



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 46th SESSION

Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner's report on Belarus

(25 February 2021)

Pursuant to the Human Rights Council's resolution [A/HRC/RES/45/1](#) of 18 September 2020, "**Situation of human rights in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and in its aftermath**".

Ms Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (*video message*):

The report ([A/HRC/46/4](#)) covers serious violations of human rights between 1 May and 20 December 2020. The events that unfolded before and after the election have led to a human rights crisis of unprecedented dimension in the country and have brought greater visibility to a longstanding and chronic pattern of systemic violations and impunity.

Numerous and widespread violations were committed: the systematic denial of fundamental freedoms; mass arbitrary arrests and detentions; allegations of torture and ill-treatment; acts of harassment and intimidation targeting opposition members, journalists, human rights defenders and citizens in general.

Failure to ensure accountability for these violations is a fundamental concern and key aspect of this crisis.

The Government's information note with respect to our report, which we received on 10 February, indicates that "*the preliminary investigation bodies received 4 644 complaints about use of physical force and special measures by the personnel of interior affairs interrupting unsanctioned protest actions*". However, it goes on to observe that over 1050 of these complaints were rejected. Other sources indicate that no one of the hundreds of complaints for acts of torture and ill-treatment had led to the opening of a criminal case.

Since completion of the report, the human rights situation has further deteriorated. Legislative amendments currently in preparation reportedly enable harsher punishments for participation in peaceful demonstrations. Journalists and human rights defenders are increasingly targeted.

Recommendations: Respect for human rights and the broadest possible civic space should be established. Those detained for peacefully exercising their rights should be released. Thorough, effective, credible and transparent investigations should be conducted into all allegations of serious human rights violations, with perpetrators brought to justice. There should be an immediate end to the policy of harassment and intimidation of civil society and media workers. The national legal framework should be reformed.

Belarus – Speaking as the Country Concerned. Statement delivered by H.E. Mr Yuri Ambrazevich, Ambassador Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus (*video message*):

Belarus does not recognize Resolution 45/1 and is not in agreement with the very fact of the examination of the report. Investigations of country-specific situations is a grave violation of the UN principle of non-interference in the domestic matters. The report is subjective and simplistic. A number of facts were left out in the report: the unconstitutional nature of the protests, the arbitrary establishment of the self-appointed activists for shifting power, the external interference, among others. The report does not contain the description of a true scale of the protests: only 200-300 individuals protest in a 2-million city.



INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (52 country delegations):

Denmark – Minister for Foreign Affairs (on behalf of 42 countries), Latvia - Minister of Foreign Affairs, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland – Minister for European Neighborhood and the Americas, Lithuania - Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada – Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union, Ukraine – First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Liechtenstein, Russian Federation, Finland, Germany, Slovenia, France, Estonia, Switzerland, Venezuela, Japan, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Belgium, Marshall Islands, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, Malta, Norway, United States of America Romania, Spain, China, Albania, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Egypt, Austria, Syrian Arab Republic, Poland, Philippines, Luxembourg, Turkey, New Zealand, Cambodia, Iceland, Ireland, Lebanon, Greece, Sri Lanka, Italy, Nicaragua, Cuba, Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Eritrea, Maldives.

A number of European states, along with USA, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand reaffirmed their strong condemnation of the systematic and massive human rights violations and abuses reported in Belarus. They expressed their particular concern about the reported use by the Belarusian authorities of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including sexual and gender based violence, against peaceful protesters and political opponents. These States called for the Belarusian authorities to stop the systematic oppression and the persecution of peaceful and democratic movements and cease all violence, including the use of torture; to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners and those arbitrarily detained; to investigate the reported cases of torture and to bring perpetrators to account. Several delegations reiterated their call to the Council to create an international accountability mechanism to address human rights violations in Belarus.

The European Union announced that it will present a resolution this session aiming to ensure the much needed continued international scrutiny of the human rights violations in Belarus and to ensure accountability.

On the other hand, other delegations (China, Laos, Cuba, Russian Federation, Venezuela, Kazakhstan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, Syria, Egypt, Philippines, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Eritrea, Azerbaijan) said that human rights mechanism should not be used as a tool to interfere in the internal affairs of the states, while human rights issue must be addressed within the global context based on the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and non-politicization.

The delegation of Marshall Islands asked what further measures the OHCHR can take to ensure that women and children are protected from sexual violence, torture and ill-treatment by the Belarusian authorities. Canada asked how the international community can support protection for journalists and independent media in Belarus.

Additionally, *UN Women* said that women human rights defenders must be able to carry out their work in an enabling environment, without fear of harassment or reprisals.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (10):

Lawyers for Lawyers, Human Rights House Foundation (joint statement), Reporters Sans Frontiers International - Reporters Without Borders International, Right Livelihood Award, Foundation International Federation for Human Rights Leagues, World Organisation Against Torture, Article 19 - International Centre Against Censorship, Human Rights Watch, International Commission of Jurists, CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation.

The representatives of the NGOs called the attention of the Council to the fact that Belarus' human rights situation continues to deteriorate. The intimidation of human rights defenders, journalists and lawyers was brought up. Today, not a single criminal case has been opened into alleged violations by law enforcement officials, said one speaker. A number of NGOs reiterated a strong call on the Council to create an international investigative mechanism assisting the process of accountability.

To watch full EID on the High Commissioner's report on Belarus, refer to [UN Web TV](#)