MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission
pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the systematic repression in Belarus and its consequences for European
security following the abductions from an EU civilian plane intercepted by the
Belarusian authorities
(2021/2741(RSP))

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group
European Parliament resolution on the systematic repression in Belarus and its consequences for European security following the abductions from an EU civilian plane intercepted by the Belarusian authorities (2021/2741(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions and recommendations on Belarus,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 24 May 2021 on Belarus,
- having regard to the declaration by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on behalf of the EU of 24 May 2021 on the forced diversion of Ryanair flight FR4978 to Minsk on 23 May 2021,
- having regard to the joint statement by the G7 foreign ministers and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 27 May 2021 on Belarus,
- having regard to the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) of 26 March 2021 on the EU’s support to the International Accountability Platform for Belarus,
- having regard to the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, signed on 7 December 1944, and the Montreal Convention for the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of civil aviation, concluded on 23 September 1971,
- having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas on 23 May 2021, the Belarusian authorities, in an act of state terrorism, forced a civilian plane to perform an emergency landing in Minsk; whereas the plane, owned by an EU company, flying between two EU capitals (Athens to Vilnius) and carrying more than 170 passengers and crew, was forced to land by a Belarusian military aircraft using an alleged bomb threat as a pretext;

B. whereas two of the flight’s passengers, Raman Pratasevich, an independent journalist from Belarus and co-founder of the opposition Nexta channel, and Sofia Sapecga, a student at the European Humanities University in Vilnius, were detained by the Belarusian authorities and prevented from boarding the plane at Minsk airport to its original destination; whereas this incident is yet another blatant attempt by the Belarusian authorities to silence all opposition voices, civil society and the independent media;

C. whereas not enough is known about the sequence of events leading to the forced landing of the civilian plane in Minsk, or the role of the Russian intelligence services therein; whereas the Belarusian authorities cited an alleged email as the source of the threat,
which was sent after the pilots were alerted about the alleged bomb threat by the Belarusian authorities; whereas four unidentified persons also disembarked in Minsk, in addition to Raman Pratasevich and Sofia Sapega;

D. whereas it is clear, however, that these actions constitute a violation of international law, namely of the Chicago and Montreal Conventions, and jeopardised the safety of the passengers and crew on board this flight; whereas this incident demonstrates that the regime has become a threat to international peace and security;

E. whereas Raman Pratasevich appeared in several pieces of video footage broadcast by Belarusian state TV, with visible bruises on his skin; whereas President Lukashenka threatened to invite investigators from the Russian-occupied Donbas region to interrogate Mr Pratasevich;

F. whereas the fraudulent 2020 presidential elections in Belarus led to unprecedented protests calling for new free and fair elections and to a violent crackdown against opposition to the regime, with tens of thousands of arbitrary arrests, as well as reports of torture, ill-treatment and murder;

G. whereas the human rights situation in Belarus continues to deteriorate, with growing numbers of political prisoners; whereas the Belarusian authorities have shown an appalling disregard for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Belarusian people, as well as for their lives, by carrying out the repression of their own population; whereas human rights defenders, opposition politicians, civil society, independent journalists and other activists are systematically subjected to intimidation, harassment and restrictions on their fundamental freedoms;

H. whereas there is no indication that the Belarusian authorities are investigating the thousands of reports of police brutality filed since mid-August 2020, or the killings of protesters; whereas as of June 2021, there are more than 450 political prisoners in Belarus; whereas the widespread impunity for human rights violations perpetuates the desperate situation of the Belarusian people; whereas the absence of the rule of law impedes their right to a fair trial; whereas Belarus is the only country in Europe to still carry out capital punishment;

I. whereas after several months of detention, political prisoner Vitold Ashurak died in prison under suspicious circumstances; whereas under the immense physical and psychological pressure they are subjected to, many detainees have attempted or committed suicide, such as, for example, Stepan Latypov who attempted suicide during his court hearing, and 18-year-old Dmitry Stakhovsky who took his life after being investigated by the Belarusian authorities for taking part in the anti-regime protests;

J. whereas Belarusian opposition politician Paval Sevyarynets, European Belarus civil campaign activists Maksim Vinyarski, Andrey Voynich, Paval Yukhnевич and Yauhen Afnahel, as well as Telegram channel administrator Iryna Shchasnaya and blogger Dzmitry Kazlou, were sentenced to four to seven years in prison on charges in connection with unsanctioned political and civic activities in a closed trial at the Mahilyou Regional Court on 25 May 2021;

K. whereas on 31 May 2021, Belarus’ border security agency announced a severe
tightening of the already strict rules limiting citizens’ ability to exit the country, essentially blocking all land border crossings; whereas the EU moved to ban overflight of EU airspace by Belarusian airlines and to prevent access to EU airports of flights operated by these airlines, which makes it even harder for people to leave the country and forces them to travel via Russia;

1. Continues to stand firmly in solidarity with the people of Belarus, who continue to suffer at the hands of the Belarusian authorities; strongly condemns the violence and repression employed by the Belarusian authorities against peaceful protesters, opposition politicians, the independent media, human rights defenders, representatives of civil society, academia and trade unions, lawyers and other Belarusian citizens;

