



DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH BELARUS

- The Chairman -

STATEMENT

**by Mr Jacek PROTASIEWICZ,
Chairman of the Delegation for relations with Belarus**

on forcible illegal conscription of young democratic activists in Belarus

Brussels, 30 January 2009. Following my last statement issued on 26th January 2009 on the abuse of compulsory army conscription in Belarus, I would like to strongly condemn the recent developments in this matter.

As I was informed, young democratic activists Franak Viačorka, Ivan Šyla and Zmitser Fedaruk were on 28 January arrested by the special services in connection to the forcible army conscription. Franak Viačorka was beaten and directly convoyed to the military unit in Baranavičy city. It must be stressed that the conscription of Franak Viačorka contradicted the legal standards, as it was performed without transparent medical examination and violating the earlier court decision to postpone his conscription process until at least the beginning of February. Furthermore, Ivan Šyla was put in the regional transit camp and yesterday transported to the military unit in Lepel region for 18-month compulsory military service. Finally, Zmitser Fedaruk was detained on Wednesday, presumably to serve a 10-day jail sentence imposed on him over an unauthorized demonstration in May last year, following his summoning earlier that day to a district recruitment office in Minsk, where he explained that he was a student at a theological school and was eligible for a deferment from military service.

Having in mind the ongoing process of the evaluation of the human rights situation in Belarus during the targeted sanctions' six-month suspension period and taking into account the declarations of the Belarusian authorities that they are interested in continuing constructive dialogue with the European Union, I observe these practices with a deep concern. Therefore, I demand from the representatives of the Belarusian government an urgent explanation of the above-listed actions.

In this context I call on the Belarusian government to put an immediate end to all forms of harassment of the activists from youth organisations and to follow the procedures of the army conscription with the full respect for the rule of law. Furthermore, I urge the Council and the European Commission to demand the clarification of this issue from the Belarusian authorities in order to ensure that the process of the negotiations between the EU and Belarus is not undermined.

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