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P6_TA(2006)0137

Elections in Belarus

European Parliament resolution on the situation in Belarus after the presidential elections of 19 March 2006

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Belarus, in particular that of 16 February 2006 ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the US Congress' resolution 'expressing support for the efforts of the people of the Republic of Belarus to establish a full democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and urging the Government of Belarus to conduct a free and fair presidential election on March 19, 2006', passed on 8 March 2006,
 - having regard to the preliminary election assessment statement of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) of 20 March 2006 (OSCE),
 - having regard to the statement of the EU High Representative for the CFSP of 20 March 2006 on the conduct of the presidential elections in Belarus,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting of 20 March 2006,
 - having regard to the statement of its ad hoc delegation to the Belarus presidential elections of 20 March 2006,
 - having regard to Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Belarus presidential elections took place on 19 March 2006,
- B. whereas President Lukashenko extended his new term of office through a constitutional referendum which did not meet international democratic standards and the results of which have not been recognised by the international democratic community,
- C. whereas the Belarus authorities conducted the elections in a climate of fear by repeatedly harassing and arresting prominent opposition leaders and members of student and minority organisations, including religious and community leaders, journalists, campaign activists and members of pro-democracy political parties,
- D. whereas the elections took place in an atmosphere of isolation with reinforced external border controls and the authorities suppressed freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of the media and freedom of demonstration in the run-up to, and after, the elections,
- E. whereas early voting was non-transparent and state employees, the elderly and students were increasingly pressured, intimidated and threatened with retribution such as loss of employment, loss of pensions and expulsion from universities,
- F. F whereas the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission to the presidential elections in Belarus concluded that those elections failed to meet international democratic standards; whereas the European Council, the Council of Europe, the United States and most other international institutions and governments also concluded that the elections were fundamentally flawed,
- G. whereas during the five days following the elections the opposition forces staged continued demonstrations in the main square of Minsk to protest against the fraudulent way in which the elections had been held, despite threats by President Lukashenko to 'wring the necks' of anyone who tried to seize power through popular protests after the result of the elections and hints of severe punishment for those arrested during such protests, including the death penalty,

⁽¹⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2006)0066.

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- H. whereas in the early hours of 25 March 2006 the police brutally stormed the tent camp set up by young people and students in the centre of Minsk and arrested hundreds of protesters,
- I. whereas the demonstrators, foreign sympathisers and journalists present at the rallies have been defamed and tried, without due respect for the right to defence, under allegations of provoking illegal rallies and vandalism; whereas on 27 March 2006 Belarusian courts handed down jail terms of up to 15 days to the protesters who had been arrested for participating in an unauthorised demonstration; whereas politically motivated investigations have been launched against the opposition leaders, including Aleksandr Milinkievič, the main presidential candidate for the opposition,
1. Strongly condemns the failed presidential elections in Belarus and points out that the Lukashenko regime lacks all democratic legitimacy and continues as the last dictatorship in Europe;
 2. Denounces the presidential elections as not having met the required international standards of free, fair, equal, accountable and transparent elections; considers therefore that, by implication, President Lukashenko cannot be recognised as the legitimate President of Belarus and that the presidential elections should be repeated in compliance with international democratic standards;
 3. Expresses its solidarity with Aleksandr Milinkievič and the United Democratic forces, as well as Aleksandr Kozulin and all Belarusian citizens who strive for an independent, open and democratic Belarus based on the rule of law;
 4. Is impressed by the mass demonstrations against the non-democratic and sham nature of the elections, showing the desire of a large part of society to restore true democratic rights and political freedom to their country, thus revealing a huge democratic potential in Belarus;
 5. Strongly condemns the violence and the arbitrary arrests exercised by the Belarusian regime against the thousands of people who found the courage to protest against the rigging of the presidential elections and the violation of the fundamental rights of the Belarusian people;
 6. Calls on the Commission and the Council and the international community as a whole to increase their support for the Belarusian people and substantially to increase pressure on the Belarusian regime to end the dictatorial oppression of its people, to release all those detained immediately, to annul all judgments against peaceful demonstrators and to hold new, democratic elections as soon as possible;
 7. Demands that the Belarus government put an end to the beating and ill-treatment of political prisoners and conduct a transparent investigation into the abusive use of force by police and security forces against demonstrators;
 8. Demands that the Belarus authorities immediately make public the names of all persons arrested, their whereabouts and the accusations made against them; stresses that those authorities have an obligation to guarantee the right of all arrested persons to consult a private lawyer, meet with members of their families and have access to information;
 9. Condemns the Belarus authorities for not allowing certain foreign journalists to enter Belarus to observe the elections;
 10. Condemns the Belarus authorities for not allowing delegations from Parliament and the national parliaments of the Member States to observe the elections and for expelling observers from Denmark, Georgia, Germany, Ukraine and Poland, as well as from the OSCE;
 11. Welcomes the decision of the Council to add President Lukashenko to the visa ban list but calls on it and the Commission to expand that list to include representatives of the Belarus local, regional, national and academic authorities who were involved in breaching the human rights and political freedoms of Belarusian citizens during and after the electoral campaign;

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12. Calls on the Commission and the Council to work towards the freezing of the assets of the Belarusian authorities abroad, restrictive measures against companies directly and personally linked to senior officials of the regime and the freezing of the personal assets of President Lukashenko and his close advisors;
 13. Calls on the Commission and the Council to make proposals to put further pressure on President Lukashenko's regime in international organisations; demands that a complete package of concrete and direct 'smart' sanctions — severely affecting the perpetrators of oppression without adding any further suffering to the citizens of Belarus — be brought forward;
 14. Calls on the Commission and the Council to direct all forms of financial support to citizens' initiatives, non-governmental organisations and small and medium-sized enterprises which are not linked to the government;
 15. Calls on the Commission to revise its external policy towards Belarus and to make proposals as to how democracy, the rule of law and human rights can be promoted; stresses that the Commission's problems in adequately supporting Belarusian civil society in the run-up to the elections is a further indication of the urgent need to set up an effective financial and administrative mechanism to promote democracy;
 16. Calls on the Commission and Council to create a visa facilitation regime for the benefit of the civil society of Belarus;
 17. Calls on the Commission and the Council to support independent journalists and strengthen TV, internet, printed media and radio broadcasting programmes for Belarus in order to help Belarusian citizens obtain impartial and accurate information about their country and the world;
 18. Calls on the Commission and the Council to fund additional educational exchange programmes for Belarusian young people who have been expelled from their universities for political reasons;
 19. Is appalled by the positive reactions of the Russian State Duma and the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, to the conduct of the presidential elections in Belarus and their outcome; takes the view that the effectiveness of EU policies towards Belarus is undermined by the irresponsible attitude of the Moscow authorities, who are lending decisive support to the last dictatorship in Europe; calls on the Council and the Commission urgently to raise the issue of Belarus with the Russian authorities so as to define a common responsibility for bringing about concrete democratic changes in that country and stop the political repression and human rights violations; is of the opinion that specific efforts to this end should be made in the framework of the Council of Europe and the OSCE as Russia — together with the Member States of the European Union — is a member of both organisations;
 20. Calls on the Member States represented in the G8 to place the current situation in Belarus on the agenda of the forthcoming summit this spring and to urge Russia to reverse its position on President Lukashenko and his regime and to use its close ties with Belarus to promote democracy and political reforms in that country;
 21. Calls on the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Member States to set up an international commission to investigate the disappearances of Yuri Zakharenko, Victor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovsky and Dmitry Zavadskiy;
 22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, the President and State Duma of Russia and the Belarus authorities.
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