



Plenary sitting

B9-0496/2021

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))

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on behalf of the ECR 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 European Council conclusions of 25 June 2021,
 - 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 declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union of 30 July 2021 on the instrumentalisation of migrants and refugees by the regime,
 - having regard to the joint statement of 9 August 2021 on the first anniversary of the fraudulent presidential election in Belarus,
 - having regard to the statement of the Prime Ministers of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland of 23 August 2021,
 - having regard to the joint statement of 7 September 2021 on the sentencing of Maryia Kalesnikava and Maksim Znak,
 - having regard to the statement by the G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and the High Representative of the European Union,
 - having regard to the UN Human Rights Council resolution of 13 July 2021 on the situation of human rights in Belarus,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas 9 August 2021 marked the first anniversary of the fraudulent presidential election in Belarus, and yet the regime's brutal crackdown on opposition figures, independent media and civil society representatives continues;
- B. whereas the EU and its Member States fully support the Belarusian people's aspiration for a democratic, prosperous, free and independent future;
- C. whereas the human rights situation in Belarus continues to deteriorate, with the number of political prisoners exceeding 670, while the regime continues its acts of repression against the peaceful Belarusian people, with many citizens being harassed, arrested and convicted for expressing their opposition to the regime;
- D. whereas Aliaksandr Lukashenka continues his campaign against the Polish minority,

having imprisoned Andżelika Borys and Andrzej Poczobut, two leaders of the Polish community, attacking Polish-language schools and running propaganda a campaign based on false historical narratives;

- E. whereas in September 2021, a Belarusian court sentenced one of the country's most prominent opposition figures, Maryia Kalesnikava, to 11 years in prison; whereas Maksim Znak, a prominent lawyer who also participated peacefully in the campaign process, was sentenced to 10 years in prison;
- F. whereas pressure on the Belarusian trade unions has dramatically increased in recent weeks, with leaders and members of the Belarusian Independent Trade Union (BITU) and the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP) being arrested, fined and subjected to searches by the KGB; whereas Belarus rates as one of the worst countries for working people in the 2021 ITUC Global Rights Index;
- G. whereas the Member States, in particular Poland and Lithuania, have provided shelter, medical treatment and scholarships for thousands of asylums seekers fleeing persecution by Lukashenka for their democratic aspirations;
- H. whereas the illegal dictator Aliaksandr Lukashenka, with the support of the Kremlin, is willing to use any means in order to remain in power, including the most barbaric instrumentalisation of migrants;
- I. whereas representatives of the regime have publicly announced that a number of special operations are planned in Europe against well known opposition figures; whereas Vitaly Shishov, head of the Belarusian House in Ukraine, has been found dead near his home in Kyiv;
- J. whereas Lukashenka warned in July that Belarus would no longer prevent asylum seekers, drugs or even nuclear materials from entering the EU;
- K. whereas Aliaksandr Lukashenka has suggested ending Belarus' obligation to accept returning refugees and has submitted to the Belarusian parliament a draft law on the suspension;
- L. whereas in recent months, increasing numbers of migrants have been transiting through Belarus with the active support of the Belarusian authorities, in order to get into the EU and reach countries such as Germany, France or the UK, with only a very limited number of people filing asylum claims in Poland, Latvia and Lithuania; whereas illegal border crossings from Belarus represent an unprecedented hybrid attack on the EU by Lukashenka's regime;
- M. whereas since August 2021, there have been more than 10 000 attempts at illegal border crossings from the Polish-Belarusian border into EU territory; whereas more than 1 200 migrants, mostly from Iraq and Afghanistan, have been detained; whereas the identity of a large number of these migrants remains unknown and many require thorough security screening;
- N. whereas the situation on the EU border with Belarus remains tense, with a large number of provocations occurring on the side of Belarusian officers and soldiers;

- O. whereas Poland, Lithuania and Latvia have responded to the increased illegal migratory pressure created by Lukashenka's regime by sending additional troops, increasing border controls and introducing a temporary state of emergency along their borders, which also constitute the EU's external border; whereas Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland have decided to modernise the whole border control system, which includes the construction of fences on external borders of the EU in order to avoid illegal border crossings or other hybrid provocations, as in the case of the kidnapping of Eston Kohver;
- P. whereas migrants at the border of Belarus face dire conditions, as the Belarusian authorities continue to reject all assistance in the form of food, water, clothing and medicine offered by the Polish and Lithuanian side; whereas there are numerous reports that some of the migrants are in very poor physical condition and that many have tested positive for COVID-19; whereas there are reports that Belarusian law enforcement officers have given drugs to migrants to ease their border crossing;
- Q. whereas five people have died trying to cross into the EU from Belarus via the border with Poland and Lithuania through an area of thick woods and bogs; whereas worsening weather conditions make the threat of hypothermia and exhaustion even more dangerous; whereas the Polish Prime Minister has stated that the Polish authorities would try to help save the lives and preserve the health of all illegal migrants who cross the border into Poland and are found in time;
- R. whereas the instrumentalisation of migrants by the Belarusian regime is aimed at disrupting the EU's unity and threatens the regional security of the EU, and was strongly condemned by the Council in its declaration of 30 July 2021; whereas the Commission has confirmed that it is preparing a new package of sanctions against Belarus regarding the influx of migrants across the country's borders; whereas the Belarusian state is not only involved in issuing tourist visas to migrants, transporting them to Minsk and then to the border, but it also demands money from them which makes its way to Lukashenka's inner circle of aides;
- S. whereas in September 2021, Russia and Belarus held the 'Zapad 2021' military exercise, which was the largest military training event in Europe over the past 40 years and involved around 200 000 troops and over 80 aircraft and helicopters;
- T. whereas Russia and Belarus established a joint air force and air defence training centre in Grodno, less than 15 kilometres from the border with Poland;
- U. whereas on 9 September 2021, Presidents Lukashenka and Putin met in Moscow and announced the approval of 28 further programmes for integration at economic and fiscal level, as well as the creation of a 'joint defence sphere', which represents another step towards merging the Belarusian and Russian armed forces and the possible permanent dislocation of Russian troops in Belarus;
- V. whereas after the recent fatal shootdown in Minsk that claimed the lives of an IT worker and a KGB agent, over hundred people who commented about the event on social media were arrested by the regime;
1. Reiterates its non-recognition of the election of Aliaksandr Lukashenka to the post of

