



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Interactive Dialogue with the Group of Experts on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus

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PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT

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The Group of Experts stresses with regret that the Government of Belarus has not engaged and cooperated with the Group as requested in UNHRC resolution 55/27. The Group repeatedly requested access to the country and information necessary to carry out its mandate, as well as detailed information on the steps taken to prevent and investigate deaths in detention. The Group did not receive **any response to those requests**.

Despite the impact of the liquidity crisis on its staffing and operational capacity, the Group held a number of **consultations on accountability with various stakeholders**, including representatives of the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, national authorities in countries hosting Belarusian refugees, civil society organisations, the OSCE and members of the diplomatic community. The Group also held regular meetings with the Special Rapporteur (SR) on Belarus and other related special mechanisms.



In line with its enhanced accountability mandate, the Group established the state structures that have enabled the violations. It prepared a **list of all state entities involved in the commission of the violations**, and preserved and analysed public statements from high-level Belarusian officials. The Group mapped out all detention facilities in which torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment have been documented. It prepared a consolidated list of all individuals allegedly responsible for human rights violations since May 2020, and it is currently preparing individual profiles of persons of interest, namely those who bear the greatest responsibility for human rights violations.

Turning to the current human rights situation in Belarus, the Group's team conducted interviews with Belarusians in exile to identify the root causes of the human rights violations committed since 1st May 2020. The Group determined that the **violent response** of the Belarusian authorities to the unprecedented mass protests that had preceded and followed the 2020 presidential election was not an isolated incident, but the latest manifestation of a **long-standing pattern of governance**. The Group considered that several interconnected structural factors, including the absence of truly democratic institutions, the lack of an independent judiciary, the perception of civil society as a threat, and the culture of impunity, have set the stage for the human rights violations we have observed since 2020. Until those structural factors are addressed, the repression and violence are likely to continue, forcing more Belarusians into exile.

The recent results of the January 2025 presidential elections represent the root causes of the repression in Belarus. There were no candidates to mount genuine opposition to President Lukashenko, with hundreds of thousands of Belarusians in exile and more than **1,200 political prisoners remaining in detention**. Arbitrary arrest and detention have become a permanent feature of the repressive tactics of Belarusian authorities. In contrast to previous election cycles, when mass arrests would occur for some time after the elections and then subside, the wave of arrests and detentions that began shortly before the presidential election in 2020 has persisted to the present day. In 2024, courts tried more than **7,500 persons on politically motivated charges**. This is an increase of hundreds of months compared with 2023.

The Group of Experts has ample evidence that those arrested on political grounds in the last four years were subjected to **torture and ill-treatment**. Out of the 161 interviewed persons who have been arrested at least once, 52 were victims of ill-treatment and sometimes torture during arrest, interrogation, transportation or detention. The Group found that Belarusian authorities continue to apply a harsher regime of detention on those arrested on politically motivated charges. Men and women who served short sentences in temporary detention facilities were systematically subjected to discriminatory, degrading and punitive conditions of detention, amounting to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and in some instances torture. The Group also documented several cases of torture and ill-treatment in penal colonies across the country.

Ahead of the 2025 presidential election, Belarusian authorities continued their **efforts to purge the civic and democratic space** with all potential sources of dissent. Last year, another 228 civil society organisations were liquidated. In addition, 87 entities and 1,168 persons were added to the extremist list. Authorities tightened their control of schools and religious communities and introduced legislative measures drastically restricting forms of LGBTQI+ expressions. They have extended the surveillance capability of law enforcement and lodged criminal proceedings in absentia against hundreds of Belarusians in exile, exposing them to imprisonment on return.



The Group of Experts has reasonable grounds to believe that some of the human rights violations documented in our report amount to the **crimes against humanity of political persecution and imprisonment**. The Group of Experts established that the orchestrated campaign of violence was directed against Belarusians perceived as being critical or opposed to the Government. The continuing involvement of multiple state actors within the security apparatus and complete lack of accountability suggests that attack against the civilian population remains ongoing, widespread, systematic, carried out in furtherance of government policy.

Human rights violations and crimes against humanity are both the responsibility of the state of Belarus and individual criminal responsibility. Ensuring accountability for these violations and related crimes is imperative to ensure their non-occurrence. Belarusian authorities **systematically failed to investigate, prosecute, and punish** the human rights violations and crimes committed in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election with the judiciary in the hands of the executive, the systematic punishment of lawyers, the systemic fair trial rights violations. Belarus clearly demonstrates its **inability and unwillingness to prosecute** international crimes under its jurisdiction.

For these reasons, the Group of Experts believes that **accountability initiatives must come from the international community**. Several countries have already responded in a range of ways, including through a state referral to the International Criminal Court and by opening domestic investigations under the universal jurisdiction principle. Pursuing accountability at the international level and third countries are not mutually exclusive options, nor do they prevent future judicial proceedings in Belarus. Therefore, the Group encourages all stakeholders to consider these options to continue documenting evidence for future processes. To conclude, the Group urges the members of the UNHRC to continue to pay close attention to developments in Belarus. The Group stands ready to continue to investigate whether credible progress is being made in advancing justice, accountability, and respect for human rights and to give voices to the Belarusians who entrust us with their stories of loss and hope for a better future in Belarus.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ms. Karinna MOSKALENKO, Chair of the Group of Experts, replies to the statements by the representative of the Belarusian authorities and the respective governments who have spoken out in support of them. The first thesis is that the **refusal to a dialogue is a dead end**. It is hard not to agree with this. The hand was stretched out for cooperation, calling for cooperation under the mandate. The Group of Experts positively assesses the release of a large number of people from imprisonment, but this did not resolve the root problem of mass repressions. The Belarusian authorities had an opportunity, a chance that still remains, to enter into a dialogue, to present their evidence. But until now, the Belarusian authorities have not decided to take this opportunity.

The second thesis is the **interference in domestic affairs**. Serious violations of human rights have been mentioned again and again in this hall. Year after year, the Belarusian authorities claim that these words are aimed at undermining the independence of sovereign Belarus. However, there are facts, statistics that speak for themselves. The number of NGOs closed in one year is more than 200 since the elections in 2020. Up to December 2024, 1,107. What about the number of people arrested for peacefully going down into the streets? Tens of thousands. The number of people who have abandoned the country? Hundreds of thousands. These facts cannot be



denied. This amounts to a diagnosis of the political, social situation and the human rights situation in the country. How can this be called the domestic internal affair of a state in the modern world? In modern international human rights practises, this is not how things work. Why is Belarus shutting down so many organisations? Why is Belarus arresting so many people and beating them up? Why are Belarusian citizens on mass abandoning the country if, as it claims, the vast majority of citizens support the Government? Belarus does not exist in a vacuum. Independent observers are seeing an atmosphere of fear and a lack of protections on the one hand and an atmosphere of impunity on the other side.

What about those responsible for these abuses? They have not been held accountable. What about reports of the people who have died in prisons? **Every political prisoner who dies in prison is on the conscience of the State** and they must be held accountable. The Chair must state the one very sad fact. The authorities of Belarus are not meeting their international obligations in the basic fundamental human rights and they must be made accountable.

Ms. Monika STANISŁAWA PŁATEK, member of the Group of Experts, responding to the questions concerning international tools, notes that Article 8 of the Belarusian constitution recognises the supremacy of the universal principle of international law. It promised that country law would comply with those principles in letter and in practise. It is therefore important that the UNHRC continues calling on the Belarusian authorities to meet their obligations under international human rights. It is equally crucial to bring to court those responsible for crimes against humanity and to stop political repression towards the people and citizens who dare to take their human rights seriously by calling them extremists.

