



Belarus: The Last Dictatorship in Europe

Members of the European Parliament adopted a joint resolution on the situation in Belarus after the presidential elections. The resolution "strongly condemns the failed Presidential elections" and criticises the Russian reaction to them, was put forward by the PES, UEN, EPP-ED, ALDE and Greens/EFA. It describes the Lukashenko regime as "the last dictatorship in Europe".

The House denounces the elections of 19 March 2006 as *"not having fulfilled the required international standards of free, fair, equal, accountable and transparent elections"*. Consequently, it will not recognise any legitimacy in President **Lukashenko's** leadership, and therefore calls on a repeat of the Presidential elections *"in compliance with international democratic standards"*. The Members are *"appalled by the positive reactions of the Russian State Duma and the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, to the conduct of the presidential elections in Belarus and their outcome"*, and correspondingly urge the Council and Commission to *"raise the issue of Belarus with the Russian authorities so as to define a common responsibility for bringing about concrete democratic changes in that country and stop the political repression and human rights violations"*.

While the MEPs welcome the Council's decision to add *President Lukashenko* to the visa ban list, they call for an expansion of the list *"to include representatives of the Belarus local, regional and national authorities who were involved in breaching the human rights and political freedoms of Belarusian citizens during and after the electoral campaign"*. Furthermore they call for further pressure on the *Lukashenko* regime through the use of *"smart sanctions - severely affecting the perpetrators of oppression without adding any further suffering to the citizens of Belarus"* as well as *"an international freezing of the assets of Belarusian authorities abroad, restrictive measures against companies directly and personally linked to senior officials of the regime and the freezing of the personal assets of President Lukashenko and his close advisors"*. MEPs therefore advise all financial assistance to be directed towards citizens, organisations and enterprises not associated with the government.

The resolution recommends more support for the Belarusian citizens through the creation of *"visa facilitation regime"* and to *"fund additional educational exchange programmes for Belarusian young people who have been expelled from their universities for political reasons"*. It also recommends a strengthening of the independent media *"in order to help Belarusian citizens obtain impartial and accurate information about their country and the world"*.

The House *"calls on the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the EU Member States to set up an international commission to investigate the disappearance of Yuri Zakharenko, Victor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovsky and Dmitry Zavadski"*.

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