Resolution on the systematic repression in Belarus and its consequences for European security following the abductions from an EU civilian plane intercepted by Belarusian authorities

2021/2741(RSP) - 10/06/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 626 votes to 16, with 36 abstentions, a resolution on the systematic repression in Belarus and its consequences for European security following the abductions from an EU

civilian plane intercepted by Belarusian authorities.

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

As a reminder, on 23 May 2021, a Polish-registered aircraft serving Ryanair flight FR4978, an international passenger flight between two EU capitals (Athens to Vilnius), while in Belarusian airspace, was forcefully diverted on the orders of Aliaksandr Lukashenka and

was escorted by a Belarusian fighter jet to Minsk National Airport based on the false pretence of a bomb threat, jeopardising the safety of the more than 170 passengers and crew on board, many of them EU citizens. The Belarusian authorities did not discover any explosive devices, but detained two passengers – Raman Pratasevich, a Belarusian national, and his companion Sofia Sapega, a Russian national and student of the European Humanities University in Vilnius.

Parliament strongly condemned the 23 May hijacking and forced landing of Ryanair flight FR4978 in Minsk and the detention by Belarusian authorities of journalist Raman Pratasevich and Sofia Sapega. It considered this **horrendous act** a violation of international law which

constitutes an act of state terrorism.

The resolution called for the immediate and unconditional release of Raman Pratasevich and Sofia Sapega, as well as all other journalists and political prisoners held in Belarus.

Parliament recalled the Council’s decision to strengthen existing restrictive measures by introducing a **ban on Belarusian carriers of all kinds from entering EU airspace** and accessing EU airports, and advised the Council to draw up a plan to facilitate Belarusians’ attempts to

leave the country.

The Council is called on to extend as soon as possible the lists of persons and entities under EU sanctions by including individuals and entities involved in the interception and forced landing of Ryanair flight FR4978 and the detention of Raman Pratasevich and Sofia

Sapega.

Continued repression

The Belarusian authorities have continued their repression against the peaceful Belarusian people, with many citizens being harassed, arrested and convicted for expressing opposition to the regime or to the widespread human rights violations taking place in Belarus. More than 34 000 Belarusian are estimated to have been detained at some point for protesting against the regime, before and after the 9 August 2020 elections.

Parliament considered that the current regime in Belarus as illegitimate, illegal and Criminal. It continues to support the people of Belarus in their legitimate demands and aspirations for free and fair elections, fundamental freedoms and human rights, democratic representation, political participation and dignity.

It strongly condemned and demanded an immediate end to the violence and repression by state authorities in Belarus, and in particular the unlawful detention, the torture and the ill-treatment in detention, and the criminal prosecution of peaceful citizens.

Sanctions

The resolution called on the Council to swiftly adopt and implement **economic sanctions**, which must be substantial and have, as much as possible, an immediate effect on the Belarusian regime, its supporters and the economic actors that support the regime. Sectoral sanctions should target in particular the crude oil and oil-products, potash, steel and wood-processing industries.

In addition, Member States and the EU institutions should increase their efforts to tackle the substantial **cigarette smuggling** from Belarus into the EU, which provides funds to the Lukashenka regime. Parliament encouraged a coordinated EU action of solidarity to offset the economic hardships for the Member States most affected by the economic sanctions on Belarus.

Member States are urged to:

- facilitate the procedures for obtaining visas and residence for those fleeing Belarus for political reasons or for those who require medical treatment as a result of violence perpetrated against them, and to offer them and their families the necessary support and assistance;

- provide financial support to those exiled institutions, such as the European Humanities University in Vilnius, that are nurturing a new generation of Belarusians who are challenging the country’s corrupt and illegitimate system;

Lastly, Parliament is committed to the effective functioning of the European Parliament’s Platform on the fight against impunity in Belarus and to coordinating a timely international reaction to developments in Belarus.