President of Belarus and considers the current regime in Belarus as illegitimate; continues to support the people of Belarus in their demands for free and fair elections, democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights;

2. Strongly condemns the ongoing acts of repression against the people of Belarus, the suppression of media and the internet, and the harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers, opposition figures and other independent voices in Belarus;
3. Reiterates its call for the unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Andželika Borys and Andrzej Poczobut, and 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;
4. Supports the nomination of Belsat journalists Yekaterina Andreeva and Darya Chultsova, who are serving sentences in a penal colony in Belarus, for the Journalist of the Year award at the PRIX Europa Festival; is concerned about acts of repression against journalists who are expelled or forced to emigrate from the country;
5. Reiterates the need for all Member States to take a unified position in responding to the state terrorism orchestrated by the regime of Aliaksandr Lukashenka and supported by the Kremlin; underlines the importance for the EU of countering disinformation on the situation in Belarus within the EU and other forms of hybrid threats undertaken by third parties in this regard, as well as the current trend of using migrants as a weapon against the EU; expects Western media outlets to refrain, in this regard, from legitimising Aliaksandr Lukashenka and avoid becoming an additional source of the regime's propaganda, as was the case with the CNN's recent interview with the dictator; calls, moreover, in the light of the recent arrests of social media users, on the relevant IT companies to increase the level of protection of their consumers from surveillance;
6. Strongly condemns the instrumentalisation of migrants and refugees by the Lukashenka regime and supports Member States' efforts to effectively manage migratory flows in order to protect the EU's external borders; calls for the EU, its Member States and international organisations to step up efforts in dismantling these state-ordered human trafficking flows, including by placing diplomatic pressure on the countries of origin of migrants and by imposing sanctions on Belarusian officials, individuals and entities involved, as well as on international criminal networks operating on the EU's territory responsible for transfers to final destinations;
7. Is concerned over the deaths of people at the border between Belarus and the EU and expresses its sympathy to the families and relatives of the deceased; condemns the refusal by the Belarusian side to accept the humanitarian aid offered by Poland, Lithuania and Latvia for the refugees stranded at the border, and urges Belarus to stop using migrants as tool of pressure on the EU and to assume its responsibility and fulfil its international legal obligations towards them;
8. Calls for the EU to extend sanctions against the Belarusian regime, targeting officials who have taken part in the electoral fraud and human rights violations in Belarus or who are responsible for the current migration crisis; underlines the need also to target companies that support Lukashenka's regime, including the potash industry, and to

introduce sectoral sanctions and a ban on imports of goods that are often produced by inmates in penal colonies; 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. Underlines that the sanctions should continue to be extended and remain in place until such a time as the following has been achieved: 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 and 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, in line with OSCE commitments and with the participation of international observers;
10. Is strongly concerned about the recent ‘Zapad 2021’ joint Russian-Belarusian military exercise, the scale of which was unprecedented and which was accompanied by the creation of a joint air force and air defence training centre and the announcement of the further integration of the armed forces of both sides;
11. Firmly believes that Russia, as Lukashenka’s main source of political, financial and logistical support, should also be held accountable for the brutal crackdown on the people of Belarus and the instrumentalisation of migrants; calls on the Commission to investigate all the foreign means of support offered to the Lukashenka regime, in particular by Russia and China;
12. Denounces any attempts to incorporate Belarus into Russia, as this would be done by an illegitimate leader against the will of the Belarusian people; calls on the Member States and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) to make it clear that such move will not be accepted;
13. Condemns the sentencing in Belarus of the leading opposition figures Maryia Kalesnikava and Maksim Znak; demands that the Belarusian authorities release all political prisoners and stop the persecution of journalists, human rights defenders and civil society activists; calls for a complete and thorough investigation into the murder of Belarusian activist Vitaly Shishov in Kyiv;
14. Regrets the IMF’s unconditional special drawing rights allocation of USD 910 million, which will not serve the people of Belarus, but rather the interests of the illegitimate leader of the country; is of the opinion that such IMF arrangements, without any human rights conditionality, may undermine sanctions intended to place pressure on the regime and serve to support Russia’s goal of keeping Lukashenka in power;
15. 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, the

Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the International Civil Aviation Organization, and the authorities of the Republic of Belarus and of the Russian Federation.