Relations with Belarus

2023/2041(INI) - 13/09/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 453 votes to 21, with 40 abstentions, a resolution on relations with Belarus.

Belarusian society continues to be exposed to systemic human rights violations and crimes against humanity committed by the Lukashenko regime. More than 1 500 people are still imprisoned for political reasons, and around 300 000 Belarusian citizens have fled the country because of persecution or fear of persecution.

Continuous repression by the Lukashenka regime and EU support for repressed persons

Parliament condemned in the strongest terms the unabated repression and the systematic and widespread human rights violations continuously committed by the Lukashenka regime. It demanded that the Lukashenka regime end this spiral of violence, torture, repression and propaganda against dissenting voices and perceived critics, immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners, their family members and all persons arbitrarily detained.

It called on the Lukashenka regime to immediately provide the necessary medical treatment to and guarantee proper medical supervision of all political prisoners with serious diseases and health issues.

Members denounced politically motivated ‘show trials’ and trumped-up charges aimed at instilling fear in representatives and supporters of the democratic forces, civil society, independent media outlets, free trade unions, human rights defenders, and national, religious and sexual minorities. They called on the Commission and the Member States to continue enabling human rights defenders, lawyers and civil society organisations to provide services to political prisoners and their families, particularly social aid, healthcare and public defence.

Involvement of the Lukashenka regime in Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine

The resolution condemned in the strongest possible terms the Lukashenka regime’s involvement in Russia’s war aggression against Ukraine It condemned, in this regard, the regime’s massive provision of ammunition and military hardware to the Russian aggressors, particularly the manufacture of components for the Russian military, as well as the stationing of Russian troops in Belarus and their training by Belarusian instructors, the welcoming of Russia’s illegal and state-sponsored terrorist organisation the Wagner Group and the threat to join the aggression.

Noting that the vast majority of Belarusians disapprove of this multifaceted involvement in Russia’s war of aggression, Members expressed their full support for the Belarusian activists who are resisting the aggressors within Belarus. Parliament denounced the **illegal transfer of more than 2 150 children**, including orphans, from Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine to so-called recreational camps in Belarus, where they are subjected to Russification and indoctrination. It considered that the actions of Lukashenka himself and his regime may also amount to **the crime against humanity** of ‘deportation or forcible transfer of population’ under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). It considered Lukashenka as responsible for these **war crimes** as Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova and therefore called on the ICC to consider issuing a similar international warrant for Lukashenka’s arrest.

By enabling Russia’s unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, the Lukashenka regime has become an accomplice in the crimes committed by Russia, which implies responsibility for the destruction and

damage caused to Ukraine. The resolution called, therefore, for the EU institutions and the Member States to take all the actions necessary to enable the criminal prosecution of Belarusian officials who are complicit in the crime of aggression, war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide committed against Ukraine.

Members called for Russia and Belarus to be put on the EU's high-risk third-country list regarding combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

The International Olympic Committee and other international sports federations are urged not to allow athletes from Belarus and Russia, many of whom support or have even participated in Russia's unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, to compete in the **Paris 2024 Olympic Games** or any other international sports events.

Sovereignty of Belarus and protection of its language and national culture

Noting with great concern the rampant political, economic, military and cultural subordination of Belarus to Moscow, Parliament regretted the fact that Belarus has become a satellite state of Russia. It called for the EU, its Member States and NATO to take all possible steps to deal with the **deployment of nuclear weapons**, which is in violation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and may trigger further nuclear redeployments in the region.

Members called for the EU and the Member States to maintain unity in addressing the multifaceted threats posed by the regime of Aliaksandr Lukashenka to the EU, in particular the continued and growing state-engineered instrumentalisation of migration. They strongly condemned the use of migration for political ends by the Belarusian authorities and sees this as a purposefully orchestrated reprisal by the Lukashenka regime against EU Member States for their support for the democratic forces of Belarus. They reiterate their call on the Council to add the Wagner Group to the EU's terrorist list and calls for the EU and its Member States to continue to monitor the activities of the **Wagner Group** and to reinforce the protection of the EU's borders in order to prevent any provocations by the Wagner Group or attempts by Wagner Group mercenaries to cross into the EU.

Parliament expressed solidarity with the Belarusians seeking to protect and nurture their national identity. It also urged the Belarusian regime to end its discrimination and violence against all minorities, in particular ethnic, religious and sexual minorities.

Support for democracy and European aspirations

Belarus has historical ties with the rest of Europe and shares the heritage of European culture and identity. It should remain a part of the European political, cultural and economic space.

Members support the declarations about the European aspirations of Belarusians made by the leaders of Belarusian democratic political parties. They called for the EU institutions and Member States to develop a **more ambitious and comprehensive strategy**, coupled with a broad economic plan, that would provide support for the Belarusian democratic forces with a view to fostering a democratic transition in the country and upholding Belarus's independence and sovereignty.

The resolution also stressed the need to:

- improve EU communication with the people in Belarus to provide them with information and counter disinformation and propaganda by the state-controlled media and to foster contacts between their own populations and the Belarusian people;

- simplify the procedures for obtaining visas and residence permits for those fleeing Belarus for political reasons;

- continue and broaden support for the cultural and educational activities of Belarusian civil society and academic institutions, including those aimed at supporting the Belarusian language and the independent media;

- establish an operational dialogue with the representatives of the democratic forces of Belarus to bring to a successful conclusion the work on the adoption of a roadmap for implementing the economic and investment package of EUR 3 billion already planned by the Commission to meet the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people.