Basic information

2008/2581(RSP) RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects	Procedure completed
Resolution on the arrest of political opponents in Belarus **Subject** 6.10.08 Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general **Geographical area** Belarus	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
22/05/2008	Decision by Parliament	T6-0239/2008	Summary
22/05/2008	Results of vote in Parliament		
22/05/2008	Debate in Parliament		Summary
22/05/2008	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2008/2581(RSP)
Procedure type	RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects
Procedure subtype	Urgent debate or resolution
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 150
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Motion for a resolution		B6-0239/2008	20/05/2008	
Motion for a resolution		B6-0259/2008	20/05/2008	
Motion for a resolution		B6-0260/2008	20/05/2008	
Motion for a resolution		B6-0261/2008	20/05/2008	
Motion for a resolution		B6-0263/2008	20/05/2008	
Motion for a resolution		B6-0264/2008	20/05/2008	
Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects		T6-0239/2008	22/05/2008	Summary

Resolution on the arrest of political opponents in Belarus

2008/2581(RSP) - 22/05/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 22 May 2008, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the arrest of political opponents in Belarus. The resolution had been tabled for consideration in plenary by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, UEN, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups. Parliament deeply regrets that the situation of democracy, human rights and the rule of law is not improving in Belarus. It points out that constant arbitrary arrests of members of civil society and opposition activists, notably the recent temporary detention and trial of Aleksander Milinkevich, and the clampdown on the independent media, contradict the recent rhetoric of the Belarusian Government concerning their wish to improve relations with the EU.

Parliament also condemns the severe sentences given to Syarhei Parsyukevich and Andrei Kim on 22 and 23 April 2008 in Minsk for their participation in the entrepreneurs' demonstrations of 10 January 2008. At the same time, it deplores the reportedly excessive force used by Belarusian security forces against and the arrests of peaceful citizens gathered in Minsk on 25 March 2008 to mark the ninetieth anniversary of the Foundation of the Independent Belarusian People's Republic.

The Belarusian authorities are urged to release the remaining political prisoner, Aliaksandr Kazulin, and to stop using intimidation, targeted arrests and politically motivated prosecutions against the activists of the democratic opposition and civil society. Members condemn the detention of independent journalists and destruction of their equipment by Belarusian secret services (KGB).

Parliament recalls that on 21 November 2006 the EU declared its readiness to renew its relationship with Belarus within the framework of the ENP as soon as the Belarusian Government demonstrates respect for democratic values. It emphasises that Belarus needs to fulfil the remaining conditions laid down in the 'non-paper' entitled 'What the European Union could bring to Belarus', which include the release of all political prisoners, the abolition of the death penalty, an assurance of a free media and freedom of expression, the independence of the judiciary and respect for democratic values and for the basic rights of the Belarusian people. Parliament condemns the fact that Belarus is the only country in Europe which still has the death penalty.

Members went on to state that they deeply regret the 2002 Religion Law, recognising that as result of this legislation, the activities of many religious communities have been restricted and their leaders are being subjected to constant harassment and imprisonment. They call on the Belarusian Government to revise the 2002 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations and restore procedures guaranteeing respect for freedom of religion.

Belarusian authorities are urged to implement OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) standards in the organisation of the forthcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for autumn 2008. The government must give democratic opposition representatives free access to district election commissions, grant registration to all parliamentary candidates, and not create obstacles for a comprehensive international election observation mission. Parliament expresses solidarity with the united democratic opposition of Belarus and Belarusian citizens who strive for an independent and democratic Belarus based on the rule of law.

The Council and Commission are asked to :

-provide substantial support for the victims of human rights violation in Belarus. Increased financial assistance to civil society organisations, in particular free media, is necessary for the promotion of human rights in the country;

-take further steps towards the facilitation and liberalisation of visa procedures for Belarusian citizens, to facilitate people- to-people contacts and to democratise that country. Parliament urges a consideration of the possibilities of lowering the cost of visas for Belarusian citizens entering the Schengen territory.

Parliament deplores the Belarusian authorities' repeated refusal to grant entry visas to Members of the European Parliament in the last couple of years, calling on the Belarusian authorities not to create any further obstacles preventing the European Parliament Delegation observing the forthcoming general elections.

Lastly, recalling the decision of the Government of Belarus to declare 10 United States diplomats personae non gratae and the forced expulsion of the US Ambassador to Minsk, Parliament expresses its solidarity with the United States and calls on Belarus to reconsider its decision.