



Plenary sitting

B9-0275/2020

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 following the presidential elections of 9 August 2020
(2020/2779(RSP))

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on behalf of the ECR Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Belarus following the presidential elections of 9 August 2020
(2020/2779(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Joint Declarations of the Eastern Partnership Summits of 2009 in Prague, 2011 in Warsaw, 2013 in Vilnius, 2015 in Riga and 2017 in Brussels,
 - having regard to its resolutions on Belarus, in particular those of 24 November 2016 on the situation in Belarus¹, of 6 April 2017 on the situation in Belarus², of 19 April 2018 on Belarus³, and of 4 October 2018 on the deterioration of media freedom in Belarus, notably the case of Charter 97⁴,
 - having regard to the presidential election held in Belarus on 9 August 2020,
 - having regard to the public statements by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) on the situation in Belarus following the presidential election of 9 August 2020,
 - having regard to the statement of the President of the European Parliament of 13 August 2020, of the leaders of the five political groups of 17 August 2020 on the situation in Belarus following the presidential election of 9 August 2020, and of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of 11 August 2020,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the people of Belarus share a common European heritage and culture; whereas Belarus directly neighbour three EU Member States; whereas the situation in Belarus may have a direct impact on the EU;
- B. whereas Lukashenko's 26 years in power have been marked by policies of undermining sovereignty and the independence of the country and weakening the Belarussian identity, heritage and culture;
- C. whereas the 2020 presidential elections were marred by widespread manipulation, intimidation and repression against other candidates, independent journalists and bloggers; whereas this is a pattern recurring through all previous elections in Belarus since 1994;
- D. whereas election day was marked by numerous irregularities, including intimidation of

¹ OJ C 224, 27.6.2018, p. 135.

² OJ C 298, 23.8.2018, p. 60.

³ OJ C 390, 18.11.2019, p. 100.

⁴ OJ C 11, 13.1.2020, p. 18.

voters, denial of their right to vote and falsification of protocols from the precincts on a massive scale; whereas independent international observers were not present in the country; whereas independent domestic observers, including those who monitored early voting in the Belarusian presidential election, have been detained across the country after documenting numerous violations of electoral law;

- E. whereas the Central Election Committee announced Alexander Lukashenko as the winner of the election having allegedly received 80.10 % of the vote, while his main opponent Svetlana Tikhanovskaya only received 10.12 %; whereas according to independent research, social polls and real data from a number of polling stations Ms Tikhanovskaya achieved around 60 % of the votes and should be considered the real winner of the election;
- F. whereas after the publication of the falsified results, the Belarusian people immediately organised peaceful protests of an unprecedented scale, which were met with brutal force by the security services, leading to thousands of protestors being arrested, tortured, wounded, and some even killed, including: Alyaksandr Taraykouski, Konstantin Shishmakov, Alexander Vikhor and Gennady Shutov; whereas peaceful protesters have been subjected to intimidation, such as threatening calls, attempted break-ins, and persecution by state law enforcement, but also by unidentified well-organised groups of civil individuals; whereas for almost 40 days rallies attended in the thousands have been held in the capital, but also in smaller cities and towns countrywide;
- G. whereas the protests have been accompanied by widespread strikes in industrial plants, companies, schools, universities, cities, towns and villages, all over the country; whereas people taking part in the protests or officially supporting them have been dismissed from work, deprived of official housing, and expelled from universities or schools;
- H. whereas the European Council of 19 August 2020 decided to impose sanctions against a substantial number of individuals responsible for violence, repression and the falsification of the election results in Belarus, prohibiting them from entering the EU and freezing their financial assets in the EU;
- I. whereas after the falsification of the election results in 2010 and the brutal crackdown on protesters, the EU, the US and other democratic countries imposed wide sanctions on those responsible for election fraud, violence and links to the regime, including Alexander Lukashenko and more than 160 people and entities from senior state leadership, law enforcement, the judiciary, the election committee, state propaganda and businesspeople; whereas the sanctions were mostly lifted in 2016 without delivering any lasting results, which has weakened the credibility of the EU in the eyes of the democratic Belarusian opposition; whereas the recent list of proposed sanctions is very narrow and limited and is not proportionate to the scale of violence and brutality imposed by the regime on the peaceful protesters;
- J. whereas access to the internet and free media has been severely limited by the authorities; whereas a European provider, the A1 Telekom Austria Group, has allegedly been cutting access to mobile internet for their Belarusian customers after orders from the Belarusian authorities;