The Government of Lithuania is the first state to have **referred the Belarusian situation to ICC**. This is an important step to end the impunity. In doing so, it is essential to ensure the protection and support of the victims at witness. This is giving a very strong signal to victims and survivors. It is also proving to the NGOs, to many civil societies that the work that they are doing in documenting the alleged crime is really worth doing and showing the crimes committed, alleged crime committed under the Lukashenko administration. Ms. Monika STANISŁAWA PŁATEK points out that according to the Belarusian constitution, the right to citizenship is irrevocable. However, as the amendments of July 2023 to the citizenship law In July 2023 the Belarusian authorities amended the citizenship law to allow Belarusians living abroad to **be deprived of their citizenship**, providing them with seeking asylum and humanitarian assistance elsewhere should be taken into consideration. Last but not least, Presidential Decree No. 278 adopted in September 2023 continues the persecution of people of Belarus outside Belarus.

Ms. Suzan BAZILLI, member of the Group of Experts, explains that in addition to the support for the Lithuanian referral to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, when asked how Member States can use international justice mechanisms, the Group of Experts would very much encourage the **increased and robust use of universal jurisdiction** and other executorial jurisdiction, which has been long a call from civil society. Member States could coordinate effectively with other stakeholders to support civil society through information sharing, legal assistance, technical support and financial support.

The Group of Experts also acknowledges the critical and crucial role played by **civil society and human rights defenders** in ensuring accountability for human rights violations and in providing



support to victims and witnesses. The Group of Experts acknowledges the risk they undertake in the terribly repressive environments in which they find themselves. The Group of Experts is encouraged by their continuing monitoring and analysing of trends and documenting individual cases and presenting them to international organisations. The Group of Experts also encourages civil society and Member States to **support media workers and journalists** who work often at great risk to document human rights violations. On the issue of access to justice and support to victims, it is important that the UNHRC continue calling on the Belarusian authorities to meet their obligations under international human rights law, including the obligation to investigate alleged violations effectively, promptly and independently, and to take appropriate action to hold perpetrators to account and to provide access to justice and effective remedies to victims.

In parallel, Member States should consider initiating effective investigations and prosecutions based, as said earlier, on **extraterritorial and universal jurisdiction**. In so doing, though, it is essential to ensure the protection and support of victims and witnesses involved in these processes and providing them with legal assistance while prioritising their interests as they seek justice. Victims have refrained from reporting human rights violations to the authorities due to their lack of trust in national law enforcement agencies and courts, as well as concerns for their safety. Some victims have expressed fear of re-arrest if they were to file a complaint at a police station or provide a statement to investigators, leading some to withdraw their complaints.

The Group of Experts has documented an **intensification of the repression of lawyers** and the disbarment of lawyers, the subject to torture and criminal charges on behalf of other lawyers, and many independent lawyers have fled the country. The Group of Experts is gravely concerned about politically motivated charges, lack of fair trial, access to independent judiciary in Belarus, placing human rights defenders at risk of criminal prosecution for their legitimate human rights work.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Views Expressed by the Country Concerned

The delegation of **Belarus** states that the report presented is one more sad indication of how the selective country mechanisms turn the international aspect of human rights work into a farce. This avenue is a dead end for the work of the UNHRC. The latter has no mandate for so-called investigations and assessments of the political mechanisms of sovereign states. It is counterproductive to create any country mechanisms without the consent of the country affected. The dissemination of the practise of creating country mechanisms makes it clear that they serve the interests of their initiators but do not facilitate cooperation. These mandates above all serve the military politics of the West. They want more mandates and more odious conclusions. On the basis of the reports, the West is inducing unilateral coercive measures (UCMs), justifying interference in domestic affairs and electoral process, financing those who are violating Belarusian statehood and lobbying sanctions to cause harm to the country they could not take over. Their own position is used as a source of information for the reports. They present purely ideological approaches as objective analysis. They are not independent. They are not responsible for the accuracy of the information or of how these sometimes libellous conclusions are invented. Any critical person can study these reports and see that they are unfounded, commissioned essays. The SR and the Group of Experts are spending a lot of the UN's money to



create unfounded assumptions in the style of there are reasonable grounds to believe that. It appears that at any price they are trying to support the negative background noise against Belarus. Fake news is being created about supposed bloody repressions of protests against the regime. An illusion is being created of this terrible nine million person country Belarus. How can it be an enemy to all of Europe with its 450 millions? Five years have passed since the presidential elections in Belarus which the West tried to use to explode the political system in the country and create chaos. They failed but they are back. Increasing pressure against Belarus confirms this. The Belarusian state and society survived in 2020 and it will continue.

The **country is growing, developing**, confidently moving in the direction of progress. The recent presidential elections were when the people confirmed that they chose stability. The people of Belarus is doing everything they can and the state is doing everything in its power to protect the rights of its citizens, peace and prosperity. Hundreds of NGOs and unions are supporting this policy and they are resolving the problems of people protecting rights without standing up against the state. In Belarus there are no political persecutions. There are clear legal frameworks for realising economic, social, civil, political, cultural and other rights. The law is one for all regardless of personal or professional activity. Everyone is responsible before the law equally and responsible for violations regardless of whether they are in the country or abroad. Humanity is an important aspect of our policies. There were **pardons in 2024 for 293 people** who confessed to crimes related to anti-state activity. For three years, we have had a functioning Commission reviewing requests from citizens abroad to regulate their legal situation in the country. Belarus intends to continue to follow its path towards progress in human rights in line with its national conditions and sovereign interests as is enshrined by the UN Charter. Belarus does not need politicised tools in the UNHRC serving a group of countries to render pressure on Belarus. Belarus calls for these mechanisms to be shut down.

Views Expressed by State Delegations

On behalf of the **Nordic-Baltic countries**, H.E. Mr. Margus Tsahkna, **Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia**, thanks the Group of Experts for the update and reaffirms its full support to your vital work. The report clearly shows that the Belarusian authorities have escalated their commitment to eradicate every expression of dissent through violence, intimidation and detentions. According to the findings, the Belarusian regime uses widespread repression, specifically in the form of imprisonment and persecution, which has reached levels that may amount to crimes against humanity. The Nordic-Baltic countries demand immediate and unconditional release and effective rehabilitation of all individuals unlawfully detained. They urge Belarus to meaningfully re-engage with the United Nations human rights mechanism. Belarus must fulfil its obligations under international human rights law. Belarusian authorities must be held accountable for human rights violations as well as for complicity in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. They call on Belarus to immediately ensure the safe return to Ukraine of all unlawfully deported Ukrainian children.

On behalf of the **Group of Friends** in Defence of the UN Charter, **Venezuela** reiterates its firm rejection of double standards and of the politicisation of human rights, given that this approach prevents genuine dialogue and cooperation. The Group voices its deep concern at the ongoing and growing proliferation of overlapping mechanisms and procedures that do not enjoy the sufficient support from the country concerned and focus on biased human rights assessments



in specific states such as Belarus. These mechanisms completely ignore the achievements of the countries in the area of human rights. They deliberately present the situation in a manner that is distorted. They misinterpret information and refer to biased sources and unverified sources. The Group of Friends reaffirms its firm condemnation of the imposition of UCMs which negatively affect the full enjoyment of human rights, the human rights of the people of Belarus. The Group reiterates its appeal for a constructive, non-politicised approach to all human rights issues based on genuine cooperation, non-interference in domestic affairs and respect for national sovereignty.

