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Session document

3 July 2002

B5-0404/2002 }
B5-0415/2002 }
B5-0420/2002 }
B5-0424/2002 }
B5-0427/2002 }
B5-0432/2002 }

RC1

JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 50(5) of the Rules of Procedure by

- Lennart Sacrédeus, Robert Goodwill and Bernd Posselt, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group
- Jan Marinus Wiersma and Margrietus J. van den Berg, on behalf of the PSE Group
- Ole Andreasen and Astrid Thors, on behalf of the ELDR Group
- Elisabeth Schroedter and Marie Anne Isler Béguin, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group
- Pedro Marset Campos, Giuseppe Di Lello Finuoli and Jonas Sjöstedt, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group
- Bastiaan Belder, on behalf of the EDD Group

replacing the motions by the following groups:

- Verts/ALE (B5-0404/2002),
- ELDR (B5-0415/2002),
- PSE (B5-0420/2002),
- EDD (B5-0424/2002),
- PPE-DE (B5-0427/2002),
- GUE/NGL (B5-0432/2002),

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PE 319.832}
PE 319.851}
PE 319.856}
PE 319.860}
PE 319.863
PE 319.868} RC1

on the freedom of the press in Belarus

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PE 319.832}
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EN

European Parliament resolution on the freedom of press in Belarus

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Belarus and, in particular, to its resolutions of 5 July 2001 and 11 June 2002,
 - having regard to the report by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media dated 20 June 2002 concerning the attack on freedom of expression in Belarus,
 - having regard to the report by Journalists without Borders dated 30 April 2002 on attacks against freedom of the press in Belarus,
 - having regard to the activities of the Parliamentary Troika on Belarus and the reports of the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,
 - having regard to the Partnership Agreement with Belarus, which was signed in March 1995 but could not enter into force because of the lack of democracy in Belarus,
- A. whereas, for many years now, the situation of freedom of the press in Belarus has been regarded by international observers as one of the worst in the world today,
- B. whereas the Editor-in-Chief of the Belarus Presidential Administration's 'News Bulletin' has urged the country's state-controlled media not to publish work produced by writers critical of the government, listing amongst those termed 'politically retarded' such well known authors as Vasil Bykov Ryhor Baraduin, Nil Gilevich and Sergei Zakonnikov,
- C. whereas the journalists Nikolai Markevich and Pavel Maozheiko of the independent newspaper Pagonja in the city of Grodno have been condemned respectively to two and a half and two years 'restriction of freedom' because they wrote articles critical of President Lukashenko during the presidential election campaign,
- D. whereas the Editor-in-Chief of the independent newspaper 'Rabochy' has also been charged with defaming the President during the same election campaign and may well receive a prison sentence of up to five years,
- E. whereas all the financial assets of the largest independent newspaper 'Narodnaja Wolja' have been frozen by the authorities, thereby putting an end to all the newspaper's activities,
- F. whereas the continuing attacks on the freedom of the press constitute a serious obstruction to democratic developments in Belarus and further contribute to the country's isolation from European democratic institutions,

- G. whereas critical scientists such as Professor Bandazhevsky, who researched and published information about the consequences of fall-out in Belarus following the explosion of the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl in 1986, are also being prosecuted under criminal law for their publications and sentenced to disproportionately lengthy terms of imprisonment;
1. Urges the Belarus authorities to undertake an immediate review of the proceedings brought against the journalists Nikolai Markevich and Pavel Maozheiko and to put an end to all other politically motivated proceedings against independent journalists in Belarus;
 2. Urges the Belarus authorities to put an immediate end to its attempts to prevent politically critical writers from finding an opportunity to publish their work;
 3. Expresses its deep concern at the persistent lack of freedom of the press and freedom of opinion, the use of criminal law against journalists and the freezing of the bank accounts of independent media in Belarus,
 4. Urges the Belarus authorities to stop their harassment of independent newspapers, to put an end to the criminal prosecution of journalists and to fulfil its international commitments regarding freedom of the press and freedom of opinion and to admit competition by granting equal opportunities to an independent press and to the state-owned press alike;
 5. Calls on the President and the Government of Belarus to amend the Belarus legislation on the mass media in the light of international standards relating to the freedom of the press, of opinion and of religion;
 6. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to give their fullest support to all measures designed to guarantee freedom of the media and the independence of journalists in Belarus;
 7. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to draw up a programme in universities of the Member States so as to give students from Belarus an opportunity to become journalists and to give them their fullest support;
 8. Calls upon the President to ensure that the case of Professor Bandazhevsky is reviewed by an independent commission and refers in this connection to the fact that the published results of Professor Bandazhevsky's work received international acknowledgement;
 9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, the OSCE Presidency the Government of Belarus and, in view of the Union between the Russian Federation and Belarus, to the President of the Russian Federation.