



Plenary sitting

B9-0530/2022

22.11.2022

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on the continuing repression of the democratic opposition and civil society in Belarus
(2022/2956(RSP))

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on behalf of the S&D Group

**European Parliament resolution on the continuing repression of the democratic opposition and civil society in Belarus
(2022/2956(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Belarus, in particular those of 19 May 2022 on the prosecution of the opposition and detention of trade union leaders in Belarus, of 7 October 2021 on the situation in Belarus after one year of protests and their violent repression, and of 10 June 2021 on the systematic repression in Belarus,
 - having regard to the declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU of 8 August 2022 on the second anniversary of the fraudulent presidential election,
 - having regard to the joint statement by the High Representative, on behalf of the European Union, and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on European and World Day against the Death Penalty of 10 October 2022,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
 - having regard to the statement by OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media of 13 July 2022 on persistent imprisonment of journalists and media workers in Belarus;
 - having regard to the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, Anaïs Marin, to the United Nations Human Rights Council on 4 May 2022;
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure.
- A. whereas since peaceful protests broke out against the massively falsified presidential election of 9 August 2020 the human rights situation in Belarus has been deteriorating continuously due to the unprecedented scale and systematic nature of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and several orchestrated crackdowns on civil society organisations, workers and trade union activists, academic and educational institutions, independent media outlets, online platforms, journalists and political parties;
- B. whereas the Lukashenka regime continues its severe repression against the Belarusian people, with many citizens being harassed, arrested, tortured and convicted for expressing opposition to the regime, to the systematic human rights violations or to the regime's support to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine;
- C. whereas the Lukashenka regime continues to prosecute citizens on political grounds, including for anti-war protests, and to detain peaceful protesters; whereas, as of November 2022, there are already more than 1 400 political prisoners in Belarus and thousands of arbitrarily detained persons;

- D. whereas over 634 organisations have been forced to discontinue their activities, including virtually all human rights groups working in the country, trade unions ;
- E. whereas the Criminal Code of Belarus was amended to extend capital punishment to “attempted terrorist acts”, with the eventual aim of targeting political dissidents, and to introduce trials in absentia on ‘extremist’ or ‘terrorist’ grounds;
- F. whereas since July 2021 many prominent members of the democratic opposition and protest movement have been sentenced to prison terms on politically motivated charges, sometimes decade long, among them the laureates of the European Parliament’s 2020 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought and Ales Bialatski, founder of the Human Rights Centre ‘Viasna’, and laureate of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize;
1. Expresses its strong support for all those who continue their brave defiance of the Lukashenka regime in Belarus;
 2. Urges for an immediate end to the systematic repression by state authorities against the people of Belarus; reiterates its concern about the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Belarus, the unabated systematic repression, the ever-increasing crackdown on the democratic opposition and civil society, the persistent impunity and the structural lack of respect for due process and fair trials, in breach of the regime’s obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the UN Convention Against Torture, and the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus;
 3. Reiterates that, in line with the 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 fulfilled; reiterates its previous calls for new free and fair elections under international observation by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR); recalls that the EU and its Member States did not recognise the results of the 2020 presidential election and do not recognise Aliaksandr Lukashenka as the legitimate president of Belarus;
 4. Notes with deep concern that, through campaigns of intimidation, the organisation of show trials, and the imposition of harsh prison sentences, the Lukashenka regime seeks to stifle any remaining expressions of dissent within the country; strongly condemns the sentencing of Mikalai Autukhovich, a democracy activist and prisoner of conscience, on 17 October 2022 to 25 years in prison on fabricated charges, which include ‘acts of terrorism’, ‘conspiracy to seize power by unconstitutional means’, and ‘inciting enmity’, in the longest politically motivated sentence imposed by the regime to date; condemns, similarly, the politically motivated sentencing of the eleven further defendants in the so-called Autukhovich case, specifically Paval Sava, Halina Dzerbysh, Volha Mayorava, Viktor Snehur, Uladzimer Hundar, Syarhey Razanovich, Paval Razanovich, Lyobov Razanovich, Iryna Melkher, Anton Melkher, and Iryna Harachkina, to a combined 169.6 years in prison, and demands their immediate and unconditional release;
 5. Demands the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners and all persons arbitrarily detained, arrested or sentenced on politically motivated grounds, and

for all charges against them to be dropped, as well as for their full rehabilitation and financial compensation for damages incurred due to their illegitimate detention; in the meantime, underlines the need for information on their whereabouts and conditions of detention to be provided as well as their access to lawyers of their choice, medical support and communication with family members to be ensured; calls on the EU Delegation in Belarus to, where possible, observe and monitor the trials of all political prisoners, including pro-democracy activists and trade unionists;

