



Plenary sitting

B9-0392/2020

24.11.2020

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

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

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on the continuous violations of human rights in Belarus, in particular the murder of Raman Bandarenka

(2020/2882(RSP))

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on behalf of the Renew Group

B9-0392/2020

European Parliament resolution on on the continuous violations of human rights in Belarus, in particular the murder of Raman Bandarenka

(2020/2882(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Belarus, in particular those of 4 October 2018 on the deterioration of media freedom in Belarus, notably the case of Charter 97¹, of 19 April 2018 on Belarus², of 6 April 2017 on the situation in Belarus³, of 24 November 2016 on the situation in Belarus⁴, and of 17 September 2020 on the situation in Belarus⁵,
- having regard to its recommendation of 21 October 2020 to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on relations with Belarus,
- having regard to the launch of the Eastern Partnership in Prague on 7 May 2009 as a common endeavour of the EU and its six Eastern European Partners and 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, and to the Eastern Partnership leaders' videoconference held in 2020,
- having regard to the so-called presidential elections held in Belarus on 9 August 2020,
- having regard to the declarations by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on behalf of the European Union on the presidential elections, notably those of 11 August 2020 and 17 August 2020,
- having regard to the statement of the President of the European Parliament of 13 August 2020 and that of the leaders of the five political groups of 17 August 2020 on the situation in Belarus following the so-called presidential elections of 9 August 2020,
- having regard to the main outcome of the extraordinary meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council of 14 August 2020 and the conclusions of the President by the European Council on 19 August 2020 on the situation in Belarus following the presidential elections of 9 August 2020,
- having regard to the statements by the VP/HR of 7 September 2020 on arbitrary and unexplained arrests and detentions on political grounds, and of 11 September 2020 on the escalation of violence and intimidation against members of the Coordination Council,

¹ OJ C 11, 13.1.2020, p. 18.

² OJ C 390, 18.11.2019, p. 100.

³ OJ C 298, 23.8.2018, p. 60.

⁴ OJ C 224, 27.6.2018, p. 135.

⁵ P9_TA(2020)0231

- having regard to the statement by the EEAS Spokesperson on the death of Raman Bandarenka of 13 November 2020,
- having regard to the Joint Statement by the EU Delegation to Belarus on behalf of the EU Member States represented in Minsk, the British Embassy, the Embassy of Switzerland, and the Embassy of the United States of America on the deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus of 17 November 2020,
- having regard to the EU Global Strategy and the revised European Neighbourhood Policy,
- having regard to the Council decision of 17 February 2020 to prolong the 2004 EU embargo on arms and on equipment that could be used for internal repression regarding Belarus⁶,
- 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 OSCE Rapporteur’s Report under the Moscow Mechanism on Alleged Human Rights Violations related to the Presidential Elections of 9 August 2020 in Belarus,
- having regard to the UN Human Rights Council’s Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus of 10 July 2020,
- having regard to the UN statements on the situation in Belarus, in particular those of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights of 12 August 2020, the UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights of 19 November and 13 August 2020, and the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights of 13 November, 11 September and 21 August 2020, and statements during the urgent debate on the situation of human rights at the 45th session of the Human Rights Council on 18 September 2020,
- having regard to the award of the European Parliament’s 2020 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to the democratic opposition in Belarus,
- having regard to Rule 132(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas the so-called presidential elections in Belarus of 9 August 2020 fell far short of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) guidelines and systematic irregularities and violations of international electoral standards were reported during polling;
- B. whereas the Central Election Commission of Belarus announced incumbent President Aliaksandr Lukashenka as the winner of the so-called elections; whereas credible nationwide reports and grassroots social media initiatives demonstrated large-scale electoral fraud in favour of the incumbent Aliaksandr Lukashenka; whereas Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya is the President-elect according to the Belarusian people;

⁶ OJ L 45, 18.2.2020, p. 3.

