

Motion

# The protection of youth rights and support of young political prisoners of Belarus

signed by: Belarusian National Youth  
Council (RADA)

co-signed by: National Youth Council  
of Moldova (CNTM), Danish Youth  
Council (DUF), Polish Council of Youth  
Organizations (PROM), Finnish National  
Youth Council (Allianssi)

The European Youth Forum recognizes the urgent need to protect youth rights and support young political prisoners in Belarus. This resolution addresses the increasing number of political prisoners and their inhumane conditions during imprisonment while advocating for their immediate and unconditional release. It also emphasizes the importance of international solidarity and cooperation in promoting human rights and democracy.

Since the events of August 2020 in Belarus, when 'not transparent, free, or fair elections'<sup>1</sup> took place, the number of political prisoners in Belarus has been increasing daily, and every day the Belarusian regime arrests citizens who believe in the principles of democracy and human rights. More than 300,000 were forced to leave Belarus<sup>2</sup> because of threats and persecution; around 1,500 people<sup>3</sup> recognized as political prisoners remain unjustly imprisoned, with approximately 45% of them being Belarusians under the age of 35.

Young political prisoners and other people in Belarus are facing an alarming crisis, where their lives are under constant threat due to repressive measures enforced by the illegitimate Belarusian regime. This includes severe instances of torture within prisons, unjust political repression targeting their relatives, restrictions on access to information by labeling various social media platforms and websites as 'extremist materials,' including the social networks of the Belarusian National Youth Council RADA, and perpetuating inhuman detention conditions.

In contravention of Belarus' obligations to the Convention against Torture, to which it is a State Party to, young political prisoners endure inhumane treatment within an "incommunicado"<sup>4</sup> regime. They are being denied proper medical care and stripped of their right to a fair defense. The political pris-

oners are often punished by being put in standing and isolation cells, exacerbating their already dire circumstances. Such conditions, described by the political prisoners as torture, represent a gross violation of human rights<sup>5</sup>, which has been reiterated by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus in their latest 2023 report. Furthermore, the relatives and isolation cells, exacerbating their already dire circumstances. Such conditions, described by the political prisoners as torture, represent a gross violation of human rights<sup>5</sup>, which has been reiterated by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus in their latest 2023 report. Furthermore, the relatives of these prisoners suffer from a lack of information regarding their well-being, enduring months of uncertainty and distress. It is important to note that numerous prisoners also grapple with severe illnesses whilst being unjustly detained.

The Belarusian National Youth Council "RADA" team has been forced into exile and cannot safely return to Belarus. Disturbingly, during this time, family members of the RADA activists have also been arrested and persecuted. In the face of these adversities, it is commendable that RADA remains steadfast in its commitment to promoting the values of democracy and human rights.

The European Youth Forum recognizes the Belarusian democratic youth's courageous efforts in pursuing a democratic society founded on the principles of the rule of law and respect for human rights. In particular, we commend the explicit advocacy actions taken by RADA, including "Resolution on combating shrinking space with expanding opportunities for youth organizations, national youth councils, and international non-governmental youth organizations"<sup>6</sup>, "Resolution on the abolition of death penalty measures in Belarus"<sup>7</sup> and "Motion

1 <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/b/469539.pdf>

2 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230717IPRO3019/belarus-meps-alarmed-that-russia-is-suffocating-its-neighbour-s-identity>

3 <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en>

4 Incommunicado detention means that the detainee cannot communicate with anyone other than his or her captors and perhaps his co-detainees. In other words, an 'incommunicado detainee' is permitted no contact with the world outside the place of detention or incarceration. Some commentators imply that detention is not completely incommunicado if the detainee has some direct contact with truly independent judicial authorities. See Nigel Rodley, *Treatment of Prisoners under International Law* 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 1999), p.334.

