanctions adopted on 2 July 2004 placed on Belarusian officials following the disappearance of 3 Belarusian opposition leaders and one journalist,
- having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas the Parliamentary Troika concluded that neither the parliamentary nor the presidential elections of 2000 and 2001 were free and fair and that they were preceded by arbitrary action by the government against the political opposition, independent media and election-observing organisations,
- B. whereas, instead of improving, the situation in Belarus has further deteriorated to a situation where human rights are violated with contempt, the Lower House is deprived of its legislative rights, and economic life is ruled by the president; whereas these violations include imprisonment of members of the democratic opposition and other forms of repression used against them, the de-registration of political parties in the run-up to the elections, the harassment and intimidation of opposition candidates and the banning of representatives of opposition parties at polling stations,
- C. whereas the EU has repeatedly condemned the arrest of prominent opposition leaders by the Lukashenko government and whereas no progress has been made in the unsolved cases of a number of disappeared persons,
- D. whereas Mikhail Marynich, ex-Minister for Foreign Economic Relations, former Ambassador and presidential candidate in the mid-2001 elections, was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment, on 18 February 2005 reduced to 3 years and 6 months, in spite of the fact that there appeared to be clear evidence that the lawsuit was politically motivated and that the trial did not meet international standards of transparency and due process,
- E. whereas over the past few years several political parties and more than 50 pro-democracy NGOs of different levels and different political orientations, 25 independent mass media entities, and several educational establishments have been closed for ‘technical’ reasons, but whereas it was clear that in all cases these organisations were punished for criticising the President and his policy,
- F. whereas politically motivated arrests and trials of activists of the democratic movement and independent journalists, and deportations of foreign citizens are continually taking place in Belarus; whereas in September 2004 two members of the Belarusian opposition, Valery Levonevsky and Alexander Vasilyev, were condemned to two years in prison on a charge of defaming the President of Belarus,
- G. whereas the ongoing peaceful protests by small shopkeepers have faced intimidation by the government and the organisers of these strikes have been detained and fined,
- H. extremely concerned at the decision of the Belarusian authorities to revoke the licence to operate as a legal entity of the internationally recognised European Humanities University in Minsk, which is a remarkable example of academic freedom and the pursuit of true European values in teaching and research programmes, with dire consequences for the academic future of hundreds of students and teachers,
- I. whereas the resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 28 May 2004 acknowledged evidence of involvement of top state officials in the abduction and alleged assassination of leading opposition figures in 1999,
- J. whereas in April 2004, the UN Commission on Human Rights criticized Belarus for continued reports of arbitrary arrest and detention and for harassment of non-governmental organizations and opposition political parties and those engaged in democratic activities,

- K. whereas in May 2004, the Council of Europe rejected an application from Belarus to renew its special status with the organization which had been suspended when President Lukashenko dissolved the parliament in 1997,
1. Strongly condemns the Belarusian regime's indiscriminate attacks on the media, journalists, members of the opposition, human rights activists and any person who attempts freely to voice criticism of the President and the regime, as manifested through arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment of detainees, disappearances, politically motivated persecution and other acts of repression that flout the basic principles of democracy and the rule of law;
 2. Considers President Lukashenko's extension of his presidential term by referendum as a further confirmation of the authoritarian way in which he rules the country;
 3. Calls on the Belarusian authorities for the immediate and unconditional release of Mikhail Marynich;
 4. Calls on the Belarusian authorities to release immediately Valery Levonevsky, Alexander Vasilyev and all other imprisoned political opponents of the regime;
 5. Calls for an independent investigation to be opened under a neutral investigator regarding the case of the disappearance of Yuri Zakharenko, the former Minister of Interior; Victor Gonchar, former Vice-President of the Parliament of Belarus; Anatoly Krasovsky, a businessman; and Dmitry Zavadski, a cameraman for the Russian TV channel ORT;
 6. Calls on the Belarusian authorities to allow peaceful protests of small shopkeepers, and the release from prison of the organisers and leaders of these protests;
 7. Calls on the Council to condemn the current Belarusian regime as a dictatorship and President Lukashenko as a dictator;
 8. Calls on the Council and the Governments of the Member States to identify and freeze the personal assets of President Lukashenko and those other senior members of the regime who ensure the continuation of the dictatorship;
 9. Calls on the Council, and the Governments of the Member States to increase the list of representatives of the Belarusian authorities subject to the visa ban on entering the territory of the EU Member States;
 10. Calls on Belarus to bring the actions of its police and security forces into conformity with its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
 11. Calls on the Belarusian authorities to immediately stop the harassment of all educational institutions in the country and to respect the basic principles of academic freedom, teaching autonomy and tolerance in education;
 12. Calls for the creation of a special educational programme which would grant scholarships, especially for students from the European Humanities University (EHU) in Minsk, who would like to study in the European Union, and financial support for academic institutions who will be ready to host these students; calls for the creation of an ad-hoc procedure to allow the transferability of credits earned by students at the EHU;

13. Stresses that a policy of sanctions against Belarus will only target the authorities of that country and in no way will affect Belarusian society, as proposed in the 'EU action plan for promoting democracy in Belarus' recently adopted by the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with Belarus;
14. Supports the strengthening of the civil society in Belarus and welcomes the decision of the Commission to finance projects in Belarus under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR);
15. Emphasises once again that the further development of EU relations with Belarus will continue to depend on the progress made towards democratisation and reform in the country;
16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the Parliaments and Governments of the Member States, the Government and the Parliament of Belarus, and the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe.