



Plenary sitting

B9-0167/2023

8.3.2023

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on further repression against the people of Belarus, in particular the cases of
Andrzej Poczobut and Ales Bialiatski
(2023/2573(RSP))

Pedro Marques, Tonino Picula, Thijs Reuten, Juozas Olekas
on behalf of the S&D Group

European Parliament resolution on further repression against the people of Belarus, in particular the cases of Andrzej Poczobut and Ales Bialiatski (2023/2573(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Belarus, in particular those of 24 November 2022 on the continuing repression of the democratic opposition and civil society in Belarus¹, of 19 May 2022 on the prosecution of the opposition and the detention of trade union leaders in Belarus², of 7 October 2021 on the situation in Belarus after one year of protests and their violent repression³ and of 10 June 2021 on the systematic repression in Belarus and its consequences for European security following the abductions from an EU civilian plane intercepted by Belarusian authorities⁴,
 - having regard to the statement by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 17 January 2023 on the trials against opposition leaders and journalists,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas ever since peaceful protests broke out against the massively falsified presidential election of 9 August 2020, the Lukashenka regime has been continuing 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 for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine;
- B. whereas as of March 2023, there were more than 1 450 political prisoners in Belarus and thousands of arbitrarily detained persons, among them representatives of civil society, religious organisations, workers, trade unions, academic and educational institutions, journalists and independent media outlets and political parties;
- C. whereas *in absentia* proceedings have been initiated by the Lukashenka regime against leaders of the democratic movement in Belarus and many leaders and representatives of the democratic opposition parties continue to be imprisoned under inhumane conditions; whereas on 6 March 2023, following a show trial *in absentia*, the Minsk City Court sentenced Sakharov Prize laureate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya to 15 years in prison on politically motivated charges that included high treason and conspiracy to seize power; whereas Pavel Latushka was sentenced to 18 years in prison; whereas Maryia Maroz

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0418.

² OJ C 479, 16.12.2022, p. 57.

³ OJ C 132, 24.3.2022, p. 196.

⁴ OJ C 67, 8.2.2022, p. 118.

and Sakharov Prize laureates Volha Kavalkova and Siarhei Dyleuski, who is also a trade union leader, were handed down sentences of 12 years, all *in absentia*;

- D. whereas journalists remain among those most targeted by the regime; whereas there are currently more than 30 journalists in prison in Belarus; whereas on 8 February 2023, the Hrodna Regional Court sentenced Polish-Belarusian journalist Andrzej Poczobut to eight years in prison on politically motivated charges of harming national security and inciting ethnic hostility;
- E. whereas on 27 February 2023, the Council prolonged by one year the restrictive measures against Belarus linked to internal repression in the country and the regime's support for the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine;
1. Reiterates its firm solidarity with all those who continue to fight the Lukashenka regime's massive and systematic repression in Belarus, which is fully complicit in the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine;
 2. Continues to urge the state authorities to bring an immediate end to the repression against the people of Belarus; reiterates its concern about the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Belarus, including the unabated systematic repression, the ever-increasing crackdown on the democratic opposition, civil society, independent media, trade unions, religious organisations and political parties, persistent impunity and the structural lack of respect for due process and fair trials;
 3. Reiterates that, in line with the principles of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the legitimate demands of the people of Belarus for democracy based on human rights, fundamental freedoms, prosperity, sovereignty and security must be fulfilled; reiterates its previous calls for new free and fair elections to be organised 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. 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; underlines the need, in the meantime, for information on their whereabouts and their detention conditions to be provided, as well as for their access to lawyers of their choice, medical support and communication with family members to be ensured; calls on the EU Delegation for relations with Belarus and the Member State embassies in Belarus to, wherever possible, continue observing and monitoring the trials of all political prisoners; encourages the Council and the Commission to identify novel avenues to work towards the release of all political prisoners;
 5. Denounces the continued systematic repression, the politically motivated show trials and unjust and disproportionately harsh prison sentences against members and leaders of the democratic opposition, protestors, journalists, trade union leaders and activists and other arbitrarily detained persons, which aim to delegitimise their strife for a democratic and free Belarus; condemns the fact that 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;

6. Denounces, in particular, the trials against Viasna Human Rights Centre founder and 2020 Sakharov Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski and Polish-Belarusian journalist Andrzej Poczobut as they showcase the regime's efforts to suppress all civic engagement defending human rights and all independent journalism in the country; condemns the sentencing of Ales Bialiatski on 3 March 2023 to 10 years in a penal colony and a heavy fine, as well as the sentences of nine and seven years respectively issued to Valiantsin Stefanovich and Uladzimir Labkovich; notes that these sentences against some of the most prominent defenders of human rights and independent media in Belarus clearly aim to prevent Belarusian people and the international community from knowing the full extent of the massive and systematic human rights violations that the Lukashenka regime has been purposefully committing since the massively falsified presidential election of August 2020;
7. Condemns the *in absentia* sentencing of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Pavel Latushka, Volha Kavalkova and Siarhei Dyleuski on 6 March 2023 on fabricated charges; rejects the court's verdict, according to which exercising the democratic right to stand in elections constitutes 'conspiracy to seize power'; demands that the Lukashenka regime repeal the sentences and drop all charges levelled against the four activists; insists that no activist sentenced for their support for or active participation in the pro-democratic opposition should be barred from running for elected office in Belarus;
8. Calls on the Council to broaden the sanctions against members of the Lukashenka regime and to target all individuals complicit in the regime's repression against the democratic opposition and political protesters, including judges, prosecutors and law enforcement, prison and penal colony officials;
9. Calls on the Commission, the Council, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy 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 and the International Labour Organization, 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 held to account; commends, in this regard, the work of the International Accountability Platform for Belarus, and calls for the EU and its Member States to continue to support the platform with a view to strengthening accountability for the serious and systematic human rights violations in Belarus;
10. Highlights the critical role that independent media, trade unions and civil society organisations, whether in Belarus or in exile, play in affirming the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people; encourages the Commission and the Member States to dedicate greater resources to the activities and capacity-building of independent Belarusian civil society organisations;
11. 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; recognises the solidarity that the people of Belarus continue to demonstrate with the people of Ukraine, as underlined by the acts of resistance and sabotage by Belarusian anti-war partisans intended to hamper Russia's war efforts against Ukraine; urges the Commission and the Member States to continue assisting Belarusian democratic forces, civil society and independent media; encourages the representatives of the democratic forces of Belarus to maintain and promote unity, based on the objective of a free, democratic and independent Belarus, among all Belarusian democratic forces and independent civil society; welcomes the establishment of the Mission for Democratic Belarus in Brussels;

12. 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 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the representatives of the Belarusian democratic forces and the de-facto authorities of the Republic of Belarus.