On behalf of a **cross-regional group** of countries, **Lithuania** is appalled by the constantly deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus. Both in Belarus and in exile, society is forced to live in constant fear because the authorities rely on arbitrary arrests and detentions, frequently accompanied by torture or ill-treatment, to silence them. They are being punished and humiliated for aspiring to have free, democratic, strong and independent country. The group is particularly alarmed by further evidence, as reported by the Experts, of crimes against humanity, specifically imprisonment and persecution of political reasons. This aspect must be seriously taken into account when engaging with the government of Belarus and ensuring that all perpetrators are held accountable. The Group urgently calls on Belarusian authorities to immediately cease its support to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Any arbitrary detentions of those peacefully expressing protest or speaking out against the war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine, or Belarus' support for that aggression, are unjustifiable. The Group also calls on the Belarusian authorities to ensure the safe return to Ukraine of all deported Ukrainian children and to stop political indoctrination and military re-education of Ukrainian children on its territory. It also condemns the continued instrumentalization of migrants by the Belarusian authorities in complicity with Russia for political purposes.

Liechtenstein remains deeply worried about the trouble that continued our human rights situation in Belarus. The restriction of civic and democratic space in anticipation of the elections held in January 2025 were unacceptable. With hundreds of civil society organisations liquidated and thousands of people added to the so-called extremist list, the already few remaining spaces for dialogue in Belarus have been removed. The state-enforced silencing of dissent has been a long-standing practise in Belarus. The Government has worked for years to shrink civic space by using counter-terrorism and extremist means. In 2024, the number of people put on trial for politically motivated charges has reached a dismaying new high. The digital space has become just as targeted as the physical, with people being charged on account of sharing harmless online posts. Liechtenstein urges the Belarusian government to release all those arbitrarily detained. Liechtenstein calls for Belarus's full cooperation with international human rights mechanisms, ensuring that all violations are investigated thoroughly. Accountability remains essential in order to re-establish trust in democratic institutions and upholding the rule of law in Belarus.

The **Czech Republic** remains gravely concerned with the violations of human rights in Belarus, the systematic elimination of its civic space, and the ongoing repression of independent voices. It urges Belarus to release and rehabilitate all political prisoners, including journalist Ihar Losik, Ihar Ilyash, and Katsyaryna Andreeva. It further calls on Belarus to abandon the use of arbitrary arrests, harsh and incommunicado detentions, inhuman conditions, torture, and other fear-inducing and humiliating practises that silence independent voices and force whole families into



exile. Belarus must fully abide by its obligations under international human rights law and ensure that all prisoners are kept in a safe and dignified environment, with an access to timely medical care if necessary. The ongoing terror of the regime, of its own people, both inside and outside of the country, must stop once and for all.

Luxembourg thanks the Group of Experts for its report relating widespread violations of human rights against the Belarusian public since May 2020. The trend to suppress freedoms and to abolish rights only gets worse with increasingly intrusive digital surveillance. Despite the release of 227 political prisoners in 2024, the Government has shown no appetite to open up a democratic dialogue, a space. Arrests and arbitrary detentions on political grounds, as well as acts of torture as well as forced exile, have become shameful realities in Belarus' daily life. Luxembourg is particularly concerned about the widespread repression of civil society organisations and of the LGBTQI+ community, as well as the silencing of human rights defenders, be it through judicial or non-judicial means. The new evidence for crimes against humanity appear among the most serious violations of international law and give rise to deep and irreparable suffering. Luxembourg restates its unshakeable supports to the democratic aspirations of Belarusian women and men and pays tribute to their resilience, courage and determination.

Germany thanks the Group of Experts for its report and the tireless work that has gone into compiling it. The first report is testament to the levels of repression, persecution and human rights violations Belarusians are facing every day, not only inside their own country but also when living abroad. Those who manage to flee the country are facing in absentia trials and repercussions against family or friends. Germany pays tribute to the courage of so many Belarusians who, despite all this repression, stand up against the regime in Minsk. Many of them suffer under inhumane conditions in detentions. Germany reiterates its call that all political prisoners must be released. Germany's position is clear. It is crucial to renew the Group's mandate as well as the mandate of the SR. The Group is needed to lay the basis for accountability and to continue working towards a future in which Belarusians can live inside and outside of their home country without fear.

Switzerland thanks the Group of Experts for the report and supports the extension of its mandate. Up until today, more than 1,200 people are imprisoned in Belarus for having exercised their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. It is essential we put an end to the systematic and widespread violations of human rights. Switzerland calls for the release of all persons arbitrarily detained and we ask that their places of detention and state of health are communicated to their families and lawyers. According to the reports, acts of torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment as well as sexual and gender-based violence continue to be widespread against detained and arrested persons. Switzerland urges the authorities to put an end to the systematic use of torture as well as the impunity that goes with it. In addition, secret detentions and handing down sentences in absentia must stop. All persons judged must have guarantees of a fair trial. Finally, Switzerland is deeply concerned by the conclusion of the Group of Experts according to which the crime against humanity of persecutions for political reasons have been committed against Belarus citizens who are critical or opposed to the Government.

The **Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)** highly commends Belarus and its efforts for ongoing large-scale industrial modernisation projects, decent social protection of population



and promotional welfare of the citizens by choosing its own path of progressive development. Belarus continues cooperation with the UN human rights system through dialogues on periodic reports with the CERD and CRPD Committees in August 2024 and with CEDAW in February 2025. Unfortunately, certain countries which have initiated this debate turn a blind eye to this reality and are only obsessed with slandering Belarus with disinformation and increasing pressure on sovereign states. The Group of Experts misused bluntly the procedural possibility for reporting to the UNHRC in order to spread extremely biased allegations and ungrounded conclusions. It is obviously a selective and politically motivated approach and proves itself that it is another attempt to manipulate the UNHRC in its own geopolitical interests. The DPRK opposes and rejects any practise and attempt of selective targeting of sovereign states and political interference in the internal affairs under the pretext of human rights.

Malta remains deeply concerned about the ever-deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus and condemns the widespread human rights violations in the country, including restrictions to political participation and access to independent media. Malta therefore urges the Belarusian authorities to cooperate fully with international and regional human rights monitoring mechanisms. Malta calls for the end of the involvement of Belarus in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and to immediately ensure the safe return to Ukraine of all unlawfully deported Ukrainian children. Finally, Malta also urges the Belarusian authorities to abolish the death penalty and as a first step to introduce a moratorium.

Bulgaria aligns itself with the EU statement and we hail the first report of the group of independent experts and we support their report. We are deeply concerned by the conclusions of the group according to which the violent response of the Belarus authorities against the criticism of protests of the elections in 2020 are a new wave of repression imposed by an anti-democratic authoritarian government of Lukashenko. Bulgaria is alarmed by the fact that this power continues to be built on oppression and crushing dissidents through monitoring, surveillance, arrests and arbitrary detentions as well as torture and poor treatment as well as forced exile. Bulgaria condemns the fact that despite pardons of 2024 for 257 political prisoners, the majority of political prisoners remain behind bars. It calls for release of all those civil prisoners and the unconditional release of all political prisoners. Bulgaria further urges the Belarus authorities to stop helping Russia wage its wide full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine contributing to the illegal deportation of Ukrainian children and guarantee their safe return to Ukraine. It renews its appeal to the Belarusian authorities for them to fully cooperate with the Group of Experts and international mechanisms protecting human rights.