5 <https://tinyurl.com/crhhuaja>

6 [https://www.youthforum.org/files/0120-19\\_COMEMII-19\\_Resolution\\_combatting\\_shrinking\\_space\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.youthforum.org/files/0120-19_COMEMII-19_Resolution_combatting_shrinking_space_FINAL.pdf)

7 [https://www.youthforum.org/files/0094-20\\_Resolution\\_deathpenalty\\_Belarus\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.youthforum.org/files/0094-20_Resolution_deathpenalty_Belarus_FINAL.pdf)

on non-discrimination of young Belarusian activists and support for democratic principles in Europe"<sup>8</sup>. These initiatives exemplify the resilience and determination of the Belarusian youth in promoting human rights, combating oppression, and advancing democratic principles.

The European Youth Forum stands in solidarity with RADA and pledges to support their ongoing advocacy efforts. In light of these acknowledgments, the Council of Members reaffirms its commitment to collaborating with RADA and its member organizations to amplify their voices, advocate for their causes, and ensure that their work receives the international recognition it deserves.

Furthermore, it is imperative to reiterate our recognition that the Belarusian people do not support the whole-scale invasion and should not be associated with the Belarusian regime solely based on their nationality. The illegitimate regime's actions should not be misconstrued as a reflection of the beliefs and aspirations of the majority of the Belarusian population. Associating the Belarusian people with the regime undermines the fundamental principles of justice and fairness and perpetuates discrimination and hostility towards individuals of Belarusian nationality. It is crucial to distinguish between the oppressive illegitimate regime and the aspirations of the democratically-oriented Belarusian people, who strive for democracy, human rights, and a peaceful future.

**In the light of the abovementioned, we, the members of the European Youth Forum:**

- Stand in solidarity with the people of Belarus as they seek a future based on the rule of law, respect for human rights, and an accountable, democratic government.
- Reiterate our strong desire to see the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners held by the illegitimate Lukashenko regime.
- Firmly emphasize that unfair, unjust elections were held in Belarus in 2020. The Belarusian regime has lost its legitimacy and representation of the Belarusian people and must not be

recognized by European or any other democratic countries in the World. New elections should take place in accordance with international standards.

- Advocate for including youth representatives from Belarus in international forums, conferences, and dialogues, and by ensuring their access to funding, to ensure their voices are heard and their perspectives are taken into account in discussions.
- Ensure access to justice via the establishment of independent investigations procedures and fair redress mechanisms, commit to promoting accountability for perpetrators of youth rights violations in Belarus and raising the costs associated with their abuses, including by imposing visa restrictions and other forms of sanctions.
- Urge the **European Parliament**, and the **European Commission** and the **Council of the European Union** to reiterate the discernment of Belarusian democratic civil society from the illegitimate regime in Belarus.
- Call on **European Union** Member States to exert all possible political pressure on the Belarusian regime, through inter alia the imposition of visa restrictions and other targeted sanctions on individuals responsible for human rights violations in Belarus, in line with international law obligations and ensuring no harm comes to civilians or civic spaces through such sanctions, demanding the immediate and unconditional release of Belarusian political prisoners.
- Call on the **newly established UN Youth Office** **UN Youth Envoy** and the **UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus**, to consult with representatives of Belarusian independent and democratic youth NGOs and develop an advocacy plan for the rights of young political prisoners in Belarus.
- Call upon the Advisory Council of Youth of the Council of Europe to organize bilateral meetings with representatives of Belarusian independent and democratic youth NGOs and

8 <https://www.youthforum.org/files/220520-M-NON-DISCRIMINATION-OF-YOUNG-BELARUSIAN-ACTIVISTS-AND-SUPPORT-FOR-DEMOCRATIC-PRINCIPLES-IN-EUROPE.pdf>

develop an advocacy plan for the rights of young political prisoners in Belarus.

- Call on the international community, national governments, NGOs, and civil society organizations to provide support and resources for the rehabilitation and reintegration of political prisoners upon their release. This should include access to gender-sensitive, trauma-informed and accessible medical and psychological support, vocational training, educational opportunities, and assistance in rebuilding their lives and careers. Emphasize the importance of ensuring their physical and mental well-being, as well as their successful reintegration into society.
- Urge international organizations, such as the European Union Member States, the United Nations, and the Council of Europe, to increase the monitoring and reporting of human rights abuses in Belarus, particularly focusing on the situation of young people and political prisoners.





Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



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