Resolution on the situation in Belarus

2005/2604(RSP) - 29/09/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Belarus.

The resolution had been tabled by the PES, IND/DEM, Greens/ALE, EPP-ED, ALDE, and UEN groups.

Parliament details in the resolution the many violations of human rights occurring in Belarus and strongly condemns the Belarus regime's indiscriminate attacks on the media, minority and human rights activists, members of the opposition, religious leaders, and any person who attempts freely to voice criticism of President Lukashenko and the regime. This is evidenced by arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment of detainees, disappearances, politically motivated persecution and other acts of repression that flout the basic principles of democracy and the rule of law.

Parliament also condemns the following:

- the Belarus regime's amendment to Decree 460 on the regulations for accepting foreign aid, dated 17 August 2005, which extends the list of objectives for which external aid cannot be accepted;
- the regime's decision of 22 August 2005 to ban the Reformed Evangelical Church, which had been present in Belarus for more than 400 years;
- the government's action against the Union of Poles in Belarus (ZPB) as a violation of the basic principles of the Council of Europe 'Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities' of 1995 and as an attempt to curb the largest NGO and one of the few not controlled by the government;
- the continuous persecution of activists belonging to the Polish minority who wish to preserve the independence of their association, and the Belarus regime's complete marginalisation of the Roma minority in Belarus;
- the Belarus authorities for not granting entry visas to a delegation of Members of the European Parliament who went on a fact-finding mission on 8 August 2005.

Should the Belarussian authorities fail to improve the situation regarding freedom of speech, assembly and religion, Parliament feels that the Commission, the Council and Parliament should initiate the procedure to **expand the visa-ban list to include representatives of Belarussian authorities involved in persecution** . The sanctions against President Lukashenko's regime should also include the **freezing of assets of Belarussian authorities abroad**.

Parliament calls on the Council and Commission as appropriate:

- to act on their responsibility stemming from the Neighbourhood Strategy to support Belarussian civil society and make provision for a financial programme relating to the objectives of the European Neighbourhood Policy, adapting the support measures to the case of Belarus;
- to grant as soon as possible even greater assistance to the free media and independent NGOs in Belarus and to extend broadcasting initiatives;
- to ensure that no 'pseudo-NGOs', which are created by the Belarus authorities in order to obtain funds from foreign donors, receive any EU funding or any contributions from the EU budget;
- to support the democratically elected board of ZPB, as well as the boards of other democratically elected NGOs which are also subject to repression by the Lukashenko regime;
- to create a programme of scholarships, visits and placements for NGOs and human rights and minority activists;

- to accelerate the opening of a permanent representation of the EU in Minsk, so as to be able to better distribute information, coordinate projects and monitor the situation in Belarus;
- to raise the issue of Belarus with the Russian authorities with a view to defining a common responsibility for bringing about concrete democratic changes in that country.

Lastly, Parliament calls on European political parties and the political groups in the European Parliament to increase their contacts with, and political support for, the Belarussian opposition.