Iran reiterates its principal position in rejecting the establishment of biased discriminatory mechanisms and reporting mandates without the consent of the concerned states. The Group of Experts on the situation of human rights in Belarus should avoid their standards, stereotyping and politicising the human rights situation in Belarus. Iran acknowledges the progress made by the government of Belarus in efforts to reform its legislation and political system in accordance with its constitution updated in 2022 and with the ultimate goal of responding effectively to modern challenges and ensuring peaceful and sustainable development of the country with due attention to the promotion of its citizens' rights. Iran firmly believes that the UNHRC country's specific mechanisms established without the consent of the concerned states are nothing more than an



obstacle to a genuine dialogue and result-orientated discussion for promotion and protection of human rights.

The **Netherlands** thanks the Group of Experts for their report outlining the dire human rights situation in Belarus. It remains deeply concerned about the serious and large-scale human rights violations that continue to be perpetrated by the Belarusian authorities, some of which, as highlighted in the report, may amount to crimes against humanity. The Netherlands continues to firmly stand with the people of Belarus, its civil society, human rights offenders, journalists, trade unionists and the Belarusian forces. With more than 1,250 political prisoners currently being held in arbitrary detention, the Netherlands calls on the Belarusian authorities for their immediate and unconditional release and demand their full legal redress. Tragically, we have witnessed persistent efforts by Lukashenko and the Belarusian authorities to curb civil liberties, especially in the run-up to the so-called presidential elections in January, depriving people of their liberty while they exercise their right to stand up for freedom and dignity is unacceptable. Rights, moreover, that are enshrined in the Belarusian constitution and the international human rights treaties to which Belarus is a party. Those responsible for the serious violations detailed in the report must be held accountable. Therefore, the Netherlands calls on the UNHRC and the broader international community to continue its support to initiatives aimed at preventing impunity.

Albania expresses its concern over the report's findings, which highlight serious persistent violations since 2020 presidential election. The report documents systematic repression of Belarusian authorities against civil society, political opponents and independent media. The arbitrary arrests and detentions of thousands of people, often accompanied by torture and ill-treatment, constitute flagrant violations of fundamental rights. The forced exile of many people under threat of arbitrary prosecution is another alarming manifestation of this repression. Albania takes note of the recent series of releases of detainees. However, Albania regrets that Belarus remains one of the rare countries in the European continent with political prisoners 1,200 today. Albania strongly condemns this targeted politically motivated repression by the authorities and call on the Belarusian government to immediately release all political prisoners and torture and prosecution and guarantee freedom of expression and association. It also regrets Belarus' deliberate failure to cooperate with international mechanism. Finally, Albania reaffirms support for Belarusian people in their fight for the rule of law and democracy.

Belgium remains deeply concerned by the situation in Belarus, which is continually exacerbating. Persistent systematic repressions, the absence of democratic controls and general impunity reign. The Group's report shows that attacks against dissidents are now widespread and full scale. It is an attack against civil space, civic space and the population, a crime against humanity. A thousand NGOs have been removed and ten thousand have been detained or arrested in recent years for simply expressing an opinion, if not protesting torture. The absence of fair trials or guarantees of fair trials are deeply concerning. Harassment and continued repression of civil society figures, political repressions of journalists, human rights advocates and all persons exercising their human rights must stop. Political prisoners must be released. All allegations of torture must be investigated. Violators of human rights must be made accountable for their actions.



Eritrea is increasingly concerned that this council is being exploited to advance the agendas of a select few, further deepening divisions within the UNHRC and beyond. Eritrea recognises the successful presidential election held earlier this year in which President Lukashenko was elected with significant popular support. However, certain parties continue refusing to recognise the legitimacy of the elections. Eritrea firmly maintains that the recognition of a nation's leadership is a sovereign matter for its people, not external actors. Eritrea notes that Belarus consistently ranks among the countries with a high Human Development Index and in 2024 placed 29th out of 166 countries on the Gender Inequality Index. These positive developments deserve greater acknowledgement within this council to encourage constructive dialogue and cooperation. In this light, Eritrea opposes the country's specific mandates on human rights in Belarus. These initiatives, one of which have been in place for over a decade, are simply driven by political motives, undermining national efforts to advance human rights and risking regional instability. In closing, Eritrea calls for the lifting of UCMs imposed on Belarus and urges the international community to engage with the country through dialogue, mutual respect and cooperation

Russia categorically condemns the imposition on the UNHRC of politicised discussions on Belarus. The domestic political situation in the country is stable. As a result of 26 January presidential elections, we clearly saw broad popular support inside and also for the foreign policy avenues of the head of state. More than 86 percent of the population voted for the president. The sovereign choice is not subject to choice. Numerous foreign observers confirmed that these were free elections in line with domestic and international legislation. However, one is forced to note constant attempts by Western countries to use the human rights issue as a means of exerting pressure on official Minsk. Russia sees double standards and impartial approaches in assessing the human rights situation in the sovereign country. Russia is convinced that any disagreements within Belarusian society must be resolved within the country in a domestic political situation. Russia is strongly against whipping up anti-Belarusian moods in international fora, including in the UNHRC, as well as politicisation of the human rights mechanisms of the UN, where a group of countries is settling their political accounts with a state that has fallen out of favour.

China takes note of the report by the Group of Experts. The UNHRC should adhere to the principles of objectivity and impartiality and refrain from using unsubstantiated forcing permission to level unwarranted accusations against the developing countries, let alone be reduced to a political tool for certain countries against others. Some countries ignore the fact that the UCMs are preventing the Belarusian people from fully enjoying human rights and disregard the Government's efforts and achievements in promoting and protecting human rights, as well as its vehement opposition to the extension of country-specific mechanisms. Such actions have a seriously intensified confrontation within the UNHRC. China respects the development path independently chosen by the people of Belarus based on their national conditions and the country's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. China supports Belarus' efforts to ensure political stability and economic development and firmly oppose any external interference in Belarus' internal affairs under any pretext. China urges relevant countries to cease their unjustified unilateral sanctions against Belarus, fulfil their international responsibilities and obligations, contribute to socio-economic development in Belarus, as well as the enjoyment of human rights by these people.



Greece expresses its concern over the situation of human rights in Belarus, especially over the report findings on imprisonment and persecution against a significant segment of the population defined by its real or perceived political views. Greece is also worried about the ample evidence gathered by the Group of Experts that those arrested on politically motivated grounds between 2020 and 2024 were subjected to torture and ill-treatment at all stages of their detention. Greece is also gravely concerned that Belarus is misusing counter-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation to further purge civic space, suppress freedom of expression, and eradicate political opposition. Greece urges the Government of Belarus to engage meaningfully with the Group of Experts and the UN mechanisms. It condemns the involvement of Minsk in the war in Ukraine and calls on Belarusian authorities to stop the exploitation of human suffering through the instrumentalization of migrants and refugees for political purposes.

Cuba is not surprised that the reports presented on Belarus does not reflect the reality of that country. It is the product of other the selective interventionistic and partial report of the UNHRC. Cuba rejects the imposition of politically motivated mechanisms which do not enjoy the consent of the country concerned. A great part of the available resources of the country are being misused against Belarus and these mechanisms have never shown any result, and will never be able to show any result because only respectful dialogue will work. This is the only way to move forward in the promotion protection of human rights. The UNHRC cannot be an a instrument that interferes and coerces countries. Cuba once again appeals to the UNHRC to respect the principles of objectivity, partiality, non-selectivity. Cuba will continue to demand the immediate end of UCMs which seriously harm the human rights of the people of Belarus.

