



LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS SEIMO NARIAI
MEMBERS OF THE SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

Gedimino pr. 53, LT-01109 Vilnius, Lithuania

22 July 2020, Vilnius

Charles Michel

President of the European Council

Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

Josep Borrell Fontelles

The High Representative of the Union

for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Vice-President of the European Commission

Honourable Leaders of the European Union,

We, the Members of Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the European Parliament, would like to address you regarding the rapidly deteriorating situation in Belarus. In the run-up to the presidential elections in Belarus, in last months, we are witnessing increasing repressions against independent candidates and media, the democratic opposition and Belarusian civil society. The number of detentions, criminal and administrative prosecutions, intimidation, restrictions on freedom of assembly and expression are on the rise. The overall human rights situation is deteriorating rapidly. V.Babaryka, who could potentially have been the main competitor of Aliaksandr Lukashenka in the elections, was detained and the Central Electoral Commission decided not to register him as a candidate in the elections. Independent candidate Valery Tsapkala was denied registration too. According to independent NGOs and human rights defenders, during last months hundreds of people have been detained or otherwise repressed. On 29 June “Amnesty International” has issued a statement acknowledging Viktor Babaryka, his son Eduard Babaryka, Syarhey Tsikhanouski, a well-known blogger and husband of Presidential candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, as well as dozens of their comrades, peaceful protesters and activists as the prisoners of conscience who are persecuted solely for the peaceful realization of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, freedom of expression and participation in political and electoral processes.

We believe that the situation in Belarus have to be among the priorities on the EU's agenda, however it did not get the proper attention in the discussions of European Council. During last decades, European Union has repeatedly taken important steps in response to the existing human rights violations in Belarus. Restrictive measures against Belarus were first imposed in 2004, then expanded against those involved in violations of international electoral standards and international human rights law, as well as in the crackdown on civil society and the democratic opposition. Sanctions were lifted in 2016, however the new wave of brutal repressions by the Lukashenka regime against political opponents, peaceful protesters, independent media and civil society activists demonstrates that there is an urgent need to review this decision.

We, the Members of Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the European Parliament, strongly believe that protection of democratic values, human rights and fundamental freedoms have to remain at the forefront of the EU policy towards Belarus. There is an urgent need to demonstrate clear position of the whole EU that the brutal actions by the authoritarian Lukashenko's regime cannot be tolerated. Therefore, we call for renewing of sanctions against regime and those responsible for the repressions against Belarussian people, for the actions undermining the democratic nature of elections and for the interfering into the democratic and competitive political process, including the participation in the electoral fraud – for the violation of principles and values that are at the very heart of European Union.

Sincerely yours,

Gabrielius LANDSBERGIS, Opposition Leader, Chair of the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

Viktorija ČMILYTĖ-NIELSEN, Chair of the Liberal Movement of Lithuania, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

Andrius KUBILIUS, MEP, Head of EPP Lithuanian delegation, Co-President of the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly

Ingrida ŠIMONYTĖ, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

Gediminas KIRKILAS, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

Juozas BERNATONIS, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

Radvilė MORKŪNAITĖ - MIKULĖNIENĖ, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

Žygimantas PAVILIONIS, MP, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

Rasa JUKNEVIČIENĖ, MEP, EPP, Lithuania

Aušra MALDEIKIENĖ, MEP, EPP, Lithuania

Liudas MAŽYLIS, MEP, EPP, Lithuania

Petras AUŠTREVICIUS, MEP, Renew Europe, Lithuania

Vilija BLINKEVIČIŪTĖ, MEP, S&D, Lithuania

Juozas OLEKAS, MEP, S&D, Lithuania