



Plenary sitting

B9-0344/2021

7.6.2021

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

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on behalf of the ECR Group

B9-0344/2021

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

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Belarus, in particular those of 26 November 2020 on the continuous violations of human rights in Belarus, in particular the murder of Raman Bandarenka¹, of 17 September 2020 on the situation in Belarus², of 4 October 2018 on the deterioration of media freedom in Belarus, notably the case of Charter 97³, of 19 April 2018 on Belarus⁴, of 6 April 2017 on the situation in Belarus⁵, and of 24 November 2016 on the situation in Belarus⁶,
 - 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 European Council conclusions on Belarus of 24 May 2021, of 1 October 2020 and of 16 October 2020, and to the Council conclusions on Belarus of 12 October 2020,
 - having regard to the 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 European Parliament’s Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 2020, which was awarded to the democratic opposition in Belarus on 22 October 2020,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas on 23 May 2021, the Belarusian authorities used an MiG-29 fighter jet to force a Ryanair aeroplane registered in Poland and flying between two EU capitals to land in Minsk, under false claims about a possible bomb threat;
- B. whereas the flight passengers Raman Pratasevich, co-founder and former editor-in-chief of the opposition Nexta channel, and his companion, Sofia Sapega, were arrested by the Belarusian authorities; whereas Mr Pratasevich was added by the Belarusian State Security Committee (KGB) to the list of individuals involved in terrorist activities and may now face the death penalty;

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0331.

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0231.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0375.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0174.

⁵ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0126.

⁶ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0456.

- C. whereas Mr Pratasevich was spied upon by ‘intel professionals carrying Russian passports’ in Greece and three other passengers with Russian citizenship voluntarily disembarked flight FR4978 after the forced landing in Minsk, pointing to cooperation between the Belarusian and Russian secret services;
- D. whereas the forced landing of flight FR4978 was in breach of many norms of international law, including the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation and the Montreal Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Civil Aviation;
- E. whereas the EU decided to ban the overflight of EU airspace by Belarusian airlines and prevent access to EU airports by such airlines, and all EU-based carriers have been called upon to avoid overflight of Belarus; whereas a total of 88 individuals and 7 entities are now included in the EU sanctions regime on Belarus, including Aliaksandr Lukashenka and his son;
- F. whereas Belarus is facing the most brutal repression in Europe since 1989; whereas more than 400 people, including 7 minors, have been recognised as political prisoners since the protests started after the stolen presidential election of 9 August 2020 and 35 000 people have been jailed, while some 3 000 politically motivated criminal cases have been opened against protestors and there have been over 4 600 claims of torture, violence and ill-treatment; whereas many cases of ill-treatment of people detained for participating in peaceful protests are a matter of big concern; whereas the administrations of detention facilities are deliberately creating inhuman detention conditions;
- G. whereas there is growing repression against representatives of the Polish minority in Belarus, including the arrest and sentencing of the well known Polish activist and Chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus, Andželika Borys, and the detention of the journalist, blogger and member of the Union of Poles in Belarus, Andrzej Poczobut; whereas the Polish schooling system in Belarus is under growing pressure from the regime, with schools being forced to close down, principals being arrested and detailed inspections being carried out; whereas, in his efforts to consolidate his hold on power, Lukashenka has cast the Polish minority as his enemy; whereas the arrest of leaders of the Polish minority have been accompanied by anti-Polish propaganda on state TV, as well as pressure on Polish-language schools; whereas Lukashenka has created a new public holiday in Belarus, to be celebrated on 17 September, marking the anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939;
- H. whereas a number of Member States’ diplomats have been expelled from Minsk and, in a gesture of solidarity with them, other countries have limited their diplomatic presence in Minsk; whereas NATO has decided to restrict access for Belarusian officials;
- I. whereas in the first years of Lukashenka’s presidency , opposition leaders and critical journalists disappeared and are believed to have been killed, presumably by the so-called death squadrons; whereas there is a growing number of credible allegations and evidence that top officials of the Lukashenka regime have been involved in the disappearances and killings, both on Belarusian soil and abroad, including the 2016 disappearance and killing of Pavel Sheremet in Kiev;