The **Lao PDR** thanks the delegation of Belarus for the update and comments Belarus for strengthening its national legal and institutional frameworks to promote the fundamental rights of its citizens by maintaining active engagement with the UN human rights mechanisms including treaty bodies. It also welcomes the significant progress made by the government of Belarus towards achieving the SDG especially in poverty eradication, clean water and sanitation, reducing inequality and preserving territorial ecosystem. The Lao PDR reiterates its view that addressing human rights issues in all countries shall be based on genuine dialogue and cooperation and mutual respect and in line with national needs and priority of the concerned country. It calls for the promotion of and respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs of other states under the protect of human rights. In this regard, the principles of impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and non-politicisation shall be upheld. In conclusion, country country-specific mechanisms established without consent of concerned states are counterproductive.

Romania welcomes the presentation of the Group of Experts and their report which highlights that the human rights situation in Belarus continues to worsen. Various crimes and crimes against humanity have not been identified including arbitrary deprivation of liberty, torture and ill-treatment, persecution, lack of a fair trial, forced displacement and exile, out of view reprisals of anyone that voices dissenting political views. Accountability for these violations of human rights is non-existent, victims lacking all redress during the ongoing and continuing systematic impunity in the country. Democratic space has considerably shrunk with severe restriction of the freedom of expression association, peaceful assembly and rejection of all space for dissent and opposition. The extremists left have been multiplied and censorship hardened. Romania calls on



Belarus to immediately release all political prisoners and to cease any administrative or criminal proceedings against individuals for exercising their human rights.

Poland thanks the Group of Experts for its report and fully supports their work. The images of the 2020 protest in Belarus remain vivid. A powerful display of public outrage against the regime's fraudulent elections. This year the chilling reality of ongoing political terror has silenced any expression of dissent against Alexander Lukashenko's authoritarian rule. There were no genuine opposition candidates as the opposition leaders were either in prisons or in exile, failing politically motivated prosecution. Independent media were driven out of the country and censorship was jubilant. Poland deplores that once again Belarusians were deprived of the fundamental right to elect their own representative. The report findings detailing crimes against humanity, including imprisonment of the prosecution inflicted upon the Belarusian civilian population, are utterly appealing. Poland stands firmly in support of all actions to ensure that those who have committed this grave human rights violation are held to account.

Austria welcomes the report by the Group of Experts and is concerned about the appalling conditions of detention of political prisoners and the continued reports of death, torture, and cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment in all stages of detention. Austria is particularly concerned to hear that the Group found further evidence of crimes against humanity with the apparent objective of punishing and silencing any forms of dissent, applying a separate and harsher regime of detention on those arrested on politically motivated charges. Austria urges Belarus to immediately and unconditionally release all those unlawfully or arbitrarily detained, including human rights defenders, trade unionists, journalists, and lawyers, and cease and reverse any administrative or criminal proceedings against individuals for the mere exercise of their human rights. Austria further urges Belarus to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights in compliance with its obligations under international human rights law and to cooperate with the Group of Experts and all relevant human rights mechanisms and investigations. Austria reiterates its full support for the Group's mandate and its important work in documenting the human rights situation in Belarus.

Cyprus thanks the Group of Experts for its report. Despite continuous calls for reform, the Belarusian authorities persist in their systematic violation of human rights, some of which, according to the report, amount to crimes against humanity. Cyprus strongly condemns the ongoing persecution and intimidation campaigns against all segments of Belarusian society and the unprecedented level of repression, the restrictions on political participation, and the independent media. Cyprus is concerned by the violence, by the evidence provided, by the report that those arrested for their perceived political views were subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Cyprus calls on Belarus to bring its legislation into compliance with its international obligations and to release all persons unfairly convicted for the legitimate exercise of their human rights, such as the freedom of speech, association, and assembly. Cyprus urges Belarus to fully cooperate with the UN mechanism with a view to improving the human rights situation in the country. It further urges the Belarusian authorities to stop their involvement in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Ireland thanks the Group of Experts for its report. The Belarusian presidential election that took place earlier this year, like the elections of 2020 and 2024, cannot be considered to have been free or fair. Once again, the people of Belarus were denied a real voice in the governing of their



country. As the Lukashenko regime pursues its efforts to hold power indefinitely, the already grave human rights situation in Belarus continues to deteriorate. As the Group of Experts has detailed, the Belarusian authorities have sought to punish and silence dissent by subjecting persons detained on politically motivated grounds to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, including torture and sexual violence. There have also been a number of reported deaths in custody. Ireland condemns such practises. Ireland is alarmed by the Belarusian authorities' targeting of civil society and independent media and the increased digital surveillance of the Belarusian people. Ireland calls on the Belarusian Government to end its sustained persecution of perceived and actual political opponents in Belarus and abroad. It calls for the immediate release of all persons detained by the Belarusian authorities on politically motivated grounds and an end to measures aimed at stifling participation in public and political affairs in Belarus.

The **United Kingdom (UK)** continues to condemn human rights violations in Belarus and the systematic repression of fundamental freedoms. The UK shares the Group's concern over the more than 1,200 political prisoners who are denied a fair trial, held in inhumane conditions, subject to ill treatment, and denied adequate medical care. The UK acknowledges the pardoning of over 250 political prisoners since July 2024. However, arrests and political repression continue. The reported increase of digital surveillance in Belarus, which has further restricted civil society and freedom of expression in both online and physical spaces, are troubling. As the report notes, the regime's repression extends beyond its own borders. The UK condemns reports of trials in absentia of Belarusian nationals. On 27 January, the UK imposed new sanctions on six individuals and three entities, targeting leaders of institutions responsible for serious human rights violations and companies in the Belarusian defence sector, supporting Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. The UK stands with the Belarusian people and their right to live in a genuinely free and democratic environment, without fear of oppression.

Moldova is once again deeply concerned by the evidence in the report indicating repression of freedom of expression, assembly and association in Belarus, including by misuse of the anti-extremism and anti-terrorism laws, and increased digital surveillance. Moldova is equally worried by the continuation of practises that lead to the shrinking of civil society in the country. While welcoming the release of 227 political prisoners in 2024, Moldova expresses its concern over the reported increase in trials, politically motivated charges and reports of torture and ill-treatment of those detained. It also regrets that Belarus continued its last year practise of not inviting OECD election observation mission to monitor presidential elections from January. Moldova reiterates its call on Belarus to stop any support to Russia's unprovoked illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. It calls for a constructive and meaningful engagement of Belarusian authorities with Special Procedures, including the Group of Experts.

Venezuela affirms that once again, through an imposed mandate, enjoying no support from the concerned country, an attempt is made to address the alleged human rights situation in Belarus in a palpable display of the politicisation of the Human Rights Council in violation of the principles of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity. The so-called group of independent experts uses this council to disseminate extremely biased accusations and unfounded conclusions about Belarus, purporting to impose on the international community a false view of reality. Deliberately, what is omitted is what the country has done to promote and protect the enjoyment of human rights, such as the reforms to its laws pursuant to the constitutional provisions that exist already



to guarantee peaceful development and sustainable development of the country. Belarus finds itself among those countries in the world with the highest levels of human development. It is ranked 61 out of 169, according to the Social Progress Index. As regards to the Gender Inequality Index, it ranks 29 out of 166, which the group of experts does not mention. Finally, Venezuela rejects the imposition of UCMs deployed as political and economic weapons that are unprecedented, including an air and land blockade to isolate the country, which is why Venezuela calls for the immediate cessation of this criminal form of siege.

