Resolution on Belarus

2011/2686(RSP) - 12/05/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 52 votes to 2, with 5 abstentions, a resolution on Belarus.

The resolution was tabled by the S&D, EPP, ALDE, Greens/EFA and ECR groups.

Noting the **increase in repressive measures against members of the democratic opposition,** the free media, civil society activists and human rights, Parliament strongly condemns all convictions on the basis of the criminal charge of 'mass rioting' and finds them arbitrary and politically motivated, where the authorities have failed to prove the guilt of the accused. Furthermore, it considers all charges against the presidential candidates Vladimir Neklyayev, Vitaly Rymashevsky, Nikolai Statkevich, Dmitry Uss and Andrei Sannikov to be illegal and inadmissible, and calls for the candidates to be acquitted and spared any further persecution. It also condemns the systematic harassment and intimidation of and the mounting pressure on independent journalists and media outlets.

Parliament calls for the **extension of the EU restrictive measures**, as stated in Council Decision 2011/69 /CFSP amending Council Decision 2010/639/CFSP against the Belarusian regime, including by imposing targeted economic sanctions, in particular against state-owned enterprises. It emphasises that, in the light of the continuous, unprecedented repression of the opposition, the EU needs to find new ways to assist Belarusian civil society in facilitating awareness-raising among the public, preventing the total fragmentation of the political opposition and sustaining a political alternative to the Lukashenka regime. Members call for **EU assistance to democratic opposition parties**, civil society organisations and independent media outlets to be maintained and stepped up, for example via the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. They stress that potential EU engagement with Belarus will be subject to strict conditionality and contingent on a commitment by Belarus to respect human rights and the rule of law, as stated in the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit of 7 May 2009, co-signed by the Belarusian Government.

Members express deep concern at the **deteriorating situation of human rights defenders in Belarus**, and strongly condemns the recent defamatory allegations against Ales Bialiatski, President of the Human Rights Centre 'Viasna', made by the Belarusian President and several journalists in the state-owned media, who claimed, in their comments concerning the bomb attack on the Minsk subway, that there was a fifth column in the country. They note that there is evidence that the police are torturing people to force them to admit their alleged crimes against the state, and they condemn the persisting climate of fear and intimidation of political opponents in Belarus and the ongoing persecution of opposition figures since the December 2010 presidential elections.

The Belarussian authorities are urged to:

- remove the obstacles to the freedom of movement of the Ukrainian citizens Marina Tsapok and Maxim Kitsyuk and the Russian citizen Andrey Yurov, representatives of the Committee on International Control over the Human Rights Situation in Belarus, who were denied entry to the territory of Belarus, and to that of Alik Mnatsnakyan and Viktoria Gromova, Russian human rights defenders who were detained on 4 May 2011 in the office of the Human Rights Centre 'Viasna' and shortly after deported from Belarus;
- halt the procedure to close down the Narodnaya Volia and Nasha Niva weeklies, to refrain from limiting access to two independent internet portals, Karta '97 and Bielorusskij Partizan, which would result in the severe limitation of media pluralism in Belarus.

Lastly, Parliament condemns the lack of any independent investigation into the use of brutal force by the police and KGB services against the protesters on election day, particularly as Belarus has rejected a call by 14 EU Member States for a human rights fact-finding mission under the auspices of the OSCE to investigate the massive crackdown on the opposition in the aftermath of the December 2010 elections. It is appalled at the fact that human rights defenders from various OSCE countries have again been detained in Minsk.