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New wave of mass arrests in Belarus of opposition activists and their family members

European Parliament resolution of 8 February 2024 on the new wave of mass arrests in Belarus of opposition activists and their family members (2024/2550(RSP))

(C/2024/6335)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to its previous resolutions on Belarus,

— having regard to Rule 144(5) and 132(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas in January 2024, the Belarusian State Security Committee (KGB) carried out raids, interrogations and detentions targeting over 200 family members of current and former political prisoners as well as beneficiaries of the 'INeedHelpBY' initiative on 'extremism'-related charges; whereas the majority are mothers and wives of political prisoners, including Marina Adamovich, wife of Mikalai Statkevich, Tatsiana Seviarynets, mother of Pavel Seviarynets, and earlier-arrested Daria Losik, wife of Ihar Losik;

B. whereas additional charges were brought *in absentia* against 20 political analysts, journalists and sociologists dubbed 'Tsikhanouskaya's analysts', who face confiscation of property and revocation of citizenship if convicted;

C. whereas political prisoners, including party leaders Mikalai Kazlou, Ryhor Kastusiou, Mikalai Statkevich and Pavel Seviarynets, face isolation, torture, denial of medical care and forced labour;

D. whereas the latest crackdown precedes the parliamentary and local 'elections' on 25 February 2024; whereas the 2023 'law on political parties' is preventing democratic opposition parties from participating in the elections;

1. Strongly condemns the recent wave of mass arrests in Belarus and urges the illegitimate Lukashenka regime to cease repression, especially any gender-based persecution, and reminds the regime of its international obligations;

2. Calls for the immediate unconditional release and compensation of all more than 1 400 political prisoners, as well as their families and arbitrarily detained persons, while restoring their full rights;

3. Reiterates its position on the lack of transparency, freedom and fairness ahead of the parliamentary and local 'elections' in Belarus and calls for the EU, its Member States, and the international community not to recognise the results;

4. Calls on the VP/HR and the Council to respond by imposing stronger sanctions on the Lukashenka regime, including against goods involving political prisoners' forced labour, stricter financial sanctions, and sanctions on individuals responsible for serious human-rights violations, including high-level officials and members of the security forces; calls for a further reduction of the diplomatic presence of Belarus in the EU, continued support for regime victims through special instruments allowing them to obtain EU visas and residence permits and addressing cases of statelessness;

5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to further support the documentation of human rights violations in Belarus, to back turning the OHCHR examination of the human rights situation in Belarus into a fully independent investigative mechanism, to uphold the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Belarus, and to further accountability through extraterritorial and universal jurisdiction;

6. Reiterates its solidarity with the people of Belarus and its support for their legitimate aspirations for a democratic and European future and remains committed to working tirelessly with democratic forces, civil society and independent media to benefit the people of Belarus;

7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the VP/HR, Member States, the representatives of the Belarusian democratic forces, the de facto Belarusian authorities, the UN and the OSCE.