France thanks the Group of Experts for their report. In 2024, more than 7,500 people were convicted in Belarus on political grounds. The laws on extremism and terrorism continue to be exploited and abused to justify a crackdown on any critical voice or voices perceived as being critical. Fears of being swept up in a new wave of arrests have pushed many people to flee into exile. This crackdown was very evident in the sham presidential election held on the 26th of January 2025, in which we saw roadblocks placed in the way of the free participation of everyone in the electoral process and restrictions placed on access to independent information sources. France has taken note of the release of more than 300 political prisoners by the Belarusian authorities since July 2024, but in the same time frame, new politically motivated arrests took place. France condemns in the strongest possible terms the horrific detention conditions in which political prisoners are held. Cases of torture, deprivation and ill-treatment have been well documented and several detainees have succumbed to these violence. Belarus must live up to its international commitments by allowing detainees to communicate with their relatives and have access to medical care. Pardons must be granted as a priority to the most vulnerable detainees. France pays tribute to the courage and determination of the victims of this repression. Their aspirations for a free and democratic Belarus oblige us to take action.

Croatia thanks the Group of Experts for the report that highlights continued restriction of civic and democratic spaces as a part of the pattern of repressive governance in the country. Silencing dissidents through arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and other inhuman treatments are well documented in the report and deserve international condemnation. State sanctions violence policy force hundreds of thousands into exile solely based on their political views. Moreover, the report found that special proceedings were opened against those in exile and raising number of trials in absentia. It is deeply concerning that the conditions around imprisonment and persecutions are getting closer to the level of crimes against humanity, as showcased within the report. Croatia calls on the Government of Belarus to allow the Group of Experts access to the country and information on steps taken to investigate deaths in detention since 2020.

Zimbabwe commends Belarus for its continued cooperation with the UNHRC and other human rights mechanisms, despite the imposition of UCMs that adversely affect the full enjoyment of rights by its people. Zimbabwe recognises the efforts by the Government of Belarus to reform its legislation and political system in accordance with its constitution so as to respond effectively to challenges in ensuring peaceful and sustainable development of the country with due attention to the promotion of the rights of its citizens. Zimbabwe is concerned about the number of overlapping mechanisms and procedures that do not receive the consent of the country and the biased assessments of human rights in targeted states. It reiterates its rejection of country-specific resolutions and the use of such resolutions as a basis for the work of the UNHRC. Interventions that are built on non-consensual mandates only foment polarisation between the



country concerned and the sponsors of the mandates, thereby inhibiting dialogue and cooperation, which are key pillars of the work of the UNHRC. Zimbabwe urges the UNHRC to engage in constructive dialogue with Belarus to broaden understanding towards compliance with its obligations.

Ethiopia believes that human rights issues must be approached with respect for national mechanisms, transparency, and adherence to international standards without resorting to selective approach to orderly standards. Ethiopia believes that cooperation and respect for national sovereignty are the most important aspects of human rights. In cooperation with the UPR process remains the most effective and inclusive framework for engaging all stakeholders in a constructive manner. In this context, Ethiopia commends Belarus for its continued engagement and for its participation in the UPR mechanisms. While encouraging Belarus to implement accepted recommendations, Ethiopia reiterates its committed to the principles of universality, objectivity, and non-selectivity. Ethiopia emphasises the importance of consent-based capacity-building and technical assistance to strengthen the national efforts of member states concerned.

Sri Lanka acknowledges the engagement of the Government of Belarus with human rights bodies, including the treaty bodies and the UPR process, and commends Belarus for not having a backlog in treaty body reporting. In 2024, Belarus participated in dialogues on periodic reports with CERD and CRPD, and in February 2025 with CEDAW. It is noteworthy that Belarus has made significant progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and has already achieved the goals of poverty eradication, clean water and sanitation, reducing inequality, and preserving terrestrial ecosystems. Sri Lanka commends the National Development Policy of Belarus, which has enabled advancement in economic and social rights of the people. Sri Lanka reiterates its opposition to country-specific initiatives that are moved in the UNHRC without the consent of the country concerned. Such initiatives are divisive and counterproductive. Sri Lanka encourages cooperation with the concerned country based on their voluntarily undertaken international obligations and providing technical assistance upon request. Any action to improve the human rights situation in Belarus should be guided by the accepted principles of mutual respect and cooperation and by engaging in a constructive dialogue with Belarus.

Cambodia takes note of relevant reports as to the situation in Belarus, including cooperation with human rights mechanisms and OHCHR. Cambodia believes that the Belarusian people are best suited to rebuild their national unity and determine their future political direction through their national dialogues and institutions. The enduring strength of all human rights mechanisms lies in even-handed approaches with transparency, objectivity, and impartiality as well as in full adherence to the principles of sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and non-interference, which are well-enshrined in the UN Charter. Finally, Cambodia reiterates its principled position that human rights agendas must be addressed through a genuine dialogue-based approach with non-confrontation, non-politicisation, and non-selectivity based on a verified source of information, bearing in mind the national particularities of each country.

Sudan takes note of the report on the human rights situation in Belarus and encourages Belarus to continue its ongoing efforts to promote and embed human rights, whether these be economic, social, or cultural rights, as well as to continue pursuing improvements in human development indexes to reduce poverty and inequality, as well as to safeguard the environment. Sudan also calls upon Belarus to continue its ongoing efforts with regard to political and social rights in order



to ensure that fundamental rights and freedoms are duly enshrined and enjoyed. Sudan commends the recent presidential elections held in Belarus and the way these went off. The UNHRC was established to strengthen a framework for dialogue around the issue of human rights. It should be free of politicisation and bias, thereby underscoring the importance of these principles. No mechanism should be imposed on a country without the consent of said country concerned.

Azerbaijan takes note of the report presented by the Group of Experts as well as information provided by Belarus as a concerned country. It emphasises that respect for territorial integrity, sovereignty, and no interference in internal affairs of the Member States are important principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. In this regard, Azerbaijan stresses that issues brought to the attention of the UNHRC, including those related to Belarus, must be approached in full conformity with these principles.

Ukraine thanks the Group of Experts for its report on the human rights situation in Belarus. Regrettably, the findings confirm that the Belarusian Government remains determined to eliminate all dissent. The documented crimes against civilians were not only isolated incidents, but part of widespread and systematic attacks orchestrated at the highest level to suppress any opposition. State institutions operated in a concrete manner to implement these repressive policies, targeting anyone perceived as a threat to the regime. The recent so-called presidential elections were merely a staged political show. Widespread repression eliminated any genuine competition, leaving voters with no real choice. Ukraine strongly calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners in Belarus who remain unjustly detained, deprived of their freedom and dignity. Furthermore, it urges the Belarusian authorities to halt their complicity in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and to resist Moscow's persuasions, which only serve to erode Belarusian sovereignty. Finally, Ukraine calls on the Group of Experts to carefully examine Belarus' involvement in unlawful deprecation of Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation.

