

Declaration of Baltic Solidarity with Belarusian people

On the eve of March 25, when Belarusians celebrate the 103rd Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence by the short-lived Belarusian People's Republic (BNR), like 103 years ago, Belarusians thrive for a democratic and sovereign country. We express our full support and admiration of Belarusians keeping this fight peaceful for seven months in a row. Independence Day of March 25 has also become a symbol of the Belarusian people's resistance against the regime of dictator Alexander Lukashenko, who has usurped power for 26 years.

We condemn the continuing brutal and violent repression of the Belarusian security forces against peaceful demonstrators, independent journalists, human rights defenders, lawyers, labour unions and political activists. There are currently 300 political prisoners, 2,500 politically motivated cases, over 1000 cases of torture, there were 32.000 detained for political reasons in Belarus.

Baltic states along with the international community are committed to continue supporting Belarus democracy and sovereignty. Our nations have had to go through the hard struggle for democracy and regaining our sovereignty, therefore we fully understand the righteous motivation and determination of our neighbours. Together with our European and Euro-Atlantic partners, we are eager to strengthen Belarus's peaceful transition to democracy without weakening its independence.

On the eve of March 25, in solidarity with the people of Belarus struggling for their freedom and independence of their homeland, the Baltic countries:

- state that Alexander Lukashenko doesn't have neither national nor international legitimacy and right to represent the People of Belarus. We support democratic opposition leaders of Belarus in their calls for free and fair elections through internationally mediated negotiations and with international observation;
- demand the immediate end of violence; unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees who are currently deprived of their fundamental rights; a safe return for Belarusian citizens who were forced flee the country into exile;
- affirm the international protection and support to independent media, human rights defenders, civil society organizations which are vital to strengthening democracy in Belarus; we need to make sure the financial aid is reaching the people on the ground who are currently persecuted for their professional work or opinions;
- stress that sanctions are a step in the right direction, and that there is a need for further sanctions targeting those who participated in falsifying elections or systemic human rights abuses thus serving as a tool of the abusive regime (targeting the money bags of the regime, companies closely affiliated to the President's office) until the demands are met;
- call to all democratic nations to support Belarussian society in their efforts to seize the opportunity to shape their future, and commit to helping them in their efforts. We call on European policymakers to engage further to find the tools necessary to aid the development of Belarus' civil society into a real political force at home via providing space for complex debates over policy and ideas that would help foster a new vision for Belarus' future.

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