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Belarus

Release of political prisoners in Belarus: a step in the right direction, but not far enough

Reacting to the announcement of the release of all political prisoners in Belarus, Green MEP **Werner Schulz**, member of the Foreign Affairs committee, said:

"I welcome the release of four political prisoners in Belarus this week as well as Lukashenko's announcement that all other political detainees will be released by the beginning of October. This is a first small step; however, there is still no evidence of any genuine willingness to carry out reforms or limit Lukashenko's powers. This first token gesture signifies nothing more than the beginning of the end of a ruler who has followed a policy of ruthless oppression and violence.

International sanctions and the dramatic worsening of Belarus' economic situation have resulted in Lukashenko fearing his own people, who are bearing the consequences of a politically and economically ruined country.

The international community is well advised not to act too quickly to compromise, or to respond to flattering offers of joining a round table. As long as the EU remains unconvinced of the sincerity of Lukashenko's steps and as long as the opposition cannot be sure it will not be arrested at the negotiation table, keeping the sanctions in place is the only choice the EU has."

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