



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1414 Vienna, 9 March 2023

EU Statement on the political prisoners in Belarus

1. Last Friday, a Minsk Court sentenced members of the Viasna Human Rights Centre, including its chairman and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Ales Bialiatski, its deputy chairman Valiantsin Stefanovic, Zmitser Salauyou (tried in absentia), and the lawyer Uladzimir Labkovich, to ten, nine, eight, and seven years respectively in prison on fake and politically motivated charges.
2. On Monday, prominent members of the democratic movement, including Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, as well as Pavel Latushka, Volha Kavalkova, Maryla Maroz and Sierhei Dyleuski were convicted in absentia to sentences ranging from twelve to eighteen years in prison on fake and politically motivated charges.
3. The European Union condemns in the strongest possible terms these sham trials. They demonstrate a complete disrespect for the right to a fair trial and to an independent court. We consider these unacceptable sentences as yet another attempt to intimidate and silence those who stand up in defence of human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people in Belarus.
4. The shameful efforts by the Lukashenka regime will not change the reality. All convicted will continue to symbolise the peaceful fight for freedom and democracy for Belarusians, which is widely supported by the Belarusian people. Their call for freedom and democracy will remain loud, even behind bars or in exile.
5. The scale of persecution of the human rights defenders, activists and the democratic movement in Belarus is shocking. They continue to experience physical violence, groundless administrative detention and fines, as well as

police raids. They are detained in extremely bad conditions, labelled as “extremists” and stripped of many of their rights. Among those targeted by the regime, there are also members of the Polish national minority. Such actions utterly contradict the OSCE commitments and international human rights standards.

6. The EU supports the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in its call for respect of all their rights in line with the OSCE commitments. The EU reiterates its demand for immediate and unconditional release and rehabilitation of the more than 1450 political prisoners in Belarus and end the ongoing repressions.
7. The EU stands ready to react to repression and human rights abuses by the Lukashenka regime against its population, pursuing accountability for all the perpetrators. The EU will also continue to support all those who bravely strive for a sovereign, free, democratic, safe and prosperous Belarus.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.