

MEPs call for EU sanctions against Belarusian President and Navalny's poisoners

- Alexander Lukashenko will not be recognised by the European Parliament as President of Belarus once his current term of office expires on 5 November
- Parliament condemns the Belarusian authorities for their violent repression of peaceful protests
- MEPs call for an international investigation into the Navalny case to be launched immediately

MEPs call for new presidential elections in Belarus and urge the EU to sanction President Lukashenko and the perpetrators behind Alexei Navalny's poisoning.

The situation in Belarus In a resolution adopted by 574 votes in favour, 37 against with 82 abstentions on Thursday, the European Parliament rejects the official results of the "so-called presidential elections" in Belarus on 9 August this year, as these elections were conducted in a "flagrant violation of all internationally recognised standards". Once the term of office for the incumbent authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko expires on 5 November, Parliament will no longer recognise him as the president of the country.

In the meantime, MEPs welcome the recently established Coordination Council as an "interim representation of the people demanding democratic change" in Belarus that is open to all political and social stakeholders. They also reiterate the many calls for new, free and fair elections to take place as soon as possible under international supervision.

EU sanctions against a brutal regime and its leaders

MEPs call for EU sanctions against the group of individuals responsible for falsifying the election results and for the violent repression in Belarus, including President Lukashenko, and call on EU member states in the Council to implement these restrictive measures without delay, in close coordination with international partners.

MEPs also staunchly condemn the mass arrests and ongoing violent crackdown on peaceful protesters, strike leaders and journalists in the country, with many reports of ill-treatment, rape and torture emerging from Belarusian detention centres and jails.

Important contribution made by Belarusian women

The resolution finally underlines the important contribution made by prominent female opposition members, led by Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, Veranika Tsapkala and Maria Kalesnikova, during the protests. It demands the immediate release of the arrested members of the Coordination Council and all those arbitrarily detained for political reasons.

The text notes that many Belarusians consider Tikhanovskaya to be the winner of the presidential elections and Belarus' real president-elect.

The situation in Russia and the case of Alexei Navalny's poisoning

In a separate resolution, also adopted on Thursday with 532 votes in favour, 84 against and 72 abstentions, Parliament strongly condemns the attempt to assassinate prominent Russian opposition politician and anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny with a nerve agent. The text notes that the poison used, belonging to the "Novichok group", can only be developed in state-owned military laboratories and cannot be acquired by private individuals, which strongly implies that Russian authorities were behind the attack. Should someone else, nevertheless, be found responsible, it would still be a clear breach of Russia's international legal commitments, according to the text.

MEPs underline that the attempted assassination of Navalny was part of a systemic effort to silence dissident voices in Russia, in particular with a view to influencing Russia's local and regional by-elections on 11-13 September. His case is only one element of a wider Russian policy focusing on oppressive internal policies and aggressive actions worldwide, notes the text.

International investigation and EU sanctions needed

The resolution asks for an international investigation into Navalny's case and the alleged breaches of Russia's international commitments in the area of chemical weapons to be launched immediately, while urging the Russian authorities to fully cooperate with such an inquiry and to hold those responsible to account.

It also calls on EU member states to take an active stance on the matter such as swiftly putting in place ambitious restrictive EU measures vis-à-vis Russia and strengthening already existing ones. The text urges the deployment of sanction mechanisms that would allow the European assets of corrupt individuals to be collected and frozen in accordance with the findings of Alexei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation.

For all the details, the resolutions will be available in full [here](#) (17.09.2020).

Further information

[Watch a video recording of the plenary debate with EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell \(14.09.2020\)](#)

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