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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0485/2021**

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))

**Pedro Marques, Tonino Picula, Robert Biedroń**  
on behalf of the S&D Group

**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 its previous resolutions on Belarus,
  - having regard to the declarations of the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on behalf of the EU, in particular his statement of 8 August 2021 on the first anniversary of the fraudulent presidential election held in Belarus on 9 August 2020,
  - having regard to the statements by the European External Action Service (EEAS) spokesperson of 6 September 2021 on the sentencing of Marya Kaliesnikava and Maksim Znak, of 30 August 2021 on the repression against journalists and the media, and of 6 July 2021 on the sentencing of Viktor Babaryka and other political trials,
  - having regard to the European Council Conclusions of 25 June 2021 on Belarus,
  - having regard to the Council Conclusions of 21 June 2021 on Belarus,
  - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
  - having regard to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Charter of Paris for a New Europe,
  - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the people of Belarus have been enduring state-ordered violence and repression, including torture and ill-treatment, ever since protests broke out after the massively falsified presidential election of 9 August, and thus for already 14 months by now;
- B. whereas the human rights situation in Belarus has been deteriorating continuously due to massive, systematic and incessant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including workers' rights, and several orchestrated crackdowns on civil society organisations, among them women's organisations and the Polish minority, workers and trade union activists, academic and educational institutions, independent media outlets, online platforms, and journalists, including the Belarusian Association of Journalists, which was awarded the European Parliament Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2004, as well as on the leading Belarusian human rights group Human Rights Centre 'Viasna', which has been actively monitoring and documenting human rights violations following the August 2020 elections, and seven members of which, including the founder and 2020 Sakharov Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski, have been detained;
- C. whereas since August 2020 almost 40 000 persons have been detained, more than 700 political prisoners imprisoned, and more than 4 600 criminal charges have been filed

against Belarusian citizens, while not a single case was opened against the persons responsible for or complicit in violence and repression; whereas the investigation into the death of Raman Bandarenka was suspended on 17 September 2021;

- D. whereas since July 2021 several prominent members of the democratic opposition and protest movement have been sentenced to prison terms of a decade or more, among them Viktor Babaryka, Maksim Znak and Maria Kalesnikava, laureate of Parliament's 2020 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought;
  - E. whereas the country's entire judiciary appears to have been transformed into an agent of the regime and is being used to ensure its survival; whereas detention conditions are inhumane and marked by overcrowded facilities, lack of hygiene and access to appropriate medical care and medications, brutal physical and sexual violence, including torture and ill-treatment, and psychological abuse; whereas several cases of attempted suicide in court and in prison as well as unexplained deaths have been documented and reported;
  - F. whereas the Council has adopted several rounds of restrictive measures since October 2020, targeting 166 individuals and 15 entities so far; whereas the Council adopted sectoral sanctions in June 2021 and is preparing further sanctions;
  - G. whereas after more than one year of protests and their violent repression, the people of Belarus continue to suffer systematic repression and serious violations of their human rights and fundamental freedoms on a daily basis while the Belarusian regime has not undertaken any credible steps towards fulfilling the legitimate demands of the people, in particular the unconditional release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners and arbitrarily detained persons, an immediate end to violence and repression, and a dialogue with democratic forces on a transition process leading towards new free and fair elections;
  - H. whereas since July 2020, a surge in illegal migration from Belarus to Lithuania, Poland and Latvia has led to thousands of migrants stranded on the EU's borders; whereas the Polish authorities have refused migrants access to Polish territory, medical assistance, food and water; whereas the Polish authorities have prevented Frontex from coordinating the situation on the ground;
1. Reiterates its deepest concern about the continually deteriorating situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Belarus, the unabated systematic repression and the persistent impunity in the country, and reiterates that, in line with OSCE principles, the legitimate demands of the people of Belarus for democracy based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, prosperity, sovereignty and security must be met;
  2. Continues to urgently call for the immediate release of all political prisoners and all persons arbitrarily detained, arrested or sentenced to long prison terms, an immediate end to the violence and repression by state authorities against the people of Belarus, a dialogue process between the regime and representatives of democratic forces mediated by the OSCE, as well as new free and fair elections under international observation by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR);
  3. Denounces the political trials against former presidential candidates, members of the democratic opposition, protesters, journalists and other arbitrarily detained persons;

whereas these trials are often held behind closed doors and without due process of law and are therefore in violation of the country's international obligations and commitments;

