



Plenary sitting

B9-0272/2020

14.9.2020

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Belarus
(2020/2779(RSP))

Viola Von Cramon-Taubadel, Sergey Lagodinsky, Francisco Guerreiro, Bronis Ropè, Anna Cavazzini, Hannah Neumann, Tineke Strik, Markéta Gregorová, Diana Riba i Giner, Ville Niinistö, Alviina Alametsä, Reinhard Bütikofer, Jordi Solé, Monika Vana, Heidi Hautala
on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

B9-0272/2020

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Belarus
(2020/2779(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions and recommendations on Belarus,
 - having regard to the presidential elections held in Belarus on 9 August 2020,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to all human rights conventions to which Belarus is a party,
 - having regard to the joint statement on Belarus of 17 August 2020 by the EPP, S&D, Renew Europe, Greens/EFA and ECR groups in the European Parliament,
 - having regard to the statement by the President of the European Parliament of 13 August 2020 calling for an end to the violence in Belarus,
 - having regard to the Conclusions of the President of the European Council following the video conference of the members of the European Council on 19 August 2020, and the main outcomes of the video conference of Foreign Affairs Ministers of 14 August 2020,
 - having regard to the 6th round of the bilateral Human Rights Dialogue between the EU and Belarus on 18 June 2019 in Brussels,
 - having regard to the statements and declarations by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, notably those of 14 July 2020, 7 August 2020, 10 August 2020, 11 August 2020, 17 August 2020 and 7 September 2020,
 - having regard to the statement by the EEAS Spokesperson on recent developments in Belarus of 19 June 2020, and on the application of the death penalty in Belarus, notably those of 30 July 2019, 28 October 2019, 20 December 2019, 11 January 2020, and 7 March 2020,
 - having regard to the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus of 10 July 2020,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the presidential elections of 9 August in Belarus were neither free nor fair; whereas the Government of Belarus failed to issue a timely invitation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) for the observation of these elections, leading to the absence of independent international observers;
- B. whereas the Belarusian Central Electoral Commission denied registration as candidates in the 2020 Presidential elections to regime-critical politicians, who had reportedly

collected more than 100 000 signatures, as prescribed by the national legislation, underlining the disproportionate and unreasonable barriers to candidacy, contrary to OSCE commitments and other international standards;

- C. whereas the Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections report further measures that disadvantaged opposition candidates, such as restricting locations where election activities can lawfully take place, detaining members of candidates' campaign teams, and blocking nearly all opposition nominees to Precinct Election Commissions (PECs), leading to 1.1 % of the total number of elected nominees being from opposition parties and 96.7 % being from pro-government parties;
- D. whereas the human rights situation in Belarus continued to deteriorate during the election campaign and after the elections, with growing numbers of arbitrary detentions and fines, including for participating in peaceful assemblies; whereas NGOs and observers report reprisals against citizens, including through physical violence, abductions, administrative fines, threats of losing custody of a child, criminal proceedings, and physical and psychological torture;
- E. whereas Belarus has seen unprecedented protests calling for free and fair new elections, following the presidential elections of 9 August and the announcement of a falsified result, in which victory was claimed by the incumbent president; whereas the protests led to a violent crackdown and thousands of arrests, coupled with reports of inhumane conditions and treatment in places of detention;
- F. whereas incumbent President Lukashenko's current term ends on 5 November and, from this date, he can no longer be recognised as the legitimate president;
- G. whereas women play a prominent role in the protests and the opposition; whereas the National Coordination Council (NCC), initiated by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, was formed to represent the people of Belarus and channel their demands for democratic change and freedom in Belarus; whereas all members of the NCC's steering group have disappeared, been arrested or been forced to leave the country, except for Nobel Prize winner Sviatlana Aleksijevic, who received exceptional support from European diplomats in order to protect her;
- H. whereas the environment for the work of human rights defenders has continuously deteriorated, with human rights defenders being systematically subjected to intimidation, harassment and restrictions to fundamental freedoms; whereas the widespread impunity of law enforcement officers contributes to even further human rights violations and retaliations against human rights defenders; whereas human rights organisations are systematically denied registration, and whereas membership of non-registered groups and receiving foreign funds is criminalised; whereas human rights lawyers are disbarred for defending detained civil and political activists, who cannot rely on receiving a fair trial;
- I. whereas there are no independent news agencies registered in Belarus, where press freedom has significantly deteriorated since 2015; whereas human rights defenders and journalists who observed or covered demonstrations, and those who have criticised the state's environmental policy or commented on the COVID-19 pandemic in Belarus, have also been targeted by the authorities and may face criminal charges; whereas the

authorities of Belarus failed to provide facts about and react in a timely manner to the pandemic, and were instead actively spreading false information that jeopardised the health of its citizens;

