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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for the debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 115 of the Rules of Procedure

by Konrad Szymański, Hanna Foltyn-Kubicka, Ryszard Czarnecki, Adam Bielan, Ewa Tomaszewska, Wojciech Roszkowski, Mieczysław Edmund Janowski, Zbigniew Krzysztof Kuźmiuk, Janusz Wojciechowski, Inese Vaidere

on behalf of the UEN Group

on the situation in Belarus

European Parliament resolution on the situation in Belarus

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Belarus, in particular to its resolution of 6 April 2006,
 - having regard to the November 2006 European Commission declaration of the European Union's readiness to renew its relationship with Belarus and its people within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP),
 - having regard to its Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought, which was awarded in December 2004 to the Belarusian Association of Journalists and in December 2006 to Aleksander Milinkevich,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the European Parliament has pointed out that the Lukashenko regime lacks all democratic legitimacy and continues as the last dictatorship in Europe and has repeatedly condemned the corrupt Presidential, Parliamentary, and local elections in Belarus,
- B. whereas the Lukashenko regime enacted a new law which seriously limits the liberties of small business while increasing the burdens placed on them,
- C. whereas the deteriorating economic situation in Belarus, namely rising prices and inflation, intensifies public discontent in the country,
- D. whereas in January there were a series of entrepreneurs' protests in Minsk, and the leaders of these manifestations were detained and often beaten,
- E. whereas the Belarusian Government has introduced a new law which prevents foreign clergy from entering Belarus and fulfilling their duties,
1. Deeply regrets the fact that the situation of democracy, human rights and rule of law is further deteriorating in Belarus;
 2. Insists that the Belarusian authorities immediately release the last remaining political prisoner, Alyaksandr Kazulin, and stop using intimidation, harassment, targeted arrests and politically motivated prosecutions against the activists of the democratic opposition and civil society in Belarus, as happened on 18 February 2008 to Alexandr Milinkevich, who was arrested and interrogated by the Belarusian authorities;
 3. Condemns the arrest of 27 participants of protest by entrepreneurs in Minsk including Anatol Lyabedzka, head of the United Civil Party and Anatol Shumchanka, one of the leaders of the protesting businessmen;
 4. Condemns the arrest of ten young activists of the Young Front and of the Belarusian Popular Front Youth, who were detained following peaceful demonstrations on 16

January 2008 in Minsk to mark the day of solidarity with the imprisoned Belarusian opposition activists and the families of missing prominent Belarusians;

5. Condemns the restrictions imposed by Belarusian authorities on foreign clergy aimed at limiting their access to the country to serve religious organisations; recalls that the government obstructs spiritual practices offered by churches other than those affiliated with the Belarusian Orthodox Church and that more than 25 foreign Catholic and Protestant clergy were expelled from Belarus between the summers of 2006 and 2007; underlines that these administrative obstacles constitute a prohibition of religious freedom;
6. Reminds the Belarusian authorities that the release of all political prisoners is one of the key conditions for Belarus to renew its relationship with the EU; takes note of the recent release of several democratic opposition activists including the leaders of the Young Front, and at the same time urges the Belarusian authorities to release immediately all remaining political prisoners;
7. Recalls that in November 2006 the European Union declared its readiness to renew its relationship with Belarus and its people within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as soon as the Belarusian Government demonstrates respect for democratic values and for the basic right of the Belarusian people;
8. Calls on the Commission and the Council to consider the possibilities of waiving the cost of visas for Belarusian citizens entering the Schengen area; appeals to Member States of the Schengen Treaty to make all efforts to facilitate Belarusian citizens entering each Member State, who are not connected with the Lukashenko's regime;
9. Urges the authorities of Belarus to implement OSCE standards in the organization of the upcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for 28 September 2008; calls on the government to give democratic opposition representatives access to district election commissions, to grant registration to all parliamentary candidates and their observers, and not to create obstacles for a comprehensive and complete international election observation mission;
10. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the international community as a whole to provide more support to the civil society of Belarus and, in particular, to increase financial aid to the independent media, to the nongovernmental organisations and to Belarusian students studying abroad;
11. Calls on the Commission and the Council to provide financial support for the existing project aiming at the creation of an independent Belarusian television BELSAT, which is run by a Polish public TV company with the assistance of the Lithuanian and Polish Governments;
12. Expresses its solidarity with the united democratic opposition of Belarus and all Belarusian citizens who strive for an independent, open and democratic Belarus based on the rule of law; encourages the leaders of the opposition to demonstrate unity and resolve in the upcoming parliamentary elections;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, and the Belarus authorities.