

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 53rd SESSION

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of human rights in Belarus

04 July 2023

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Anais Marin, Special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus**, highlighted the steady deterioration of the human rights situation in Belarus. The SR emphasized there has been a surge in politically motivated prosecutions and sentencing as a result of restrictive legislation passed by the government. The SR also denounced the lack of accountability for human rights violations including arbitrary detentions, ill-treatment in prisons against political prisoners, and persecution of human rights defenders. The SR mentioned that policies to eradicate and repress independent human rights defense groups have been enacted and condemned the dire detention conditions faced by political prisoners. The SR also harshly condemned attacks against lawyers. Regarding this year's report, the SR underlined the violations against freedom of expression in Belarus, including repression against independent media and trade unions, and restrictions on academic freedom. The report highlights primary and secondary education are being subject to ideological control while individuals are being repressed when trying to speak out against the armed attack by Russia on Ukraine. The SR urged the international community to continue gathering evidence of human rights violations in Belarus, seeking engagement with the Belarusian government, and providing support to human rights defenders and civil society organizations. Finally, the SR called upon Belarus to fulfill their international human rights obligations, including reparation for victims of human rights violations.

Interactive dialogue

All states and states' organizations that took the floor commended the work of the mandate and expressed their concern about the systematic violations in Belarus, especially the attacks against political opponents and ill-treatment of political prisoners. They also denounced numerous cases of arbitrary detentions, sexual and gender-based violence, and attacks against media offices, journalists, human rights defenders, **independent labor and trade union members**, and lawyers. They harshly condemned Belarus' involvement in Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and called upon the country to stop enabling Russia. They expressed their concern about the persecution of Belarusians for their opposition to the government and the continued impunity **for the excessive use of force during protests**. **Many states deplored the health conditions of some detainees** including Viktor Babaryka and Maria Kalesnikava, and the death of Mikalai Klimovich. **All states** urged Belarus to respect, protect and fulfill human rights in compliance with its obligations under international human rights law and to fully adhere to the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

The EU and several other countries noted with concern the recent legislative changes which further restrict political rights and extend the death penalty. **The EU** also emphasized Belarus continues to disregard the rights of the child by starting the militarization and politicization of school programs. **The UK** called upon Belarus to act upon the recommendations of the SR's report. The country condemned the lack of independence of the judiciary and the intimidation and disbarment of independent lawyers, who have provided services to the political opposition and/or human rights defenders. **The United States** called upon Belarus to give the SR effective access to its territory. **Switzerland** urged Belarus to provide the necessary medical care for imprisoned persons. **Ukraine** denounced the absence of due process and disproportionate sentences against lawyers, media workers, political opponents, and human rights defenders and the lack of accountability.

All NGOs mentioned that the human rights situation in Belarus continues to deteriorate. They harshly condemned the attacks against political prisoners and the inhumane detention conditions they are subjected to. They also denounced Belarus' attacks against human rights defenders, media workers, and lawyers and the continued atmosphere of impunity. One NGO strongly urged the Council to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. Another NGO denounced Belarus for detaining migrants for extended periods without access to legal aid or appropriate facilities frequently facing discrimination.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (28 country delegations):

Estonia (on behalf of a group of countries), European Union, Lithuania, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Republic of Korea, Liechtenstein, Germany, Czechia, Slovenia, Luxembourg, Spain, United States of America, Belgium, France, Malta, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ireland, Austria, Greece, Slovakia, Switzerland, Republic of Moldova, Albania, Romania, Montenegro, Poland, Bulgaria, Ukraine.

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

National Human Rights Civic Association "Belarusian Helsinki Committee", Human Rights House Foundation, Earthjustice, International Bar Association (Joint Statement), Lawyers for Lawyers (Joint Statement), International Federation for Human Rights Leagues, Human Rights Watch, Article 19 - International Centre Against Censorship, Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI), Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety.

To watch the full meeting refer to UN Web TV [part 1](#) and [part 2](#).