2. Demands an immediate end to the violence, persecution, and unlawful detentions; insists on the immediate and unconditional release of and the dropping of all charges against all political prisoners, including Raman Pratasevich and Sofia Sapega;

3. Continues to call for an inclusive national dialogue in order to find a peaceful and democratic solution to the current crisis and bring about new free and fair elections, underpinned by an independent and free media and a strong civil society;

4. Insists on the need to ensure fundamental freedoms and human rights, the rule of law and a functioning independent judiciary in Belarus, and the ceasing of all repression, persecution, ill-treatment, gender-based violence and torture, as well as on the immediate permanent abolition of the death penalty;

5. Calls on the Council and the VP/HR to change their approach towards Belarus and not continue to let the regime get away with mass repression and breaches of international law, but to come up with a resolute response and take action beyond the current measures;

6. Insists that the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Member States increase engagement with civil society activists, human rights defenders and the independent media in Belarus and abroad, including through capacity-building and financial support, and increase support to the European Endowment for Democracy in its activities on the ground;

7. Asks the Commission to launch a targeted EU assistance programme to help victims of political repression and police brutality, as well as to ease visa requirements, improve asylum processes for those seeking refuge from Belarus, increase the offer of scholarships and grants for students and academics, and consider establishing a university in exile in the EU where Belarusian scholars can work in their national languages;

8. Welcomes the Member States’ decision to impose transport sanctions on Belarusian airlines and advises them to reverse the sanctions on a selective and temporary basis, in order to facilitate people’s attempts to leave the country;

9. Reiterates its call on the EU Delegation and national diplomatic representations in Belarus to closely monitor the situation and the trials of individual political prisoners on the ground, to offer them any support that they may need and to work together to secure
their swift release, as well as to increase their support for human rights defenders’ work, and, where appropriate, to facilitate the issuance of emergency visas, and provide temporary shelter in EU Member States;

10. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the EEAS to cooperate with international partners, such as the OSCE Moscow Mechanism and the UN Human Rights Council, as well as human rights defenders and civil society on the ground, to ensure the monitoring, documentation and reporting of human rights violations and subsequent accountability and justice for victims; welcomes and supports the establishment of the International Accountability Platform for Belarus;

11. Commits to help strengthening the capacity of the democratic forces, enhancing the role of civil society, supporting the fully fledged political dialogue leading to a peaceful transfer of power in Belarus, as well as young political leaders and human rights defenders, through Parliament’s democracy support mechanisms;

12. Welcomes the Commission’s EUR 3 billion economic support package to the future democratic Belarus; asks the Commission to share its plans for the democratic transition of Belarus and the economic support package with Parliament, and to organise an international high-level political conference on the resolution of the crisis in Belarus, to be held without delay; calls on the Commission to stand ready to mobilise other international donors to contribute additionally to the economic support package;

13. Emphasises the need for international engagement, including discussions at the UN and NATO, and support for the international investigation, led by the International Civil Aviation Organization, into the 23 May incident to ascertain the breach of international aviation rules, as well as obtain clarity on the role of Russia in this incident;

14. Urges the Council to proceed immediately with the fourth package of sanctions and already prepare the next one, targeting officials who took part or were complicit in the electoral fraud and subsequent human rights violations in Belarus, including the persecution of independent journalists and bloggers, as well as companies which support Lukashenka and his regime, and the persons who participated in these most recent actions, such as intelligence officers and aviation authorities;

15. Calls on the Council and the VP/HR to consider further actions, such as banning EU financial institutions from holding Belarusian treasury bonds, sectoral sanctions, for example in the oil, potash, metal or wood sectors, or temporarily suspending Belarus from the SWIFT system; calls for the introduction of effective safeguards against the direct or indirect sale of Belarusian electricity produced in the Astravets nuclear power plant to EU markets; asks for EU-registered companies, particularly Siemens AG, to stop collaborating with the Belarusian authorities through sharing technology and know-how;

16. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to deny any kind of financial support to the Belarusian Government and refrain from all new foreign investments in Belarus and from granting new credit lines to Belarusian banks, including halting investments from EU countries to energy infrastructure projects in Belarus;

17. Demands more concerted EU action to effectively tackle the cigarette-smuggling
business from Belarus;

18. Calls on the Member States and the EEAS to improve intelligence sharing across the EU, as well as the capabilities of the EEAS as a coordination platform, in particular on the activities of foreign security services operating in the EU and the expulsion of potential spies, in order to prevent further incidents;

19. Expresses its solidarity with Latvia following the expulsion of its diplomats by Belarus; condemns the launch of a criminal investigation by the Belarusian Prosecutor General against the Foreign Minister of Latvia, as well as the Mayor of Riga; condemns all attempts by the Belarusian authorities to exert pressure on EU Member States, including the Belarusian prosecutors’ request to question Lithuania’s former president Valdas Adamkus, based on his alleged connections with an SS-subordinated auxiliary police battalion that carried out punitive operations in Belarus during World War Two;

20. Commends the Ukrainian Government’s decision to join EU Member States in imposing transport sanctions on Belarusian airlines, and calls on the Commission and the Council to impose punitive measures on Belavia and its passengers flying to Russian-annexed Crimea;

21. 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.