- C. whereas the European Union, its Member States and the European Parliament rejected the results of the so-called presidential elections, and do not recognise Aliaksandr Lukashenka as president of Belarus;
- D. whereas a Coordination Council was established to provide an institutional partner for a national dialogue process aimed at organising new elections that would be held according to international standards and under ODIHR election observation; whereas the Belarusian authorities refuse to recognize the Coordination Council and instead apply measures of harassment, including interrogation, arrest and imprisonment, against all of its leading members; whereas harassment and threats have led leading members of the opposition to seek refuge in the European Union;
- E. whereas unprecedented peaceful protests and strikes continue in Belarus since more than 100 days after their start after the announcement of the results in the so-called presidential elections of 9 August 2020, demonstrating the level of discontent and mobilisation of Belarusian society;
- F. whereas the Belarusian authorities reacted to the legitimate and peaceful protests with disproportionate violence; whereas the response of the security forces to peaceful protests has been very harsh, with frequent use of excessive and indiscriminate force;
- G. whereas more than 25,000 Belarusian are estimated to have been detained at some point for protesting against the regime, before and after the 9 August elections and more than 1,200 criminal cases have been initiated; whereas most recently, on both 8 and 15 November 2020, over 1,000 people were detained during ongoing peaceful protests; whereas there are over 125 political prisoners in Belarus;
- H. whereas the Belarusian authorities have continued their crackdown with many students, academics, medical professionals, employees of state enterprises, athletes, cultural figures and business people being harassed, arrested and expelled from their establishments solely for expressing opposition to the widespread human rights violations currently taking place in Belarus;
- I. whereas Belarusian children are targets of repression, as their parents are being threatened with losing custody for taking part in protests;
- J. whereas prosecution, arrests and firing of medical workers and doctors over their participation in solidarity chains and professional marches to denounce the violence and ill-treatment perpetrated against protesters further limits Belarus' capacity to manage the COVID-19 pandemic;
- K. whereas the Belarus Ministry of Interior Affairs released a statement on 12 October 2020 announcing its willingness to use live ammunition against protesters; whereas the authorities used stun grenades, pepper spray, fired rubber bullets directly at the people and fired shots into the air at several protests; whereas there are constant transport and communication obstructions, particularly restrictions on access to the Internet, as a way to prevent and disperse protests;
- L. whereas human rights defenders have documented at least 750 cases of torture and ill-treatment, including cases of sexual violence, rape and ill-treatment of people deprived of

their liberty, while several people are missing or were found dead, including Alyaksandr Taraykouski, Konstantin Shishmakov, Artsyom Parukou, Alexander Vikhor and Gennady Shutov;

- M. whereas Raman Bandarenka, a 31-year-old children's art teacher and activist, was detained in the evening of 11 November 2020 by a group of plain clothed policemen, brutally beaten in detention and after two hours taken to hospital with head injuries from which he died the next day;
- N. whereas the Belarusian authorities failed to take immediate law-stipulated measures to investigate the crime and over 1,100 people commemorating Bandarenka's death were detained across Belarus in the following days; whereas Orthodox and Catholic Church representatives received notifications from the Investigation Committee of Belarus of a violation of law due to their condemnation of the destruction of the memorial commemorating Raman Bandarenka by the security forces;
- O. whereas the Belarusian authorities continuously refuse to take action to investigate complaints regarding torture, ill-treatment, sexual violence, disappearance and killing by security forces including their disproportionate use of weapons;
- P. whereas new amendments were introduced to the law on Belarus citizenship providing a possibility to deprive naturalized citizens of Belarus citizenship and while several Belarusian citizens are being denied entry into Belarus for political reasons;
- Q. whereas the Lukashenka regime continues its attempts to reform the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus in a non-transparent way and under pressure from the Russian Federation;
- R. whereas authorities in Belarus have blocked the bank accounts of the Belarusians who have received financial help from the BY_help initiative which fundraised and provided donations to the victims of repressions, helping them pay fines, medical expenses and legal fees;
- S. whereas the Belarusian authorities continue their violent crackdown on independent Belarusian reporters and citizen journalists and engage in deliberate attempts to hamper objective reporting; whereas on 15 November alone 23 journalists reporting from the protests held in memory of Raman Bandarenka in different cities of Belarus were arrested; whereas foreign media and journalists are not allowed into Belarus;
- T. whereas the Belarusian authorities refuse to enter into a dialogue with the Belarusian people and their delegated Coordination Council, and refuse the mediation offered by the international community; whereas the expulsion of European diplomats from Belarus continues;
- U. whereas the human rights situation in Belarus continues to deteriorate, with human rights defenders being systematically subjected to intimidation, harassment and restrictions to fundamental freedoms; whereas Belarus is the only country in Europe to still carry out capital punishment;

V. whereas the Astravyets nuclear power plant, which started producing electricity on 3 November 2020, has stopped its production after a few days due to a failure, raising new concerns about its safety;

W. whereas the European Union imposed sanctions against 55 individuals responsible for violence, repression and the falsification of the election results in Belarus, including Aliaksandr Lukashenka;

