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Plenary sitting

10.5.2011

B7-0341/2011

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 122 of the Rules of Procedure

on Belarus

**Elisabeth Schroedter, Heidi Hautala, Nicole Kiil-Nielsen, Werner Schulz,
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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

European Parliament resolution on Belarus

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Belarus, in particular the one of 10 March 2011, of 20 January 2011 and of 17 December 2009,
 - having regard to Declaration by the EU High Representative on recent trials and sentences in Belarus, Brussels, 18 March 2011,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions on Belarus, 3065th Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 31 January 2011;
 - having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas over 600 opposition figures, including seven former presidential candidates, many journalists and human rights defenders were arrested after the events of 19 December 2010 in Minsk and imprisoned in the KGB detention centre; whereas to date criminal charges have been brought against 42 person who face lengthy prison terms,
- B. whereas Aliaksandr Atroshchankau, Aliaksandr Malchanau, Dzmitry Novik, Vasil Parfiankou, members of the electoral campaign teams of democratic opposition candidates Uladzimir Niakliayeu and Andrei Sannikau; Mikita Likhavid, member of the "For Freedom" movement; Ales Kirkevich, Zmister Dashkevich, Eduard Lobau the Young Front activists; Paval Vinahradau an activist of the 'Speak the Truth' campaign; non-partisan activist Andrei Pratasienya, historian Dzmitry Drozd; protest participant Uladzimir Khamichenka; Dzmitry Bandarenka, a coordinator of the civil campaign European Belarus, were sentenced from one to four years' imprisonment in connection with the demonstrations of 19 December 2010,
- C. whereas the trials of the two former presidential candidates Uladzimer Nyaklyaeu and Vital Rymasheuski have just begun; the candidates are being charged for instigating public disorder and face up to three years imprisonment if found guilty; whereas the former presidential candidate Mikalay Statkevich, remains in jail awaiting the opening of the trial against him,
- D. whereas former presidential candidate Andrey Sannikau, who obtained a second electoral result after Lukashenka (according to official results) was severely beaten at the time of his arrest and is currently on trial facing up to 15 years in prison,
- E. whereas journalist Iryna Khalip, the wife of Andrey Sannikau, was also arrested and faces charges over the protests; whereas she is currently under house arrest and has been forbidden from communicating with her husband,
- F. whereas a number of opposition activists including Anatol Lyabedzka, leader of the opposition United Civic Party (AHP), former presidential candidates Vital Rymasheuski

and Ales Mikhalevich, on-line news portal chief editor Natalya Radzina, Andrey Dzmitryeu, the campaign manager for opposition presidential candidate Uladzimer Nyaklyaeu, and "Tell the Truth!" campaign activist Syarhey Vaznyak, have been released from the KGB pretrial detention centre and put under house arrest while the investigation against them is under way; whereas Ales Mikhalevich and Natalya Radzina fled the country to avoid trial while Dimitrij Bondarenko, a trustee of Andrey Sannikau in a former Presidential electoral campaign, was sent to general regime colony for 2 years,

- G. whereas Belarus has rejected a call by 14 EU Members for a human rights fact-finding mission under the auspices of the OSCE to investigate the massive crackdown on the opposition in the aftermath of the December 2010 elections,
 - H. whereas Belarus responded to the EU sanctions with its own black list of individuals and organisations listed over their criticism of the harsh response to opposition demonstrations following the disputed presidential elections in December,
 - I. whereas on 25 April 2011 the Ministry of Information of Belarus filed claims with the Supreme Economic Court for the closure of the two independent newspapers "Narodnaya Volia" and "Nasha Niva",
 - J. whereas Andrzej Poczobut, journalist of the Belsat television and Gazeta Wyborcza newspaper has been arrested and is facing the charges of up to two years for so-called "insult of President" for the articles he published recently; whereas Mr. Poczobut is recognised by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience,
1. Deplores the persisting climate of fear and intimidation towards political opponents in Belarus and the ongoing harassment and persecution of opposition figures since the presidential elections of December 2010;
 2. Strongly condemns all convictions in accordance with the criminal case of "mass riot" and finds them politically motivated and of questionable nature; underlines that the trials were held behind closed doors, detainees were refused the opportunity to call their witnesses and to meet in proper conditions and on a regular basis with their legal representatives, the lawyers of the accused received several warnings from the Ministry of Justice and some of them have been disbarred; considers that the conduct of the trials lacked impartiality;
 3. Condemns the lack of respect for the fundamental rights of freedom of assembly and of expression by Belarusian authorities and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the remaining protestors still under custody and for all charges against them to be dropped;
 4. Urges the Belarusian authorities to stop the procedure of closing the "Narodnaya Volia" and "Nasha Niva" weeklies which would result in the severe limitation of the media pluralism in Belarus and to release Andrzej Poczobut and drop all charges against him;
 6. Calls on the Commission, the Council, the EU High Representative and other EU partner countries to extend restrictive measures against the Belarusian regime, including introduction of the targeted economic sanctions;

7. Underlines that in the light of continuous unprecedented repressions towards the opposition, the EU needs to find new ways in order to effectively assist the Belarusian civil society in facilitating awareness-raising among the citizens, preventing the total dispersion of the political opposition and sustaining a political alternative to the Lukashenka regime;
8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe and the Parliament and Government of Belarus.