



Plenary sitting

B9-0483/2021

4.10.2021

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 situation in Belarus after one year of protests and their violent repression (2021/2881(RSP))

Manu Pineda
on behalf of The Left Group

B9-0483/2021

European Parliament resolution on the situation in Belarus after one year of protests and their violent repression (2021/2881(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Charter of the United Nations,
 - having regard to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the sole international election observation mission conducted by the Commonwealth of Independent States and the lack of a timely invitation for the OSCE ODIHR to undertake an electoral observation mission for the presidential election,
 - having regard to the statements of the UN Secretary General of 10 and 14 August 2020 and of 24 May 2021,
 - having regard to the statement of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus of 19 November 2020 on the rule of law and inclusive political dialogue,
 - having regard to the Treaty on the Creation of a Union State of Russia and Belarus, signed on 8 December 1999,
 - having regard to the most recent agreements between Russia and Belarus, signed on 9 September 2021 in the context of the Union State,
 - having regard to the statement by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) of 21 September 2021 concerning deaths near the Belarus-Poland border,
 - having regard to the state of emergency declared by Poland on 2 September 2021,
 - having regard to the amendments of July and August 2021 to Lithuania’s Law on the Legal Status of Aliens and to the proposed reforms of Lithuanian legislation announced by the country’s government on 15 September 2021 concerning detention,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the situation in Belarus has continued to deteriorate since the presidential election of 9 August 2020; whereas UN institutions have reported a crackdown on demonstrators and opposition figures, and have called for the rule of law to be ensured in the judicial system; whereas the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus has stated that the only way out of this situation is through inclusive political dialogue and accountability;
- B. whereas the number of people seeking international protection from several countries

and entering the EU through Belarus' borders with Poland and Lithuania has increased in recent months; whereas, according to the Polish authorities, 3 800 people have made attempts to enter Poland from Belarus since 1 September 2021; whereas the response from the Polish authorities to this increase in arrivals has been to deploy soldiers at the border and declare a state of emergency in the area, which stops NGOs and journalists from working freely in said area; whereas Latvia and Lithuania have also declared a state of emergency for the same reasons;

- C. whereas there are tens of people currently trapped in border regions between Belarus and Poland, the majority of whom from Afghanistan and Iraq; whereas the UNHCR and the IOM have denounced the fact that they have not been allowed by the Polish authorities to access these people in order to provide them with the basic necessities and services they lack, such as adequate food and water, sanitation or medical assistance; whereas in the last week five people have died at the border between Belarus and Poland;
- D. whereas the Polish and Lithuanian authorities are denying asylum seekers arriving via Belarus their right to access international protection; whereas these authorities are regularly conducting mass returns without due process at their borders with Belarus, in clear breach of international asylum legislation;
- E. whereas Frontex officers filed 12 serious incident reports in the month of August 2021 alone regarding alleged push-backs and violations of fundamental rights in the framework of Frontex joint operation FOA Land 2021, after Frontex officers handed over the groups to the Lithuanian border officers; urges the Fundamental Rights Officer to conduct a due diligence procedure regarding this operation and calls for the suspension of the operation in line with Article 46 of the European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) Regulation;
- F. whereas NGOs assisting people seeking international protection in the border regions of Poland and Lithuania have denounced systematic violence against people arriving, as well as attempts by the Polish and Lithuanian authorities to intimidate them and prevent them from providing assistance; whereas workers in the Lithuanian asylum system have denounced the fact that the government has pressured them to reject asylum applications, conduct sham interviews and coerce applicants for international protection into voluntary return;
- G. whereas the Lithuanian Government has announced its intention to remove the current detention limit of 6 months and allow for the indefinite detention of migrants, in an attempt to deter arrivals regardless of the human rights implications;
- H. whereas the US army has deployed mechanised units to areas of Lithuania which are close to the Belarusian border; whereas the US deployed over 20 000 soldiers in 2020 to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland; whereas the Russian army has deployed additional troops in the western region of the Russian Federation close to the Belarusian border and conducted military drills as part of the Zapad 2021 exercise;
- I. whereas Belarus is part of the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative; whereas Belarus and the EU have signed several agreements in recent years in the field of governance, among other areas; whereas during the period 2014-2020, the EU's assistance to

Belarus under the European Neighbourhood Instrument amounted to EUR 170 million;

- J. whereas since October 2020, the EU has imposed four packages of sanctions on Belarus, the most recent of which on 21 June 2021, covering 78 people and 8 Belarusian entities, including public companies; whereas the EU barred Belarusian carriers from using the EU's airports and airspace following the arrest of the opposition journalists Roman Protasevich and Sofia Sapega after the aircraft in which they were travelling was forced to land in Minsk;
1. Expresses deep concern about the situation in Belarus; emphasises the need for a peaceful and democratic solution to the current crisis;
 2. Expresses deep concern about the humanitarian situation of people seeking international protection at the borders between Belarus and the EU and rejects all instances of the instrumentalisation of people seeking international protection; calls on all actors to fully respect international law, including the principle of *non-refoulement*;
 3. Condemns the policies implemented by the Polish, Latvian and Lithuanian authorities to stop the arrival of people seeking international protection through their borders with Belarus, which have led to the loss of five lives in the last week and resulted in a humanitarian crisis; expresses its condolences to the families of the victims of these policies and calls for those politically responsible to be made accountable;
 4. Recalls that Member States must respect relevant EU law regarding asylum and the Schengen Borders Code, and grant access to their territory, provide proper reception conditions and grant access to a fair and reliable asylum procedure to all those expressing their will to seek international protection; reiterates the need to ensure solidarity between Member States to ensure the adequate reception and fair relocation of asylum seekers throughout the EU;
 5. Calls on the Polish, Latvian and Lithuanian authorities to immediately end the state of emergency they have imposed as a way to impede adequate assistance to asylum seekers and allow for unmonitored action by the border authorities; calls on the Lithuanian authorities to end all plans to allow for the indefinite detention of migrants and to repeal the latest reforms of their asylum law, including the possibility to deport people who are still in the process of appealing a first asylum decision;
 6. Expresses deep concern about the rising tensions between the EU and Russia and the military build-up in the region; calls on all actors, including NATO and Russia, to exercise restraint and stop fueling tensions in the region;
 7. Expresses its concern regarding the failures of the EU's Eastern Partnership policy and underlines the need for its reorientation; calls on the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) to put forward a plan for constructive dialogue with Russia that stresses the important role to be played by neighbouring countries;
 8. Opposes the imposition of sanctions as a counterproductive instrument that has a negative impact on the population, as various opposition factions and peaceful protesters have stressed;

9. 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, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and the Government of Belarus.