



Plenary sitting

B8-0197/2018

17.4.2018

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on Belarus
(2018/2661(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

**European Parliament resolution on Belarus
(2018/2661(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions and recommendations on Belarus,
 - having regard to the parliamentary elections held on 11 September 2016, the presidential elections held on 11 October 2015 and the local elections on 18 February 2018,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions on Belarus, especially those of 16 February 2016 lifting sanctions against 170 individuals and three Belarusian companies, and setting out the framework for policy dialogue and the conditions for EU-Belarus relations to develop on a more positive agenda, notably on democratic reforms,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Eastern Partnership Summit of 24th November 2017, and the endorsement of 20 Deliverables for 2020 aiming at delivering results for citizens,
 - having regard to the visit of Commissioner Hahn to Belarus in January 2018 and the ongoing negotiations on the Partnership Priorities,
 - having regard to the decision of the Foreign Affairs Council to prolong for one year the remaining restrictive measures against Belarus, including an arms embargo, ban on the export of goods for internal repression and an asset freeze and travel ban against four individuals listed in connection with the unresolved disappearance of two opposition politicians, one businessman and one journalist in 1999 and in 2000,
 - having regard to Rule 123 (2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the EU lifted most of its restrictive measures against Belarusian officials and legal entities in February 2016 as a gesture of good will to encourage Belarus to improve its human rights, democracy and rule of law record;
- B. whereas following the Presidential in 2015 and the parliamentary elections in 2016, Belarus held local elections on 18 February 2018;
- C. whereas international observers were not invited to observe the municipal election while the Belarusian observer groups collected tangible evidence of massive nationwide efforts to inflate turnout totals and carousel voting, the latter being used for the first time in several years;
- D. whereas on 25 October 2016 Belarus adopted its first National Human Rights Action

Plan, which was approved by a resolution of the Council of Ministers and which defines the principle lines of action for implementing the country's human rights commitments;

- E. whereas Belarus is the only country in Europe still to carry out capital punishment;
 - F. whereas Belarus is part of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and took part in the 'Zapad 2017' joint military exercise with Russia;
1. Notes with disappointment the lack of implementation, despite earlier appeals, of the OSCE ODIHR recommendations following the Presidential elections in 2015 and the parliamentary elections in 2016 that were to be implemented before the 2018 municipal elections; calls on the Belarusian authorities to resume work without delay on a comprehensive electoral reform as part of the broader democratisation process and in cooperation with international partners;
 2. Deplores the harassment of journalists and independent media in Belarus in the follow up to the municipal elections, including the lawless removal from the polling station and brutal treatment of a journalist of Belsat TV, Andrus Kozel, and the blockage of the news portal Charter 97 among others;
 3. Notes that only two independent candidates were elected out of 18 000 deputies nationwide, namely Roza Strechlamka, and Valery Bibilukha;
 4. Notes that the number of democratic opposition representatives in precinct level voting stations was disproportionately low compared to the applications submitted;
 5. Is disappointed by the repeated refusal of the registration of the Belarusian Christian Democracy; calls for the removal of restrictions and easing of procedures of registration of political parties in Belarus; stresses that all political parties must be allowed unrestricted political activities, especially during election campaigns;
 6. Regrets the disproportionate reaction of the Belarusian authorities to the attempt of opposition activists to organise an unauthorised rally on the 25 March 2018 that led to the arrest of dozens of people in the country; reminds that freedom of assembly and association is a fundamental human right;
 7. Strongly calls for the release of Mikhail Zhamchuzhny and Dzmitry Paliyenka, two civil society activists currently detained for political reasons;
 8. Reiterates its call on the Belarusian authorities to ensure, in all circumstances, respect for democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Belarus;
 9. Urges Belarus, the only country in Europe still applying capital punishment to join a global moratorium on execution of the death penalty as a first step towards its permanent abolition; recalls that the death penalty constitutes inhumane and degrading treatment, has no proven deterrent effect and makes judicial errors irreversible;
 10. Calls on the EEAS and on the Commission to continue support for civil society organisations in Belarus and abroad; stresses, in this context, the need to support all independent sources of information for Belarusian society, including media

broadcasting in the Belarusian language, and from abroad;

11. Takes note of Belarus' constructive role in the region and its proactive participation in the Eastern Partnership;
12. Takes note of the dialogue held within the EU-Belarus Coordination Group, Human Rights Dialogue, sector dialogues at technical level and the broadening of cooperation in areas such as economic reform, resource efficiency, green economy and environmental protection;
13. Welcomes ongoing negotiations on EU-Belarus Partnership Priorities and looks forward to their swift conclusion which will broaden the scope of bilateral cooperation for the benefit of citizens on both sides and allow Belarus access to wider scope of financial assistance and cooperation; in this context welcomes the increased planned allocation of financial assistance by the European Commission for 2018-2020;
14. Notes with satisfaction the start of the implementation of the EU-Belarus Mobility Partnership and is looking forward to finalising the EU-Belarus Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements as a clear contribution to people-to-people and business contacts;
15. Takes note of the transparency provided by the Belarusian authorities during the military exercises Zapad 2017, which clearly differed from the attitude of the Russian Federation in this regard;
16. Welcomes progress achieved in promoting EU-Belarus youth exchanges and people-to-people contacts, including through the EU MOST programme, Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 and TAIEX and Belarus' accession to the Bologna process calling for the implementation of the Bologna process according to the Roadmap agreed jointly by the EHEA and Belarus that will benefit young Belarusians and further improve the exchange and people-to-people contact with the EU;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), the European External Action Service, the Council, the Commission and the Member States, OSCE/ODHIR, Council of Europe, as well as to the Belarusian authorities.