According to **Burundi**, non-consensual country-specific mandates, as has been pointed out repeatedly, have ably demonstrated their shortcomings. All they serve to do is undermine what should be constructive cooperation between states, which in turn leads to the politicisation and bias in the work of the UNHRC. Its Agenda Item 4 should not serve the purposes of individual nations' geopolitical agendas, nor should it be used for a double-standards approach. Abusing Agenda Item 4 in these ways is a contradiction of Resolution 60/251 of the UN General Assembly, which is the founding resolution of the UNHRC. Solidarity and mutual strengthening between states should be the norm, with a view to promoting and protecting human rights for all, which is the aspiration of every country. In that understanding, Burundi encourages Belarus to continue on its demonstrated path of engagement and interaction with UN treaty bodies, pointing in particular to its recent presentation of its national reports to the Committees on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and that on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as the submission of its recent report to the CEDAW Committee, which is a clear demonstration of its determination to further the well-being of its people. Burundi also takes this opportunity to encourage Belarus in its preparations for the UPR, which will participate at the fourth cycle, which will take place later this year.



Kazakhstan takes note of the report of the Group of Experts as well as information provided by Belarus as a concerned country. Kazakhstan is committed to the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, including universality, impartiality and non-selectivity. These values are foundational to fostering equitable international cooperation and promoting human rights. By adhering to these principles, we strive to advance global peace, justice and the protection of fundamental freedoms for all. The people of every state should enjoy the right to independently choose their path of development. So do the people of Belarus, in accordance with the state's international obligations and national legislation, within the framework of the peaceful, wise and inclusive dialogue. Kazakhstan notes Belarus' commitment to cooperate with OHCHR, thematic Special Procedures and treaty bodies. It believes that Belarus and the UN human rights mechanisms should work together in good faith in a constructive manner so that such cooperation can assist the country in implementing its commitments in the field of human rights.

Kyrgyzstan takes note of the report of the Group of Experts and believes that meaningful engagement based on mutual respect and cooperation remains the most effective way to strengthen human rights globally. In this regard, Kyrgyzstan welcomes Belarus' efforts to engage with the international human rights mechanisms, including its active dialogue with the UN treaty bodies and engagement with the UPR process. Kyrgyzstan supports a balanced and objective approach to human rights discussions, one that prioritises engagement over confrontation. It remains committed to fostering open and inclusive dialogue within the UNHRC to ensure that human rights discussions contribute to stability, progress, and cooperation.

Spain takes this opportunity to further convey its alarm in light of the human rights situation in Belarus and the fact that the Group of Experts was hindered from having access to the country and to pertinent information. Regrettably, the Belarusian regime has refused to adhere to international human rights standards, despite the fact that there have been repeated calls by the international community to do that, channelled via the UNHRC. Spain regrets the fact that Belarus continues to be the only country in Europe that maintains on its statute books the death penalty for certain serious crimes. Spain urges the Belarusian authorities to release all political prisoners and to improve the detention conditions for all persons deprived of their liberty in Belarus. Spain calls for a cessation of the violations of human rights and the prosecution of those who have violated human rights. Spain reiterates that a fair and prosperous society is only to be achieved by including all persons, irrespective of their ideas or political ideology. Spain calls for the restoration of civic space and steps to be taken to put an end to the exodus of professionals, journalists and members of the opposition who find themselves compelled to flee the country given the lack of freedoms.

Egypt takes note of the report of the Group of Experts and reiterates its principled position that refuses the politicisation of human rights and the interference and meddling in the internal affairs of sovereign countries. Egypt underscores the importance of fully respecting and upholding the prospect, the principles of universality, non-interference, non-bias, non-selectivity and avoiding double standards when it comes to human rights and the assessment thereof. Egypt is of the view that priority should be given to a genuine debate and discussion with the state concerned, taking into account the importance of capacity-building.



Views Expressed by Intergovernmental Organizations

The **European Union** expresses its gratitude to the Experts for the report whose findings show that human rights violations continue to be committed as part of a widespread and systematic attack against civilians. In furtherance of government policy to silence any perceived or real dissent, the Group has found further evidence that some of the violations may amount to crimes against humanity. The wide range and severity of violations documented across UN human rights mechanisms speak for themselves. With continued arbitrary arrests and detentions, including incommunicado, torture, and ill-treatment, appalling detention conditions, politically motivated charges, and systematic denial of the right to fair trial. New restrictions on civic space, trade unionists, and independent media continue to force many to exile, facing trials in absentia. The EU urges the Belarusian authorities once again to hold their internal and transnational repression, and immediately and unconditionally release and effectively rehabilitate all political prisoners. The EU calls on Belarus to grant full access to all human rights mechanisms, including to all prisons and places of detention. Concerned with the continuing systematic impunity in Belarus, the EU asks what other possible avenues and measures alongside national proceedings should states explore in working towards accountability.

Views Expressed by Non-Governmental Organizations

The **National Human Rights Civic Association ‘Belarusian Helsinki Committee’** acknowledges the release by Belarusian authorities of 258 political prisoners in the summer of 2024. This marks a crucial step in ending unjust detention, reuniting individuals with their families, safeguarding their health and in some instances even saving their lives. However, this cannot be seen as a sign of an improved human rights situation in the country. Today, more than 1,200 political prisoners remain behind bars, deprived of adequate medical care, legal assistance, family visits and correspondence. At least 10 political prisoners have been held in prolonged and communicated detention, some for more than two years. Repressions in Belarus remain systemic and is expanding across all aspects of human rights. As a result of the lawful political choice made by Belarusians five years ago, they not only run the risk of being imprisoned, they are still subject to dismissals or arbitrary refusals when applying for jobs, unreasonable interference in private affairs and correspondence, they are unable to travel freely abroad and live in constant fear, deprived of basic security and control over their own lives. The Committee calls on the Belarusian authorities to unconditionally release all political prisoners and political repression, and ensure accountability for crimes against humanity and human rights violations. It urges the members of the UNHRC to continue supporting this cause and to maintain the mandates of the SR and the Group of Experts as crucial tools in this process.

The **International Trade Union Confederation** takes the floor on behalf of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions. The Global Rights Index in 2024 once again named Belarus one of the ten worst countries in the world for working people. We will soon enter the fourth year since the authorities in Belarus dissolved all independent trade unions, arrested their leaders, including the President of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions and the Vice President, member of the ILO Governing Body Alexander Yaroshuk, and declared them extremists. More than 70 of our colleagues have been criminally prosecuted. Twenty-nine remain in prison. Others are restricted in freedom after fully serving prison terms. Many are in exile, and hundreds have been subject of arrest, harassment, and humiliation. Only puppet organisations



fully loyal to the regime are left in Belarus. They were created to control, not to represent the interests of the workers. More than 20 years' history of suppression of free and democratic unions of Belarus is well documented by the ILO. In June 2023, the International Labour Conference adopted a resolution under Article 33 of the ILO Constitution as a last resort to ensure that Belarus respects the right to freedom of association. Furthermore, three UN Special Rapporteurs have also pointed to violations of the fundamental rights of workers to join and form trade unions. The Confederation calls on the UNHRC to help return to Belarusian workers their right to join trade unions of their choice. Labour rights are human rights. Trade unionism is not a crime.

The **International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)**, the Belarusian Association of Human Rights Lawyers, the Law Society of England and Wales, Lawyers for Lawyers and Lawyers at Church Canada, thank the Group of Experts for their excellent work. They keep condemning the oppression of civil society in Belarus, in particular reprisals against defence lawyers representing political opposition or defending the rule of law. They deplore the state's full control over the judiciary and condemn the repression against independent lawyers representing dissenting voices, the nearly complete takeover of the legal profession by the executive branch, the interference of the Minister of Justice in the licencing activities, and the Bar Association failing to protect its members. They keep condemning the landmark case of lawyer Maxim Znak, arbitrarily detained since 2020, still held incommunicado, as well as the arbitrary conviction of other lawyers. They recall that Belarus has ratified and is therefore bound by, internally, the UN Convention Against Torture and the ICCPR. They urge Belarus to immediately release all individuals arbitrarily detained for political reasons, including lawyers, and cease further persecution. Lastly, they welcome the referral of the situation in Belarus to the International Criminal Court by Lithuania and urge other states to do so.

