

# Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the second anniversary of the 9 August 2020 fraudulent presidential elections in Belarus

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This Tuesday marks the second anniversary of the 9 August 2020 fraudulent presidential elections that have stripped Belarusians of the opportunity to freely choose their own future. On this day, we reiterate our steadfast support for their democratic aspirations and efforts to uphold the respect for fundamental human rights. We reiterate that Aleksandr Lukashenko lacks any democratic legitimacy.

Two years ago, the regime in Minsk launched a massive crackdown on the people of Belarus for peacefully seeking democratic governance. Since then, the regime has orchestrated a brutal repression that has continuously worsened. Political prisoners - human rights defenders, journalists, trade unionists, media workers, lawyers and ordinary citizens who voice any criticism of the system - now number over 1200 and this figure grows by the day. Many Belarusians, including representatives of democratic opposition, were forced to leave the country to avoid unjustified persecution. The regime has labelled many democracy activists as "terrorists", targeting them with disinformation and intimidation, as well as threatening them with the death penalty. It has also intensified its persecution against the Polish community.

In contrast, none of the perpetrators of violence against the civilian population has been held to account. We will continue to support the international accountability efforts for Belarus, with a view of gathering and preserving evidence of human rights violations. We will not forget the victims of the Lukashenko regime, and its past and present crimes.

In February this year, as Russia launched its unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, the Lukashenko regime became an accomplice, against the will of the vast majority of the Belarusian people, by permitting Russia to use Belarusian territory to invade Ukraine, as a launchpad for its missiles and by granting Moscow full political and logistical support. The regime now also persecutes Belarusians for standing up against the war.

Together with our like-minded partners, we have imposed sanctions in response to the ongoing repression, the breaches of international law and aviation rules, as also confirmed by the ICAO Council, the instrumentalisation of migration and Lukashenko's complicity in Russia's war against Ukraine.

We call on the authorities in Belarus to fully adhere to the principles of democracy and the rule of law, respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and act in compliance with international law and Belarus' own commitments, including by stopping its collaboration in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. We call for the immediate and unconditional release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners, and for the cessation of repression. The authorities in Belarus must engage in a genuine and inclusive dialogue with all elements of society, leading to free and fair elections under international observation and in accordance with international standards.

Our determination to support the people of Belarus remains unchanged. Since August 2020, the EU has committed about EUR 65 million in support to the people of Belarus - the victims of repression, civil society, independent media, women, youth and students, small businesses, health and culture. We stand ready to mobilise our EUR 3 billion comprehensive plan of economic support once a democratic transition will have taken place in Belarus. This clearly shows our long-term commitment to the peace, democratic aspirations and prosperity of the Belarusian people.

For the European Union, Belarus and its courageous people are an important European neighbour. We are firmly committed to continue using our available instruments, including further sanctions and enhanced support, to support the democratic rights of the Belarusian people. We will continue to stand by the people of Belarus and support a democratic, independent, sovereign, prosperous and stable Belarus.

<https://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/article/declaration-high-representative-behalf-eu-second-anniversary-9-august-2020-fraudulent-presidential-elections-belarus>

