

## **P7\_TA(2011)0244**

### **Belarus**

#### **European Parliament resolution of 12 May 2011 on Belarus**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Belarus, in particular those of 10 March 2011<sup>1</sup>, 20 January 2011<sup>2</sup> and 17 December 2009<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to the statement issued by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, on 18 February 2011 on the conviction and sentencing of a Belarusian opposition representative, and to the statement issued by her spokesperson on 10 April 2011 on the crackdown on the independent media in Belarus,
  - having regard to Council Decision 2011/69/CFSP of 31 January 2011 amending Council Decision 2010/639/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against certain officials of Belarus,
  - having regard to the final report on the presidential election in Belarus published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) on 22 February 2011,
  - having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the presidential candidates Ales Mikhalevich, Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu, Vital Rymasheuski, Andrey Sannikau, Mikalay Statkevich and Dimitrji Uss and their campaign managers, in particular Pavel Seviarynets, Vladimir Kobets and Sergey Martselev, are currently facing trials which may result in sentences of up to 15 years' imprisonment,
- B. whereas a number of opposition activists, including Anatol Lyabedzka, leader of the opposition United Civic Party (AHP), former presidential candidates Vital Rymasheuski and Ales Mikhalevich, on-line news portal editor-in-chief Natalya Radzina, Andrey Dzmitryeu, the campaign manager for opposition presidential candidate Uladzimer Nyaklyaeu, and 'Tell the Truth!' campaign activist Syarhey Vaznyak have been released from the KGB pre-trial detention centre and placed under house arrest whilst the investigation against them continues; whereas Ales Mikhalevich and Natalya Radzina have fled the country to avoid trial, while Dzmitry Bandarenka, a backer of Andrey Sannikau in a former presidential electoral campaign, has been sent to general regime penal colony for two years,
- C. whereas Aliaksandr Atroshchankau, Aliaksandr Malchanau, Dzmitry Novik and Vasil Parfiankou, members of the electoral campaign teams of democratic opposition candidates Uladzimir Niakliayeu and Andrei Sannikau, Mikita Likhavid, a member of the 'For Freedom' movement, 'Young Front' activists Ales Kirkevich, Zmister Dashkevich and

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2011)0099.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2011)0022.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 286 E, 22.10.2010, p. 16.

Eduard Lobau, Paval Vinahradau, an activist of the ‘Speak the Truth’ campaign, non-partisan activist Andrei Pratasienya, historian Dzmitry Drozd, protest participant Uladzemir Khamichenka and Dzmitry Bandarenka, a coordinator of the civil campaign ‘European Belarus’, have been sentenced to between one and four years’ imprisonment in connection with the demonstrations of 19 December 2010,

- D. whereas there is evidence that the police are torturing people to force them to admit their alleged crimes against the state, as demonstrated by the cases of Olga Klasowska and Ales Mikhalevic,
  - E. whereas on 25 April 2011 the Belarus Ministry of Information filed applications with the Supreme Economic Court seeking the closure of the independent newspapers *Narodnaya Volia* and *Nasha Niva*,
  - F. whereas Andrzej Poczobut, a journalist with the Belsat television channel and *Gazeta Wyborcza* newspaper, has been arrested and is facing up to two years’ imprisonment on the charge of ‘insulting the President’ following the articles he published recently; whereas Mr Poczobut is recognised by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience; whereas journalist Iryna Khalip, the wife of Andrey Sannikau, has also been arrested and faces charges in connection with the protests; whereas she is currently under house arrest and has been banned from communicating with her husband,
  - G. whereas repressive measures against members of the democratic opposition, the free media, civil society activists and human rights defenders have been stepped up even further, despite repeated calls from the international community to halt them immediately; whereas this situation constitutes a serious breach of numerous international commitments given by Belarus,
1. Strongly condemns all convictions on the basis of the criminal charge of ‘mass rioting’ and finds them arbitrary and politically motivated; emphasises that according to reports the authorities have failed to prove the guilt of the accused, that the trials were held behind closed doors, that detainees were denied the opportunity to call their witnesses and to meet discreetly and on a regular basis with their legal representatives, that the lawyers of the accused received several warnings from the Ministry of Justice and that some of them have been disbarred; declares, therefore, that the trials were not conducted in an impartial manner;
  2. Considers all charges against the presidential candidates Vladimir Neklyayev, Vitaly Rymashevsky, Nikolai Statkevich, Dmitry Uss and Andrei Sannikov to be illegal and inadmissible; calls for the candidates to be acquitted and spared any further persecution; in that connection, condemns the lack of respect for the fundamental rights of freedom of assembly and of expression shown by the Belarusian authorities, and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all protestors still in custody and for all charges against them to be dropped;
  3. Expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation of human rights defenders in Belarus; strongly condemns the recent defamatory allegations against, for example, Ales Bialiatski, President of the Human Rights Centre ‘Viasna’, made by the Belarusian President and several journalists in the state-owned media, who claimed, in their comments concerning the bomb attack on the Minsk subway, that ‘there [was] a fifth column in the country’;

4. Condemns the persisting climate of fear and intimidation of political opponents in Belarus and the ongoing persecution of opposition figures since the December 2010 presidential elections;
5. Urges the Belarusian authorities to remove the obstacles to the freedom of movement of the Ukrainian citizens Marina Tsapok and Maxim Kitsyuk and the Russian citizen Andrey Yurov, representatives of the Committee on International Control over the Human Rights Situation in Belarus, who were denied entry to the territory of Belarus, and to that of Alik Mnatsnakyan and Viktoria Gromova, Russian human rights defenders who were detained on 4 May 2011 in the office of the Human Rights Centre 'Viasna' and shortly after deported from Belarus and banned from re-entering the country for two years; in that connection, condemns all actions against human rights defenders carried out by the Belarusian authorities;
6. Condemns the systematic harassment and intimidation of and the mounting pressure on independent journalists and media outlets in Belarus; in that connection, urges the Belarusian authorities to halt the procedure to close down the *Narodnaya Volia* and *Nasha Niva* weeklies, to refrain from limiting access to two independent internet portals, *Karta '97* and *Bielorusskij Partizan*, which would result in the severe limitation of media pluralism in Belarus, and to release Andrzej Poczobut and drop all charges against him;
7. Condemns the lack of any independent investigation into the use of brutal force by the police and KGB services against the protesters on election day, particularly as Belarus has rejected a call by 14 EU Member States for a human rights fact-finding mission under the auspices of the OSCE to investigate the massive crackdown on the opposition in the aftermath of the December 2010 elections; welcomes the interim report by Dr Neil Jarman, Special Rapporteur of the Committee on International Control over the Human Rights Situation in Belarus, and is appalled at the fact that human rights defenders from various OSCE countries have again been detained in Minsk;
8. Calls on the Commission, the Council, the High Representative and other EU partner countries to extend the restrictive measures against the Belarusian regime, including by imposing targeted economic sanctions, in particular against state-owned enterprises;
9. Emphasises that, in the light of the continuous, unprecedented repression of the opposition, the EU needs to find new ways to assist Belarusian civil society in facilitating awareness-raising among the public, preventing the total fragmentation of the political opposition and sustaining a political alternative to the Lukashenka regime; calls for EU assistance to democratic opposition parties, civil society organisations and independent media outlets to be maintained and stepped up, for example via the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights;
10. Stresses that potential EU engagement with Belarus will be subject to strict conditionality and contingent on a commitment by Belarus to respect human rights and the rule of law, as stated in the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit of 7 May 2009, co-signed by the Belarusian Government;
11. 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 the parliaments of the Member States, the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe and the Government

and Parliament of Belarus.