Human Rights House Foundation states that the Group of Experts' findings confirm that systematic violations persist in Belarus at all levels, rising to the level of crimes against humanity in some instances, and which must be addressed by concrete steps towards international accountability. More than 1,200 political prisoners remain behind bars. Human Rights House Foundation appeals to Belarus, at the very least, to uphold its obligations under the UN Convention Against Torture and the ICCPR by ensuring that detainees and prisoners receive adequate medical care, legal representation and protection from incommunicado detention and ill-treatment. Examples of transnational repression are growing. Belarusians forced into exile now face prosecution and absentia. Furthermore, they face the impossible choice of being forced to return to Belarus to renew their passports as they start to expire, risking arrest, political persecution or enforced disappearance, or being left without valid documentation abroad, limiting their access to essential services and legal residency. In this climate of executive control and total impunity, international scrutiny is vital.

Article 19 - The International Centre Against Censorship welcomes the report by the Group of Experts. The Group's work is essential for documentation and accountability amid the ongoing human rights crisis. While noting the recent release of 258 political prisoners who were pardoned without being exonerated, more than 1,200 remain behind bars. Article 19 has repeatedly appealed to the UNHRC to call for the release of human rights defender Nasta Loika, who is still serving her seven-year sentence for doing her work. She joins scores of other civil society actors in prison, defenders, journalists, lawyers, and active citizens. Belarusian authorities readily



equate dissenting political opinions with extremism and terrorism, the latter being punishable with death. Committing extremist crimes is a ground for being deprived of Belarusian citizenship. Online spaces are permeated with censorship. As little as subscription, post, or comment on extremist channels can land one in prison. Administering such channels is punished even more harshly with a host of criminal articles, from inciting hatred to running an extremist formation to calling to overthrow the government. The authorities themselves report the commission of 22,500 alleged extremist crimes since 2020. The broad application of anti-extremist laws is what facilitates the Commission of Crimes Against Humanity in Belarus. Article 19 reiterates its support to the Group and encourages the Experts to continue documenting the ecosystem of repression made possible with such laws. It also reiterates its calls to the Group and all states to continue demanding the release of all political prisoners, including Nasta Loika.

The [International Federation for Human Rights Leagues](#) jointly with FIDH, OMCT, and Viasna thank the Group of Experts for their important report, which highlights that the systematic persecution and the mass imprisonment of those deemed disloyal by the Belarusian authorities amount to crimes against humanity. Among the victims of these crimes are Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski, FIDH Vice President Valiantsin Stefanovich, and Viasna lawyer Vladimir Labkovich, who remain imprisoned in appalling conditions following an unjust verdict handed down two years ago by the Leninsky District Court of Minsk. The Federation strongly urges the Belarusian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all members of the Human Rights Centre Viasna, as well as all Belarusian human rights defenders and all those unlawfully imprisoned. As the International Criminal Court conducts a preliminary examination of the Belarus situation, the documentation of crimes against humanity and the preservation of evidence by the Group of Experts remains crucial. It therefore calls on the international community to renew the mandates of the Group of Experts and of the Special Rapporteur on Belarus, and to ensure that the Group of Experts is allocated all financial and staffing resources necessary to successfully perform its tasks. FIDH, OMCT, and Viasna also strongly call on the international community to take all available measures to ensure accountability and justice for the victims of the crimes committed, both on the international and the national level, including by referring the Belarus situation to the International Criminal Court.

Referencing the Experts' report, [Earthjustice](#) recalls that Belarusian authorities have continued to eradicate all possible expression of dissent, openly purging the country from civil society organisations. Among them, the liquidation of a leading environmental NGO, *Ecohome*, has been considered by the Compliance Committee of the 1998 Aarhus Convention, to which Belarus was a party, as a persecution silencing an organisation actively engaged in the follow-up mechanism of a case of non-compliance by Belarus. Given the gravity of this retaliation, the parties, in their seventh meeting, had to suspend Belarus' special rights and privileges under the Convention. This led, unfortunately, Belarus to withdraw from the Convention, depriving the people of Belarus and neighbouring countries of the safety provided by the transparent sharing of environmental information. Among the victims of the current terrible treatment described in the report, including the repression of those forced to exile, are numerous environmental human rights defenders. Earthjustice joins the Experts' call to immediately release all those unlawfully and arbitrarily detained for the peaceful exercise of their freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and reverse all proceedings against individuals for the mere exercise of their human



rights, as well as to immediately cease any form of torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence, in all places of detention in Belarus.

The **International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)** concurs with the report of the Group of Experts, which emphasises Belarus' rights crisis, marked by a lack of fair trial guarantees, attacks on lawyers and a pervasive culture of impunity for crimes under international law. The ICJ condemns the widespread human rights violations committed especially since May 2020, including thousands of spurious prosecutions, widespread torture and ill-treatment and arbitrary detention. Trials have been unduly expedited, with predetermined outcomes and flagrant violations of human or fair trial rights, including *in absentia* convictions of individuals in exile. Lawyers defending persons detained for political reasons have themselves faced arrest, harassment and arbitrary detention. Some have been criminally prosecuted, disbarred or forced into exile, leaving many such detainees without legal defence. To date, those responsible for these crimes under international law have endured near total impunity. With no high-level or direct perpetrator held accountable, the ICJ urges the UNHRC to extend the mandates of the Group of Experts and the Special Rapporteur, and to ensure they are adequately resourced to effectively and swiftly pursue their complementary functions in advancing accountability. The ICJ also calls upon states to extend protection and support to victims and survivors, lawyers and civil society members in exile, and to ensure accountability, including through the application of extraterritorial and universal jurisdiction.

Welcoming the report of the Group of Experts, **CIVICUS** notes that the human rights situation remains dire, with the authorities continuing their systematic destruction of civil society space. Since 2020, over 1,900 CSOs have been forcibly liquidated or have opted for self-liquidation. Repression against Belarusian civil society actors continues, including the widespread use of arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment of activists, peaceful protesters, journalists, HRDs and lawyers. Those convicted are often held incommunicado. In addition, many Belarusian citizens, including members of opposition activists and journalists, are currently prosecuted in absentia, with the number of cases increasing over the past year. While welcoming the release of Palina Sharenda-Panasiuk, CIVICUS reminds that more than 1,200 prisoners in the country remain detained in dire conditions, including members of the Human Rights Centre Viasna. CIVICUS also remains concerned about the growing risks of exile activists facing deportation or extradition to Belarus, where there is prosecution on trumped-up charges, including terrorism and national security. CIVICUS urges Belarus to release and rehabilitate all those arbitrarily detained for exercising their civic freedoms and calls on states to support the renewal of the mandate of the Group of Experts and the early renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, which remains crucial for civil society. Furthermore, CIVICUS encourages enhanced cooperation between the two mandates with a view to further advancing accountability.

FACTS & FIGURES ON ID PARTICIPATION

43 State Delegations

- Including 1 high-level dignitary

1 Inter-Governmental Organization

9 Non-Governmental Organizations