



Chairpersons of the Foreign Affairs Committees

STATEMENT ON BELARUS FREEDOM

August 9, 2021

Vilnius

On August 9, 2020, a falsified Belarusian Presidential election threw Belarus into turmoil, leading to peaceful protests among the people of Belarus and the emergence of a broad democratic movement against the incumbent Aleksander Lukashenko. However, since that day, these protests of tens of thousands of people have been met with mass repression by the Belarusian regime's authorities.

On the anniversary of the falsified election in Belarus, August 9, we, the Chairs of Foreign Affairs Committees of the parliaments of Estonia, Latvia Lithuania, and Poland stand in solidarity with all Belarusians on the front lines of the struggle for freedom, self-determination, and democracy.

We stand in solidarity with the more than 33,000 people who have gone through police detention for their activism and with the thousands of victims that have been brutalised, harassed, tortured, exiled, intimidated, and murdered by the regime. Despite their own supposed authorities' inhuman and illegal treatment, Belarusians have continued to fight for freedom. We, on our part, reiterate our demands that have remained the same: an immediate cessation of all violence, the release of all political prisoners and hold a new free and fair presidential election in Belarus in cooperation with the international community and institutions.

In the year since the falsified election, the Lukashenko regime has targeted civil society groups, human rights organisations, think tanks, journalistic, environmental, social, charity, educational, youth and business organisations, and independent media to suffocate Belarus' civil society of their desire for democracy. In addition, the regime has weaponised migration to exert political pressure on the European Union and its Member States in recent months. It is an ongoing hybrid attack by the Alexander Lukashenko regime against the integrity of the EU external border.

Thus, on the anniversary of August 9, we commit and call on the international community to increase support for Belarus' civil society, media, and human rights organisations, maintain the non-recognition policy of Aleksander Lukashenko's regime and maintain the demand for a new presidential election in Belarus under international observation and according to the OSCE Moscow Mechanism.

We call on the EU Council and our partners to extend individual and sectoral sanctions on the Belarusian regime, including "Belavia", Belarus state aviation company, as long as it participates in an organised weaponisation of irregular migrants; the EU should extend sectorial financial sanctions to prevent "Belavia" from the access to the financial instruments (leasing) of the EU based financial entities.

We also call the EU institutions to prepare new sanctions regime targeting all parties involved in state-sponsored use of irregular migration flows. In addition, restrictive measures targeted at

migrants' smugglers abusing human rights should be considered and swiftly implemented. Finally, we insist on the necessity to hold those responsible to account – all those who have participated in organising and facilitating the irregular migration into the EU.

We reaffirm our support for Belarus sovereignty and independence and urge the international community to adopt an effective deterrence mechanism against attempts of the Russian Federation or other nations to sign illegitimate Lukashenka agreements, affecting Belarusian sovereignty and vital national interest. Furthermore, we call for an international investigation of the crimes perpetrated by the Lukashenko regime and the full and prompt implementation of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism and the UN Human Rights Council Resolution 46/20 (on March 2021).

Marko Mihkelson

Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee
The Riigikogu of the Republic of Estonia

Žygimantas Pavilionis

Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee
The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

Rihards Kols

Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee
The Saeima of the Republic of Latvia

Marek Kuchciński

Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee
The Sejm of the Republic of Poland