- J. whereas Belarus is the only country in Europe to still carry out capital punishment;
1. Stands firmly with the people of Belarus and emphasises the need for a peaceful and democratic solution to the current crisis, underpinned by independent and free media and a strong civil society; supports the Belarusian people's call for free, fair, transparent and inclusive new elections in accordance with international standards and under the supervision of independent observers;
 2. Demands an immediate end to the violence and unlawful detentions; insists on the immediate and unconditional release of and dropping of all charges against human rights defenders, activists, journalists and anyone else arbitrarily detained or convicted in retaliation for exercising their civil and political rights; insists furthermore on a thorough and impartial investigation into all incidents of arbitrary detention, ill treatment and torture;
 3. Calls for a stop to all ill-treatment and torture, for the introduction of a specific definition of torture into Belarus's Criminal Code in line with international human rights standards, and for legislative changes to criminalise enforced disappearance;
 4. Urges all relevant Belarusian stakeholders to engage in a constructive, mediated national dialogue, including the National Coordination Council, and to cooperate fully with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, the UN Committee against Torture and the UN Human Rights Committee, in order to carry out long-overdue reforms to protect human rights and strengthen democracy;
 5. Insists on the need to ensure citizens' rights to freedom of assembly, association, expression and opinion, as well as media freedom, and thus lift all restrictions in law and practice that impede these freedoms;
 6. Stresses the urgent need to implement OSCE ODIHR recommendations in order to include substantial procedural and legal safeguards that enhance inclusiveness, integrity and transparency during all stages of the electoral process, in particular the inclusion of clear and reasonable criteria and mechanisms for candidate registration and signature verification;
 7. Condemns the suppression of internet and media, road blockades, and intimidation of journalists in order to stop the flow of information about the situation in the country, as well as the disinformation campaigns aimed at deliberately misleading the Belarusian public and blaming third actors for current events;
 8. Calls as a matter of urgency for the healthcare system to be strengthened and for the public to be provided with all relevant and life-saving information about the pandemic in a transparent and inclusive manner; emphasises the need to improve the access, availability and quality of healthcare in places of detention, in particular given the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the working conditions of medical staff, given reports of police preventing help for injured protesters and arresting medical workers;

9. Strongly condemns the ongoing application of the death penalty and calls for its immediate and permanent abolition and, pending this, an effective right to appeal against death penalty sentences;
10. Demands a stop to all acts of repression against human rights defenders, opposition figures, civil society activists, election observers, environmental rights defenders, religious leaders, and independent journalists and bloggers, and insists on guaranteeing their ability to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions;
11. Fully supports Belarusian workers and independent trade unions and calls on the Belarusian authorities and employers to respect the fundamental rights of Belarusian workers to strike without risk of dismissal, arrest or other reprisal, in line with ILO Conventions 87 and 98;
12. Calls on the Commission, the Member States, the EEAS and the EU Delegation in Minsk to increase EU engagement with and financial support to civil society activists and organisations, human rights defenders, independent unions, and independent media in Belarus and abroad, while avoiding providing any funding to the government and state-controlled projects, including channelling assistance or funding through these entities, and stopping European Investment Bank (EIB), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and other loans to the current regime;
13. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase diplomatic, humanitarian and media presence in Belarus and to increase direct contacts with Belarusian people;
14. Asks the Commission to launch a targeted EU assistance programme to help victims of political repression and police violence, in particular with access to legal counsel, material and medical help, and rehabilitation; invites the Commission to design a large-scale conditional financial package for supporting a democratic Belarus in the future;
15. Asks the Member States to take all necessary measures to receive people from Belarus who are seeking refuge in the EU;
16. Asks the Commission to urgently set up a scholarship programme for students exmatriculated from Belarusian universities for their pro-democratic stance; calls for financial and academic support to Belarusian scholars by granting them access the EU's research institutions;
17. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the EEAS to provide full support to the efforts of the UN Human Rights Council and the OSCE Moscow Mechanism to ensure documentation and reporting by international organisations of human rights violations and subsequent accountability and justice for victims;
18. Expects the Commission, the Member States and the EEAS to provide more exposure and legitimisation to the president-elect Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and the National Coordination Council of Belarus initiated by her;
19. Asks the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) and the Council to work speedily towards

targeted sanctions on those responsible for violence, repression and falsification of election results, including incumbent President Lukashenko; calls for a review of the EU's policy towards Belarus with a particular focus on the EU's support to civil society and the people of Belarus, as well as the appointment of an EU Special Representative for Belarus in order to support the process of a peaceful transition of power in accordance with the will of the Belarusian people;

20. Calls on the VP/HR and the Council to explore the possibility of extending the sanctions list to include Russian citizens who support the current regime in Belarus by means of propaganda, disinformation, political consultancy, economic support and covert or open military or special forces support, in particular the leadership and staff of Russian state-owned or state-sponsored TV channels, including VGTRK (Rossiya), Perviy Kanal and RT;
21. Calls on the national ice hockey federations of the EU Member States and all other democratic countries to urge the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) to withdraw its decision to hold the 2021 World Ice Hockey Championship partially in Belarus until the situation and, in particular, the state of human rights in the country have improved;
22. 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 governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the President, Government and Parliament of Belarus.