

Resolution on the situation in Belarus

2012/2581(RSP) - 29/03/2012 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the situation in Belarus. It continues **strongly to condemn the deteriorating situation as regards human rights and fundamental freedoms**, combined with the lack of deep democratic and economic reforms in Belarus, and will continue to oppose the repression of the regime's opponents in Minsk. Members note the political situation in Belarus has been seriously deteriorating since the presidential elections of 19 December 2010, with repressive measures being taken against members of the democratic opposition, the free media, civil society activists and human rights defenders, despite repeated calls from the international community to halt these measure immediately.

Parliament strongly deplores the **execution** of Uladzislau Kavalyou and Dzmitry Kanavalau in March 2012 despite continuous domestic and international protests. It calls on the Belarusian authorities to **immediately introduce a moratorium on the death penalty**, and it condemns the continuous persecution of human rights defenders and members of the democratic opposition. Parliament demands the unconditional and immediate release of all political prisoners, including former presidential candidates, reiterating that there cannot be any progress in the EU-Belarus dialogue without progress by Belarus in terms of democracy, human rights and rule of law and until all political prisoners, are unconditionally released and their civil rights are fully rehabilitated.

Noting an EU-Belarus diplomatic conflict of unprecedented scope escalated after the Council decision of 28 February 2012 to add 21 Belarusian officials to the list of people subject to the assets freeze and visa ban, Parliament states that the subsequent decision to withdraw all the ambassadors of the EU Member States from Belarus proves that the Belarusian authorities' attempts to divide the European Union over decisions on sanctions have failed. It deplores the foreign travel ban list drafted by the Belarus Government that forbids several opponents and human rights activists from leaving the country, and stresses that, instead of choosing increasing self-isolation, Minsk should make the right choice for its people and open itself to democracy.

Parliament welcomes the above-mentioned Council decision to strengthen restrictive measures and also welcomes the Council decision of 23 March 2012 to reinforce restrictive measures against the Belarusian regime by adding 12 more persons, benefiting from and supporting the Belarusian regime as well as persons responsible for the repression of civil society and the democratic opposition in Belarus, to the list of those targeted by a travel ban and an asset freeze as well as freezing the assets of 29 entities supporting the regime. It calls on the Council and Commission to:

- take stock of the latest developments in EU-Belarus diplomatic relations and of the further deterioration in the situation regarding human rights and basic freedoms in the country and, on this basis, to adopt a decision concerning further restrictive measures, including targeted economic sanctions;
- support, with financial and political means, the efforts of Belarusian civil society, independent media (including TV Belsat, European Radio for Belarus, Radio Racja and others) and non-governmental organisations in Belarus to promote democracy.

Members call on the National Ice Hockey Federations of the EU Member States and all other democratic countries to urge the IIHF, including at its next Congress in May in Helsinki, Finland, to re-discuss its

earlier decision envisaging the possibility of relocating the 2014 World Ice Hockey Championship from Belarus to another host country until all political prisoners, are released and until the regime shows clear signs of its commitment to respect human rights and the rule of law.

Furthermore, Parliament stresses the need for increased cooperation between the EU and its eastern neighbours in the framework of the Eastern Partnership, including its parliamentary dimension – the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly – with the shared aim of initiating a genuine process of democratisation in Belarus.

Lastly, Parliament states that a firm commitment by all EU Member States and other democratic countries to act in a united manner in times of necessity can foster the successful promotion of universal values in such countries as Belarus and bring these countries closer to the path of democratic transition.