- J. whereas Vitold Ashurak, a political activist who was serving a 5-year sentence for leading protests against the regime, died in prison, presumably after being tortured; whereas Stsiapan Latypau, a Belarusian opposition activist, stabbed himself in the throat with a pen during a court hearing following pressure in detention;
- K. whereas Belarus has decided to start the commercial operation of the unsafe Astravets nuclear power plant;
1. Commends the Belarusian people for their courage in the face of the repression by the Lukashenka regime in Belarus;
 2. Strongly condemns the endangering of the lives of the 171 passengers on board Ryanair flight FR4978, and the arrest of Raman Pratasevich and his companion, Sofia Sapega;
 3. Demands the immediate and unconditional release of Raman Pratasevich and Sofia Sapega; reiterates its previous demands to release all other political prisoners held in Belarusian prisons;
 4. Reiterates its non-recognition of the election of Aliaksandr Lukashenka to the post of President of Belarus; considers the current regime in Belarus as illegitimate, illegal and criminal; condemns the crackdown on the thousands of Belarusians who peacefully protested in defence of their right to freedom, democracy and dignity; strongly condemns the systemic repression of Belarusian society for peaceful assemblies, for expression on social media and for other forms of expression;
 5. Demands that the Belarusian authorities stop the numerous violations of procedural rights and guarantees of the accused and their lawyers, in particular the practice of hearing criminal trials behind closed doors;
 6. Points out that since the stolen presidential election of 9 August 2020, 35 000 people have been jailed and 3 000 politically motivated criminal cases have been opened, and over 4 600 claims of torture, violence and ill-treatment have been recorded; points out that, as of 1 June 2021, there were 454 political prisoners and their number continues to increase; points out that women who have played important roles in the protests in Belarus are subjected to constant reprisals, threats and ill-treatment in detention;
 7. Urges the EU to proceed with the fourth package of sanctions against officials who have taken part in the electoral fraud and human rights violations in Belarus, including judges and KGB and state officials whose names are publicly known, thanks, inter alia, to the NEXTA channel; underlines the need also to target companies which support Lukashenka's regime; advises that sectoral sanctions should be introduced and include a ban on imports of oil products, potash fertilisers, metal products and wood and wood products, many of which are produced by inmates in penal colonies; recommends that sanctions be coordinated with democratic allies, such as the UK, the US, Canada and Ukraine, and that work be continued on a comprehensive, multilateral strategy to strengthen Belarus' democracy, independence and sovereignty, in order to demonstrate the international community's solidarity in standing with the Belarusian people against the fraudulent and violent actions of the Belarusian Government; no loans, credit guarantees, insurance, financing or other similar financial assistance should be granted to the Belarusian regime and connected entities;

8. Calls, moreover, for a complete freeze of any cooperation with the public sector in Belarus, switching instead to support for the private sector, civil society and organisations working outside the country in order to support democratic movements;
9. Calls for the personal assets and wealth of Aliaksandr Lukashenka and other senior leadership figures of the regime to be identified and exposed; the sanctions should apply unless: individuals in Belarus who have been jailed for their pro-democracy activities are released; politically motivated legal charges against all opposition figures and independent journalists in Belarus are withdrawn; all instances of the killing and disappearance of opposition leaders and journalists in Belarus are accounted for; all forms of harassment and repression against the independent media, independent trade unions, non-governmental organisations, religious organisations (including their leadership and members), and the political opposition in Belarus are ceased; free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections are implemented in Belarus, consistent with OSCE commitments and with the participation of international observers;
10. Calls on the European Aviation Safety Agency and on the International Civil Aviation Organization to conduct an urgent investigation into this unprecedented act of air piracy, to assess whether air transport and passenger safety were in danger; welcomes, in this regard, the decision to ban the overflight of EU airspace by Belarusian airlines and prevent access to EU airports by such airlines, and welcomes the call for all EU-based carriers to avoid overflight of Belarus;
11. Strongly condemns the acts of repression and hostile actions carried out by the authorities against representatives of the Polish minority and against the Polish school system in Belarus; calls, in this respect, for the unconditional release of Andželika Borys, Andrzej Poczobut and other political prisoners; recalls that the recent acts of repression are part of a growing campaign of harassment and persecution of the Polish diaspora by the Belarusian authorities;
12. Calls on international authorities to cooperate closely to investigate all cases of torture and assassination having taken place since Lukashenka came to power; is of the opinion that more frequent use should be made of universal jurisdiction until such a time as a special mechanism for accountability for crimes has been established in the form of a special tribunal;
13. Is deeply concerned about Russia's involvement with and support for Lukashenka's regime, and calls, in this context, on the VP/HR to introduce further sanctions against the Russian Federation;
14. Underlines that the EU needs to stay committed to a democratic Belarus; welcomes the Commission's outline of its EUR 3 billion economic support package for a future democratic Belarus; calls for the EU to use Erasmus+ and other scholarship programmes and grants to assist students expelled from Belarusian universities for their pro-democracy activities;
15. Calls for the expulsion of Belarus from international sport bodies, including the International Olympic Committee, and for the suspension of its national teams' participation in European and world championships in all disciplines of sport, including at this year's Olympic Games in Tokyo, as well as in any club events or championships

at international level;

16. Calls on democratic leaders to include the situation in Belarus in their agenda as regards relations with Russia and at all meetings of world leaders, including the G7;
17. Calls for the EU and the Member States to reaffirm their support for a democratic, sovereign and independent Belarus; welcomes the announcement by the Commission of its plan for a EUR 3 billion package of economic support for a future democratic Belarus;
18. Reiterates its call for increased assistance to independent media both within and outside Belarus, such as the Bielsat TV channel, and to civil society organisations, human rights defenders and independent journalists;
19. States clearly that the EU will never accept any further integration of Belarus with the Russian Federation carried out during clandestine talks and serving to negotiate support for Lukashenka, who has no democratic legitimacy to hold such talks;
20. Expresses solidarity with Latvia following the unjustified 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 the capital city Riga;
21. Reiterates its concern about the commercial operation of Ostrovets nuclear plant just 50 km from Vilnius and underlines the risks it carries for other EU countries such as Poland, Latvia and Estonia;
22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the authorities of the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation.