

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 51st SESSION

Interactive dialogue on the interim oral update of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and in its aftermath

23 September 2022

Ms. Nada Al-Nashif, Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights, reported that since August 2020 and the Presidential elections, in Belarus the climate of repression has continued with a deterioration of the human rights situation, involving serious violations of civil and political rights, and rampant impunity. There is a massive crackdown on civil society, the media, political opposition, trade unions and, more generally, on the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, and participation in public affairs. Members of the political opposition, activists, human rights defenders, trade union activists, journalists and protesters have been detained. Trials are conducted in closed hearings, lacking respect for due process and the right to a fair trial. Ms. Al-Nashif expressed concern over the extension of the death penalty to “attempts to carry out acts of terrorism and murders of government officials or public figures”. Dozens of political activists have already been charged with these crimes. She urged for an immediate moratorium on the use of the death penalty, as a step towards its legal abolition. Ms. Al-Nashif provided a clear timeline for a comprehensive review thereof. Reporting the lack of genuine and impartial investigations into allegations of torture and cases of deaths, she urged prompt, effective, transparent, and independent investigations into all human rights violations or crimes under national or international law, with provision of appropriate remedies.

Belarus (Country concerned) affirmed that it continues to take part in this discussion in the hope that the OHCHR will follow principles of neutrality and inconstancy, unlike the Special Rapporteur. Particularly, the country stated that the situation in the UN's human rights field is no longer just a double standard. Instead, it is an inadvertent subordination of the entire system with the goal of eliminating pluralism and multilateralism by Western elites. Under the banner of protecting human rights, the West is trying to outcast recalcitrant States by imposing all kinds of sanctions against them. These sanctions exclude them from international cooperation and even close physical borders to ordinary people. Concluding, the country is undergoing constitutional reforms. Peacefully, calmly and independently, it is transforming its political system. Without pressure, the country is ready for constructive cooperation. Belarus welcomed all States that defended their sovereign right to determine their own path to development and to formulate internal and foreign policies that were consistent with national interests. It thanked them for their solidarity and support.

Interactive dialogue

48 country delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. The majority of the countries, including the **Republic of Moldova, Austria, Lithuania, Romania, Albania, the EU, France, and Latvia** shared concerns regarding the deterioration of the situation on the ground. The continuous reports of human rights violations were deeply alarming, in particular allegations of illegal detention of civil society actors, human rights activists, and media workers. Reported cases of violence and torture, arbitrary detention and other cruel treatment was equally disturbing. Countries strongly condemned the continuous application of the death penalty in Belarus and note with concern the extension of the death penalty to “attempted acts of terrorism”. The countries urged the Belarussian authorities to engage in an open and inclusive national dialogue in compliance with the principles of democracy and the rule of law. They also called on Belarus to respect and protect human rights in compliance with its obligations under IHRL. The **United Kingdom**, affirming that the Belarussian authorities have supported Russia's illegal war in Ukraine, urged the country to cease its support for Russia. **Poland** called on Belarus to fully respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons belonging to national minorities. **Turkmenistan, Iran, Kazakhstan**, and the **Russian Federation** affirmed that human rights issues should be dealt with within the global context via a constructive, non-confrontational, non-

political, and non-selective approach, while protecting sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. Speakers expressed concern about the continuation of the imposition of UCMs against Belarus which is outrageous and inhuman. They are causing untold pain and suffering for the Belarussian people by grossly violating their basic human rights. **Venezuela** and **Syria** reiterated that the resolution on which the High Commissioner's report is based, is another example of propagating the political agendas and allegations by Western States and their allies against Belarus and sets an unacceptable precedent through interfering with the assessment of the electoral process in a UN member state.

NGOs expressed concern about the ongoing persecution of human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists in Belarus. Speakers also condemned the lack of accountability for gross human rights violations since the 2020 elections. These violations include widespread and systematic torture and ill treatment, disproportionate use of force, arbitrary arrests and detention. NGOs urged Belarus to protect the right to freedom from torture and arbitrary deprivation of liberty for women human rights defenders, and for Belarus to provide adequate legislation and specialised services for victims of domestic violence.

Final Remarks

In her **concluding remarks**, **Ms. Al-Nashif** said the OHCHR had sought to call attention to the massive crackdown against Belarussian civil society and independent media. The Office continues to receive testimonials from detainees kept in inhumane conditions. There are no effective remedies for victims and no efforts were made by authorities to hold perpetrators to account. Such perpetrators needed to be held to account through international forums. The mandate would continue to consult with victims and ensure a victim-centred approach. Ms. Al-Nashif expressed concern about the use of lengthy pre-trial detention and the use of solitary confinement. The situation of human rights in Belarus had caused many to relocate to Ukraine. Since the start of the war, these people had been forced to relocate once again.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (48 country delegations):

Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Romania, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, United Kingdom, Venezuela, Estonia (on behalf of a group of countries), Luxembourg (on behalf of a group of countries), Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ireland, Germany, Australia, Cuba, Austria, Russian Federation, China, Czech Republic, Iceland, Estonia, Romania, Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Sweden, Malawi, Albania, Latvia, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Turkmenistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cambodia, Ukraine, Tajikistan.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor (8):

Human Rights House Foundation, Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI), International Bar Association (Joint Statement), Right Livelihood Award Foundation, International Federation for Human Rights Leagues, Advocates for Human Rights, World Organisation Against Torture, International Commission of Jurists.

International organizations (0)

To watch full meeting refer to [UN Web TV](#).