1. Does not recognise the results of the elections held in Belarus on 9 August 2020 and Alexander Lukashenko as legitimate leader and President of Belarus; accordingly, calls on Mr Lukashenko to respect the decision of the people of Belarus and peacefully step down;
2. Calls for new and transparent presidential and parliamentary elections in Belarus that meet democratic standards; calls for the EU, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Council of Europe to engage in dialogue with Belarusian civil society with a view to launching a new electoral process, under the supervision of a new Electoral Commission, a body that can be trusted by all parties including international observers, under tight international scrutiny;
3. Applauds the Belarusian people for their courage and determination and strongly supports their desire for democratic change and freedom and to base their country's future on the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights; pays tribute to those who gave their lives for the sake of a free, democratic and sovereign Belarus, expresses sympathy to the victims of torture and other forms of brutality perpetrated by the regime and hopes for their prompt and full recovery;
4. Expresses deepest concern that in the 21st century on the territory of a direct neighbour of the EU we are witnessing torture and state-driven violence on an unprecedented scale; is of the opinion that a firm and unambiguous EU stance on the situation in Belarus is a matter of the credibility of the EU's foreign policy and real commitment to European values;
5. Acknowledges the exceptional determination and steadfastness of Belarusian women, often the families of political prisoners or detained and tortured protesters, in their weekly women's solidarity marches, which each week are met with an increasingly aggressive response from the state apparatus;
6. Commends the actions taken by workers of numerous factories and institutions throughout the country who have joined the protests in various ways; likewise, commends the actions of the journalists and employees of public media outlets, who despite oppression and threats against them have remained true to the journalist ethos and continued to support the democratic opposition even though they were subsequently fired; recognises the work of independent media, including Charter 97, Bielsat, Radio Svoboda and others; calls for the EU to use the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) and other instruments to support these outlets and journalists who are subjected to repression by the regime;
7. Deplores the persecution of the members of the opposition Coordination Council and calls on the authorities to end all violence and repression; strongly condemns the arbitrary and unexplained arrests, detentions, forced deportations and kidnappings on political grounds in Belarus of individuals such as Maria Kalesnikova, Andrei Yashchuk, Irina Sukhiy, Anton Radniansky and Ivan Krautsou;
8. Demands the immediate cessation of violence and intimidation against peaceful protesters, the release of all political prisoners and all members of civil society arbitrarily detained before, during and after the elections, and the full restoration and respect for human rights and freedoms, including the freedom of press, freedom of

assembly and other political and civil freedoms in Belarus;

9. Deplores in the strongest possible terms the appalling acts of violence against and cruel repression and torture of peaceful protesters and detainees; calls for a full international investigation into these crimes, and in particular in the case of the deaths of: Alyaksandr Taraykouski, Konstantin Shishmakov, Alexander Vikhor and Gennady Shutov;
10. Warns the regime against any attempts to use national, religious, ethnic and other minorities as a proxy target, diverting the attention of society from the electoral fraud and the subsequent massive protests and repression; condemns the prevention of the return to the country of the head of the Catholic Church of Belarus, Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz; likewise, warns against the creation of false narratives about the external threats to Belarus and its territorial integrity emanating from the EU and its Member States; expresses its deepest concern about using such narratives as justification for military activities, including the movement of Belarusian forces in the Grodno region towards the border with Poland and Lithuania;
11. Recognises the Belarusian people's Coordination Council as the legitimate representation of the people demanding democratic change, freedom and dignity in Belarus; supports a peaceful transition of power as a result of an inclusive national dialogue in full respect of the Belarusian people's democratic and fundamental rights;
12. Asks the EEAS and the European Commission to prepare a comprehensive review of their policy towards Belarus, taking into account different scenarios for developments in the country, which also include a substantially increased financial and technical commitment from the EU should democratic changes, including new elections, become a reality;
13. Welcomes the decision of the EU's foreign affairs ministers and the European Council to blacklist those responsible for violence after the presidential elections and to impose individual sanctions, including an assets freeze, against Belarusian officials who are liable for or have contributed to the falsification of the results of the presidential elections in Belarus and violations of civil and human rights; underlines that this list should be constantly updated and extended if necessary and should include Alexander Lukashenko and his close collaborators;
14. Asks the EU institutions and the Member States to provide active and direct support to Belarusian non-governmental organisations and communities, grant all necessary assistance to Belarusian citizens and human right defenders, halt any financial or other support to the state institutions of Belarus, and strengthen support programmes for civil society, NGOs and journalists, the European scholarship programme for Belarusians and loans for specific reform programmes, thereby unlocking partnership priorities and ensuring full cooperation within the Eastern Partnership;
15. Deplores the Russian Federation's involvement in and support for the Lukashenko regime and condemns the Kremlin's hybrid war against the Belarusian people; is gravely concerned by the deep infiltration of public media, secret and security services and government branches – including the President's office – by Russian advisers and agents; calls on the Council to support the will of the Belarusian nation by restricting the Kremlin's interference, including by blocking Russia's access to the SWIFT system

and introducing further targeted sanctions;

16. Urges the Russian Federation not to engage in any actions that would threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Belarus and will not accept any potential steps taken by the authorities without legitimacy, in breach of international law and against the will of the Belarusian people, within the Lukashenko regime's relations with the Russian Federation which would result in the restriction of the sovereignty and independence of Belarus;
17. Notes the valued solidarity with Belarusian activists expressed by Russian pro-democratic civil society; warns against any attempts to militarise the situation and provoke tensions with neighbouring countries;
18. Welcomes the decision of the Republic of Serbia to withdraw from the Slavic Brotherhood exercises;
19. Recognises the need for the East StratCom Task Force and EU Member State media to report more broadly on the situation in Belarus and in a more detailed manner; Calls on the EED to step up support to Belarusian civil society;
20. Encourages Member States to facilitate and accelerate visa procedures for those fleeing Belarus for political reasons, and to extend to them and their families all necessary support and assistance;
21. Expresses its utmost concern about the actions of the A1 Telekom Austria Group; calls on the company to provide unrestricted access to mobile internet for its Belarusian customers in line with the values of democracy, the rule of law and freedom of speech;
22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the authorities of the Republic of Belarus.