1. Condemns in the strongest possible terms the murder of Raman Bandarenka and calls for independent and effective investigations into his death and the protest-related deaths of Alyaksandr Taraykouski, Alexander Vikhor, Artsyom Parukou, Gennady Shutov and Konstantin Shishmakov;
2. Calls for an immediate halt to the violence, the cruel repression, torture and ill-treatment of peaceful protesters and detainees;
3. Continues to condemn the Belarusian authorities for their violent repression of peaceful protests; calls for the immediate and unconditional release and dropping of all charges against all arbitrarily detained persons, including persons detained for political reasons; insists upon providing detainees with speedy access to lawyers and families and halting harassment of lawyers working on these cases;
4. Condemns the ongoing intimidation, persecution and disproportionate use of force towards protesters, participants in strikes, members of the Coordination Council and other opposition figures, civil society activists, independent journalists, bloggers and all other citizens; demands that all prosecutions on political grounds be stopped;
5. Deplores the repression against children in Belarus and calls for an immediate halt of the practice of using custody rights as a pressure tool against Belarusian parents;
6. Strongly rejects any covert or overt external interference from any third state, including the Russian Federation, which delegated its security and propaganda experts to assist the Belarusian regime and is applying pressure on the execution of the constitutional reform in Belarus;
7. Supports a peaceful and democratic transition of power as a result of an inclusive national dialogue in full respect of the Belarusian people's democratic and fundamental rights; reiterates, in this respect, the calls by the Belarusian people for the organisation of new, free and fair elections to take place as soon as possible under international supervision, led by the OSCE/ODIHR and in accordance with internationally recognised standards;
8. Urges an immediate start of a national dialogue in Belarus between the Belarusian authorities and the Belarusian people represented by the Coordination Council;
9. Expresses its clear support for the people of Belarus in their legitimate demands and aspirations for free and fair elections, fundamental freedoms and human rights, democratic representation, political participation and dignity;

10. 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; strongly condemns the ongoing application of the death penalty and calls for its immediate and permanent abolition;
11. Condemns the one-sided actions of the Belarusian regime to reform the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus and insists that such reform should take paces after free and fair elections in Belarus and with a broad public consultation;
12. Underlines the need for a comprehensive investigation into the crimes committed by the Lukashenka regime against the people of Belarus;
13. Condemns the actions of the National Assembly of Belarus to strip Belarusian citizens of their citizenship and suggests considering its members for the EU sanctions list;
14. Highlights that actions taken so far by the EU and the EU Member States against the Lukashenka regime are insufficient and calls on the EU Council to enlarge the EU sanctions regime to public and private companies supporting and funding the Lukashenka regime and to credibly enlarge the list and impose additional sanctions on the individuals responsible for electoral fraud, repression and intimidation in Belarus;
15. 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;
16. Urges to halt any engagement and cooperation with Belarusian authorities in the programs and initiatives under the EU Eastern Partnership policy;
17. Calls for a complete freeze of all EU fund transfers to the current Belarusian Government and state-controlled projects and stopping EIB, EBRD and other loans to the current regime; set up clear conditions to guarantee that EU financial support to Belarus will not end up in the hands of the regime's representatives or serve to legitimise its actions, unless the regime ceases all repression, opens up to dialogue with citizens and allows new free and fair elections;
18. Condemns the expulsion of European diplomats from Belarus and, given that the Belarusian regime continuously refuses communication and cooperation with the EU, suggests to the Council and the Commission to consider lowering the level of diplomatic engagement with Belarus;
19. Urges the Commission, the EEAS and the EU Member States to increase and urgently provide support for the people of Belarus, and their democratic aspirations, as well as civil society, human rights defenders, and independent media;
20. Expresses concerns over the COVID-19 situation in Belarus; urges the Commission, the EEAS and the EU Member States to support civic initiatives aimed to manage the COVID-19 pandemic in Belarus and to support the training of Belarusian medical staff fighting COVID-19;

21. Restates its call for the EU to further enhance people-to-people contacts by supporting Belarusian, independent CSOs, human rights defenders, media representatives and independent journalists; asks the Commission to urgently set up a scholarship programme for students and scholars exmatriculated from Belarusian universities for their pro-democratic stance;
22. Encourages EU Member States to further facilitate the procedure for obtaining visas for those fleeing Belarus for political reasons or for those who require medical treatment as a result of violence perpetrated against them, and to offer them and their families all necessary support and assistance; calls on the Commission to increase its support to civil society and victims of repression and to mobilise greater resources for their physical, psychological and material support;
23. Condemns the suppression of the media and the Internet, as well as the beating, arrest and intimidation of journalists and bloggers; underscores the right of the people of Belarus to have unhindered access to information; calls on the EU to use the European Endowment for Democracy and other instruments in order to support these outlets and journalists who are subject to repression by the regime;
24. Deplores the fact that Belarus has started the first reactor of the Astravyets nuclear power plant, without complying with the highest international environmental and safety standards and fully implementing the EU stress test recommendations, which is even more concerning in these times of high political instability; calls upon the Council and Commission to insist on full respect for international nuclear and environmental safety standards, transparent, inclusive and constructive cooperation with international authorities as regards the Astravyets NPP, and link their implementation to the disbursement of future EU financial support; supports efforts to ensure European solidarity on the issue of banning imports of energy from the Astravyets NPP into the EU market;
25. Reiterates its call on the Council and Commission to establish a comprehensive, effective and timely EU-wide restrictive measures, a so-called European Magnitsky Act, that would allow for the targeting of any individual, state and non-state actors, and other entities responsible for or involved in grave human rights violations, abuses and corruption, without any further delay;
26. 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.