

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 52nd SESSION

Interactive dialogue on the OHCHR report on the situation of human rights in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and in its aftermath

22 March 2023

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights** presented her second report and highlighted further findings of systematic gross human rights violations committed in Belarus. The report drew on the detailed analysis of 207 interviews conducted in 2022 with victims and witnesses, and other stakeholders. Amongst the main findings, Ms. Nada Al-Nashif emphasized unlawful deaths of people in the 2020 protests; the disproportionate use of force to forcibly disperse protests in Minsk; practices of torture and ill-treatment directed against individuals for their opposition; sexual and gender-based violence; arbitrary detentions; violations of the rights to due process and a fair trial in both administrative and criminal proceedings; authorities intensification of massive crackdown on members of civil society, the media and political opposition for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. She also noted that the scope of the death penalty was extended in 2022, to include acts of terrorism that do not qualify under international standards as constituting most serious crimes. The report also documented the authority's failure to investigate complaints of human rights violations. She urged for prompt, transparent, and independent investigations into all past human rights violations, with provision of appropriate remedies, including due accountability for perpetrators. Ms. Nada Al-Nashif deeply regretted the persistent lack of cooperation by the Belarusian authorities and commends the victims, survivors, and witnesses of human rights violations who have shared their own experiences and other relevant information.

Belarus (Country concerned): Belarus rejected the report and extends an invitation to all to visit the country since it considers everyone lives a peaceful and constructive life. The country condemned Western countries' pressure in producing false reports on Belarus, including this report by the OHCHR. The country emphasized that all witnesses used for the report are false, paid by the West, or sought to illegally seize power in 2020. The country deplored the rising disinformation campaign against Belarus and the sanctions imposed by Western countries. Belarus extended its appreciation to the allies that have supported the country and opposed pressure to the country in the Council. The country considered this report does not lead to constructive co-operation and undermines the possibilities of the OHCHR dialogue with Belarus. The country denounced the USA, Germany, France, and many others, who regularly disperse government opposition protests with violence and assassinations. Belarus further condemned the actions of Polish, Latvian and Lithuanian authorities in sending asylum seekers from Asia and Africa into Belarus. Finally, Belarus expressed that the HRC is dominated by double standards and politicized approaches imposed by Western countries.

Interactive dialogue

48 country delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. Some countries expressed their support for the mandate and the report. States' organisations such as the **EU, Lithuania, Ukraine, United Kingdom, the U.S., Switzerland, and Australia** remained concerned about intensifying repression against civil society, human rights defenders and independent media and an increase in political prisoners in Belarus. They were also deeply concerned about the cases of sexual and gender-based violence against detainees and the recent long prison sentences. They urged Belarusian authorities to release all political prisoners, including human rights defenders, journalists and persons belonging to national and other minorities, and deplored the newly imposed death penalty. They also strongly condemned the human rights consequences of Belarus' involvement in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Some countries also urged Belarus to adopt measures for the protection

of environmental human rights defenders. Countries such as **Cuba, Venezuela, Syrian Arab Republic, DPRK, Iran, the Russian Federation, China, and Nicaragua** rejected the mandate and the report since they consider it is politicized, violates the sovereignty of Belarus and is a result of Western political agendas. They expressed their support for Belarus and commend its progress in the protection of human rights through the UPR and other mechanisms. They urged the Council and the OHCHR to encourage genuine dialogue and cooperation with States. Some countries further condemned the imposition of unilateral coercive measures by the West. The **Lao PDR** welcomed the progress made by Belarus in the protection of human rights through legal and institutional frameworks. The **Russian federation** expressed its concern about attempts by the West to revive a nationalist movement in Belarus. **Tajikistan** welcomed Belarus's cooperation with the UN human rights mechanisms and Special Procedures mandate holders. **Venezuela** further deplored that the European Union insists on interfering in the internal affairs of Belarus. **Kazakhstan** called upon the Council to provide technical assistance and urges Belarus to maintain its cooperation with the mandates.

Most NGOs commended the work of the mandate and demand that an independent investigative mechanism is established to guarantee accountability in Belarus. All NGOs condemned Belarus for the rise of political prisoners, oppression against human rights defenders, arbitrary detentions, trials in absentia, torture and ill treatment in detention centres. They called upon the Council to pressure Belarus into releasing political prisoners and encourage all States to hold the real perpetrators accountable. Most NGOs also indicated that the human rights violations committed amount to crimes against humanity. Some NGOs were concerned about human rights violations against children and the extension of the death penalty. Other NGOs emphasized the violations against freedom of expression, attacks against journalists, reporters and lawyers and media censorship.

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

Lithuania (on behalf of Nordic-Baltic countries), European Union, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Finland, United States, Czechia, Germany, France, China, Belgium, Latvia, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Switzerland, Poland, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Slovakia, Netherlands, Republic of Moldova, Austria, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Spain, Albania, Greece, Malta, Montenegro, Romania, Bulgaria, Cuba, Australia, Eritrea, Tajikistan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ireland, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nicaragua, Cambodia, Ukraine, Lebanon, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Kazakhstan, Croatia, Azerbaijan, Zimbabwe.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (10):

Human Rights House Foundation, National Human Rights Civic Association "Belarusian Helsinki Committee", Right Livelihood Award Foundation, World Organisation Against Torture, International Federation for Human Rights Leagues, International Fellowship of Reconciliation, International Bar Association, Human Rights Watch, Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, International Commission of Jurists.

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