4. Expresses its disappointment at the fact that until now the EU has not managed to develop a comprehensive strategy towards the Belarusian regime, and urges the Council, the Commission and the VP/HR to devise a comprehensive strategy towards Belarus, based on the current emergency support to victims of repression, strategic and long-term political, technical and financial support to Belarusian civil society, human rights defenders, independent media, trade unions and democratic forces in the country and abroad, cooperation with neighbouring countries on urgent humanitarian issues, close coordination with international partners and relevant multilateral organisations (e.g. the UN, OSCE) as well as international donors, and joint international action to address impunity;
5. Urges the European Council to agree at its next meeting on 21 and 22 October 2021 on additional sanctions against the Belarusian regime that must be as broad in scope as possible, target a substantially larger number of individuals and entities than previous sanctions packages, restrict the regime's remaining access to financial resources and its economic activities, and target those who still continue ensuring the survival of the regime; calls for a shift from a step-by-step approach towards a more determined approach to sanctions, based on the systematic nature of the repression and serious violations of human rights;
6. Calls on the Council to follow up by immediately adopting and implementing additional sanctions and to close all loopholes to the current sanctions, in particular to the sectoral sanctions imposed in June 2021 on potash and petroleum products and those against the financial sector; reiterates its previous calls for the adoption of restrictive measures against a substantially larger number of persons, in particular from the justice sector, law enforcement authorities, and officials working for the regime in the fields of propaganda, media and disinformation, and for the inclusion of relevant persons working for the state border and migration services and in the tourism sector that have been involved in organising illegal migration and human trafficking; calls, furthermore, for the inclusion of additional sectors in EU economic sanctions, such as steel, wood and chemicals, and all the remaining state-owned banks and key companies, such as Belaruskali and Beltelecom; calls for possibilities for retroactive application to be considered;
7. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the VP/HR to closely coordinate the economic and sectoral sanctions with like-minded partners such as the US, Canada and the UK, and to seek cooperation and broad alignment with other European partners in order to increase the symbolic importance as much as the concrete impact and effectiveness of the sanctions on the Belarusian regime; expresses its regret that the anniversary of the protests against the massively falsified presidential election of 9 August 2020 was not used for a common announcement of additional sanctions, as it would have demonstrated international solidarity with the people of Belarus and unity against the Belarusian regime; calls on the EU to take the lead in coordinating joint international action around similarly symbolic dates in the future;
8. Welcomes the Commission's proposal of 29 September 2021 to partially suspend the

EU-Belarus visa facilitation agreement for members of official Belarusian delegations, regional and local government representatives, and members of the Constitutional Court and Supreme Court; calls for the broadening of the list of persons concerned and for consideration to already be given to including categories of individuals that may be targeted by individual restrictive measures as part of future sanctions packages;

9. Calls urgently for persisting impunity to be addressed, as well as the complete lack of investigation and prosecution of any perpetrators of the unparalleled brutality against protesters, those supporting the protests and their participants, and those reporting on them, as well as simple bystanders; calls on the Commission, the Council and the VP/HR, therefore, to keep the issue high on the international agenda and to continue actively supporting the International Accountability Platform, the UN Human Rights Council and similar initiatives; urges all Member States to apply the principle of universal jurisdiction and prepare court cases against Belarusian officials responsible for or complicit in violence and repression, including Alexander Lukashenko;
10. Urges the Commission, the Council, the VP/HR and the Member States to continue raising the situation in Belarus in all relevant European and international organisations, in particular the OSCE, the UN and its specialised bodies, with the aim of enhancing international action on the situation in Belarus and overcoming the obstruction of Russia and other countries to such action; calls on the EU and its Member States to take the lead on international efforts for the organisation of a high-level international conference on the situation in Belarus and to accelerate organisation of an international donors' conference for a democratic Belarus to bring together international financial institutions, G7 countries, EU institutions and Member States and others willing to pledge a financial package to support the country's future democratic reforms and economic restructuring; asks the Commission to inform Parliament about the progress in achieving this;
11. Reminds all EU businesses operating in Belarus of its previous calls to exercise particular diligence and to uphold their responsibility to respect human rights, in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; asks them to refrain from any new investment and to publicly protest to the Belarusian authorities against the continuing repression of workers and citizens in general;
12. Strongly condemns the instrumentalisation of human beings for political purposes as demonstrated through the state-sponsored smuggling of migrants, including asylum applicants, to the EU-Belarus border by Belarusian state authorities in response to EU sanctions and Member States' support for the democratic opposition in Belarus; denounces the tragic deaths reported at EU-Belarus borders and underlines the urgent need to ensure the respect for human safety and dignity on both sides of those borders; insists that all Member States must respect their obligations under EU and relevant international law, in particular the Geneva Convention, and grant access to their asylum procedures for those seeking international protection; calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to adopt a common approach to this situation based on relevant EU and international law and on the principles of solidarity, transparency, accountability and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; recalls that accessible legal pathways for migration would be the best tool not only to fight migrant smuggling but more importantly to ensure the human dignity and safety of persons; expresses concern about the lack of transparency at the Polish-Belarusian border and

urges the Polish authorities to ensure, in a transparent way, that any legislation, policy or practice at the Polish-Belarusian border complies with EU law and to secure access to the border region for civil society organisations and media as well as to cooperate with Frontex in order to jointly resolve the ongoing crisis;

13. Recalls that Alexander Lukashenko is not the legitimate leader of Belarus, thus any international agreements concluded by him must not be recognised; underlines that Belarusian MPs and officials should not be invited to any international or bilateral events; urges the Member States to refrain from appointing new ambassadors to Belarus and to decline accreditation of new ambassadors proposed by the Belarusian regime; condemns the instrumentalisation of Interpol by the Belarusian regime;
14. Reiterates its strong support for the Belarusian democratic forces, both in Belarus as well as in exile, and underlines the importance of maintaining relations with them and Belarusian civil society despite the regime's announcement that it would withdraw its cooperation with the Eastern Partnership; calls for increased engagement with and presence of representatives of Belarusian civil society and the democratic opposition in the multilateral bodies of the Eastern Partnership, in particular the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly; calls on Member States to enhance parliamentary cooperation on Belarus by establishing groups in national parliaments; calls on the Commission to increase its support for Belarusian civil society, including through financial means and by facilitating applications for EU funds;
15. 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 Council of Europe, the OSCE and to the authorities of the Republic of Belarus.