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Situation in Belarus

Greens/EFA motion for a resolution

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Belarus, in particular that of 17 December 2009 on Belarus,
- having regard to Council decision 2010/639/CFSP of 25 October 2010 concerning restrictive measures against certain officials of Belarus, extending both the restrictive measures and suspension until 31 October 2011,
- having regard to the Conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council of 25th October 2010,
- having regard to the Statement of the preliminary findings and conclusions on the presidential election in Belarus by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) as of 20 December 2010,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 3 December 2008 concerning the Eastern Partnership (COM (2008)0823),
- having regard to the Declaration on the Eastern Partnership issued by the European Council at its meeting of 19-20 March 2009 and to the Joint Declaration issued at the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit of 7 May 2009,
- having regard to the Commission statement of 21 November 2006 on the European Union's readiness to renew its relationship with Belarus and its people within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP),
- having regard to Rule 110 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the Council in its conclusion of 17 November 2009 recognised opening new possibilities for dialogue and deepened cooperation between the EU and Belarus with the aim of fostering genuine progress towards democracy and respect for human rights, and reaffirmed its readiness to deepen the relations with Belarus subject to further progress towards democracy, human rights and the rule of law and to assist the country in attaining these objectives,

B. whereas the Prague Declaration of Eastern Partnership Summit reaffirmed the commitments, inter alia of Belarus, to the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,

C. whereas Belarus committed itself to consider the recommendations made by the OSCE and its Office

for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) regarding improvements to its electoral law in order to bring it into line with international standards for democratic elections and to consult about the proposed amendments with the OSCE; whereas the National Assembly of Belarus passed a reform of the Electoral Code without prior consultation of the OSCE,

D. whereas the Council stood prepared to further intensify relations with Belarus and go as far as to upgrade its contractual status should a tangible progress as regards respect for human rights, the rule of law and the conduct of elections take place in Belarus,

E. whereas the Council, after evaluating developments in Belarus decided to extend the restrictive measures against certain Belarusian officials but to suspend the application of the restrictions on travelling to the EU, both until 31 October 2011, including Lukashenko,

F. whereas according to the OSCE PA and OSCE/ODIHR Statement of the preliminary findings and conclusions on the presidential election in Belarus "*The presidential election indicated that Belarus still has a considerable way to go in meeting its OSCE commitments, although some specific improvements were made. Election night was marred by detentions of most presidential candidates, and hundreds of activists, journalists and civil society representatives*",

G. whereas in response to these preliminary findings the Belarusian government asked the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe to leave the country saying that this organisation had fulfilled its mandate and that it was no longer needed; whereas the technical closure of the OSCE office is scheduled for 31 March 2011;

H. whereas the police crackdown on the demonstration of 19th December 2010 and the repressive actions of law enforcement officers against democratic opposition, free media and civil society activists were firmly condemned by the President of the European Parliament, EU High Representative, UN General Secretary,

I. whereas the arrested protesters and opposition candidates are regarded as criminals rather than political prisoners by the Belarusian Regime and therefore risk facing unreasonably maximum penalties,

J. whereas the lawyers representing protesters, the political opposition or their families are faced with the threat of losing their licence/being debarred,

K. whereas after these dramatic events EU Member Countries failed once again to speak with one voice thus sending contradictory messages to Minsk that relations could continue as usual,

1. Strongly condemns the brutal repression conducted by the police forces and KGB services against the protesters on the election day and the mass arrests that followed these events and expresses its solidarity to the victims of such violence; considers this a blatant violation of the basic democratic principles, such as freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, as well as of the human rights;

2. Expresses its deep concern at the criminal proceedings carried out by the Belarusian authorities against almost all presidential candidates, the leaders of the democratic opposition as well as great number of civil society activists, journalists, teachers and students that could lead to sentences up to 15 year prison; calls for an independent and impartial international investigation into the events;

3. Demands the unconditional release of all the demonstrators who are still detained and calls for their charges and criminal proceedings to be immediately dropped; calls, at the same time, on the Belarusian authorities to provide unhindered access of the detainees to relatives, legal assistance and medical care;

4. Urges the Belarusian authorities to stop immediately all forms of harassment, intimidation or threats against civil society activists including raids, searches and confiscation of materials in private apartments, outlets of independent media and offices of civil society organisations as well as expulsions from the universities and work places;
5. Calls on the Minsk government to reconsider its decision not to extend the mission of the OSCE Office in Belarus and urges the Belarusian authorities to resume the cooperation with this organization with a view to paving the way for the rerun of the presidential elections;
6. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the EU High Representative to review EU policy towards Belarus, underlines that the orientation of the ENP and national assistance for Belarus should be redirected in order to ensure the isolation of the regime and at the same time the appropriate enhanced support for the civil society; reiterates the importance of the effective use of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights; calls on Council to take into account the possibility to suspend Belarusian participation in the Eastern Partnership activities until genuine changes take place;
7. Takes the view that the EU should establish based on a strict conditionality a so-called Roadmap of step-by-step implemented sanctions starting with the restoration of visa ban until all the detained and arrested are released and relieved of charges; points out that the lack of timely action in this regard on the part of Belarusian authorities should result in imposing new, more strict measures, e.g. diplomatic and economic sanctions;
8. Calls, in this regard, on the Council, the Commission and the EU High Representative to immediately re-apply the visa ban on the Belarusian high-ranking authorities, expanding it to the state officials, members of judiciary and security officers who can be considered responsible for the vote-rigging and post-election brutal repressions and arrests of the members of the opposition and to freeze their assets; stresses that sanctions should remain in force until all political prisoners and detainees are released and the decision to close the OSCE office is reconsidered;
9. Expects EU Member Countries not to weaken the EU action with bilateral initiatives with the Belarusian regime that undermine the credibility and effectiveness of the European foreign policy;
10. Urges the Council, the Commission and the EU High Representative and Member States to support the democracy in Belarus by stepping up the financial aid for independent media, civil society organisations, and increasing the number of the scholarships for Belarusian students;
11. Welcomes the initiative to organise the donors' conference in Warsaw and Vilnius "Solidarity with Belarus", expects the European Union to be a major contributor; underlines the need for specific support measures for people detained, their families and those facing repressing measures in Belarus;
12. Strongly urges the Commission to increase the financial support to the European Humanities University (EHU) based in Vilnius, Lithuania, which is ready to accept students expelled from Belarusian universities following the violent crackdown after the presidential elections;
13. Takes the view that sport events, like World Ice Hockey Championships in 2014, should not be held in Belarus while there are political prisoners in this country and calls on the international sport organisations to suspend Belarusian participation in the international sport events until all political prisoners are freed;
14. Calls on the Council to consider introducing smart and targeted economic sanctions on Belarusian government owned companies, until the unconditional liberation of all political prisoners; recommends that EU Member States and other like-minded countries review their economic relations with Belarus and urges, in this context, the European business community to re-examine the conditions, on which their

cooperation with Belarusian business enterprises and companies is based; calls, at the same time, on the Member Countries to avoid facilitating and promoting business of European companies in Belarus;

15. Calls on the Council and the Commission to speed up the negotiations with Belarus for a visa facilitation agreement in order to enhance people-to-people contacts and show the concrete will of the EU to open its doors to Belarus;

16. Regrets the stance of the Russian Federation to recognise the elections and description of the ongoing repression as an "internal affair"; stresses the important role of the Belarus' neighbours and the European Union in normalising the situation and encouraging immediate unconditional release of all political prisoners;

17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States, the President, Government and Parliament of Belarus and the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council Europe and the OSCE.

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Responsible MEPs



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