Resolution on the continuous violations of human rights in Belarus, in particular the murder of Roman Bondarenko

2020/2882(RSP) - 26/11/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 613 votes to 41, with 35 abstentions, a resolution on the continuous violations of human rights in Belarus, in particular the murder of Raman Bandarenka.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and ECR groups.

Unprecedented peaceful protests and strikes continue in Belarus more than 100 days after they began, demonstrating the level of discontent and mobilisation of Belarusian society against the massive falsification of the recent election results and the human rights violations perpetrated by the country's autocratic regime. These protests have been met with violence, repression, restrictions on fundamental freedoms by the Belarusian authorities.

Moreover, Parliament strongly condemned the murder of Raman Bandarenka, a 31-year-old art teacher, who was brutally beaten on the evening of 11 November 2020 by a group of plain-clothed, masked men reportedly with close ties to the Lukashenka regime.

It demanded a prompt, thorough, impartial and independent investigations into Raman Bandarenka's death and the protest-related deaths of Alyaksandr Taraykouski, Alexander Vikhor, Artsyom Parukou, Gennady Shutov and Konstantin Shishmakov.

Against this background, Parliament called on the Belarusian authorities to:

- abolish the death penalty;
- immediately release all political prisoners, including Dr Artsyom Sarokin and journalist Katsiaryna Barysevich, who exposed an official cover-up of Raman Bandarenka's killing as well as the medical worker who handed the public interest information on Raman Bandarenka's death over to the media without violating the rights of the victim's family;
- cease all forms of violence, ill-treatment, gender-based violence and torture against Belarusian citizens and detainees, to grant them access to medical and legal advice, and to release immediately and unconditionally all persons arbitrarily detained, including for participating in protests against the election results or against violence used by the authorities, or for expressing support for these protests;
- halt to all forms of harassment of citizens, such as dismissal of employees or students for participating in strikes or protests, withdrawal of journalistic accreditation, punitive disruption of communal services such as water or heating, deprivation of child custodial rights, blocking of private bank accounts, and internet black-outs;
- call on its law enforcement employees to immediately stop using violence against civilians and to refrain from carrying out criminal orders and instructions on the use of disproportionate force, violence, torture and ill-treatment against citizens;
- stop attacking, detaining and demonising journalists and media workers and to work towards meaningful protections for media freedom;

Sanctions

Stressing that the actions taken so far by the EU and the Member States against the Lukashenka regime are insufficient, Parliament welcomed the Council's decision to work on a third package of sanctions aimed at firms and oligarchs with ties to the Lukashenka regime. It called for a credible enlargement of the EU sanctions list and for a complete freeze on all EU fund transfers to the current Belarusian Government and state-controlled projects.

Lastly, the resolution called for EU-wide restrictive measures, a so-called European Magnitsky Act, that would allow for the targeting of any individual, state and non-state actors, and other entities responsible for or involved in grave human rights violations, abuses and corruption, without any further delay. Member States should also consider lowering their level of diplomatic engagement with the country.