6. Denounces the politically motivated trials and unjust sentences against members and leaders of the democratic opposition, among them Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, protestors, journalists, trade union leaders or activists, and other arbitrarily detained persons; condemns the fact that these trials are often held behind closed doors and without due process of law and therefore are in violation of the country's international obligations and commitments; in this respect, equally condemns the changes to the Criminal Code relating to capital punishment and calls on the Belarusian authorities to immediately and permanently abolish the death penalty;
7. Commends the brave people of Belarus, who, since 24 February 2022, have protested against the involvement of Belarus in the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine in spite of large-scale crackdowns; strongly condemns the Belarusian authorities' violent response to the Belarusian people's peaceful resistance to Russia's war and the Lukashenka regime's facilitation thereof; notes with concern the increased Russian military presence on the territory of the Republic of Belarus following Aliaksandr Lukashenka's 10 October 2022 announcement of the establishment of a joint Russian-Belarusian Regional Grouping of Forces, in contravention of the wishes of the Belarusian people; considers the deployment of Russian forces and equipment to the territory of the Republic of Belarus to further undermine the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Belarus, and to pose a threat to the country's as well as regional security;
8. Welcomes the awarding of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize to human rights advocate, Viasna Human Rights Centre founder, and 2020 Sakharov Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski; denounces the ongoing incarceration of Ales Bialiatski, Valiantsin Stefanovic, and Uladzimir Labkhovich, on politically motivated charges of smuggling and financing of collective actions violating public order, which carry a sentence of up to 12 years in prison upon conviction, and calls for their immediate and unconditional release; echoes the call of the chairperson of the Norwegian Nobel Committee on the Lukashenka regime to ensure Ales Bialiatski's release ahead of the 10 December Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony;
9. Calls on the Commission, the Council, the VPC/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 as well as in ILO, with the aim of enhancing international scrutiny of the human rights violations, enhancing international action on the situation in Belarus and overcoming the obstruction of Russia and other countries to such action; insists that all crimes committed by the regime against the people of Belarus must be fully investigated and all perpetrators must be held to account; commends, in this regard, the work of the International Accountability Platform for Belarus and calls on the EU and the Member States to continue their support with a view to strengthening accountability for the serious and systematic human rights

violations in Belarus;

10. Reiterates its call on the Council and the Commission to prevent sanctions evasion by ensuring the harmonisation of sanctions regimes on the Russian Federation and Belarus; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure swift implementation and strict enforcement of all sanctions while avoiding adverse consequences, notably relating to the provision of visas, for the Belarusian people; notes that judge Maksim Filatau, who presided over the show trial in the Autukhovich case, was sanctioned by the Council on 21 June 2021 over his numerous politically motivated rulings against peaceful protestors, in particular against political prisoner Vitold Ashurok; calls on the Council to impose targeted restrictive measures on all judges and other regime officials complicit in the repression of civil society and democratic opposition through their involvement in similar rulings;
11. Expresses its concern about increased activities by agents of the Lukashenka regime abroad, including the harassing of political activists, representatives of the democratic opposition and of exiled NGOs; calls on the Member States to closely monitor such illegal activities and to take effective measures against them;
12. Expresses concern over the alleged use of the forced labour of inmates in Belarusian penal colonies by suppliers to major EU-based companies; calls on all EU-based companies to terminate relations with any Belarusian suppliers which use forced labour in their supply chains, and calls on the Council to impose sanctions on any Belarusian companies which use forced labour in their supply chains; urges the Lukashenka regime to end its practice of using forced labour in penal colonies;
13. Commends the establishment of the United Transitional Cabinet of Belarus (UTC), chaired by 2020 Sakharov Prize laureate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, on 9 August 2022 which follows the establishment of the Coordination Council and the National Anti-Crisis Management; encourages the representative structures of the democratic forces of Belarus to maintain and promote unity, based on the objective of a free, democratic, and independent Belarus, among all democratic Belarusian forces and independent civil society;
14. Recognises the aspirations of the majority of the people of Belarus to live in a free, sovereign, and democratic country, in line with European principles and values, and urges the Commission and the Member States to continue assisting the democratic forces, the civil society, and their representatives to prepare for the country's future democratic transition; commends the VPC/HR for his regular invitations to Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya to meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council, including to the roundtable of 14 November 2022; welcomes, in this regard, the establishment of the Mission for Democratic Belarus in Brussels;
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, the de-facto authorities of the Republic of Belarus, and to the representatives of the Belarusian democratic opposition