

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TO SUPPORT **FREE BELARUS**

September 5, 2020

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

As civic society organizations, we watch with apprehension as the rights and freedoms of citizens of Belarus are being repressed. We consider the brutal suppression of protests following the August presidential elections (which the European Parliament did not recognize as legitimate) unacceptable. We believe it is vital that the European Union demands the arrangement of free elections and takes adequate measures aiming to prevent further violations of civil rights in Belarus.

We, the undersigned, therefore turn to you, the representatives of European citizens in the supreme body of European cooperation, with the expectation that you will personally call for appropriate action.

We consider the following measures essential:

1. Adhering to the decision of the European Union to not recognize the results of the Belarusian elections. Based on Article 83 of the Belarusian constitution the inauguration of a new president should, at the latest, take place two months after his election. The date 9th of October 2020 should be accepted as the latest term of presidential legitimacy of Alexandr Lukašenka.
2. Allocation of financial resources for local and international humanitarian organizations that operate in Belarus and offer medical and psychological aid. Also, financial support for the Belarusian civic society, independent media, human rights and volunteer initiatives, independent labor unions and an increase of financial resources for Belarusian students and for Belarusian scientific workers.
3. Simplification of visa acquisition, particularly for Belarussian citizens who face persecution for political reasons.
4. Introduction of sanctions directed against specific natural and legal persons (and their family members) that participated in the falsification of the elections or on the brutal repressions of the protests. We commend that the member states of the EU are already working on forming a sanction list against those who bear personal responsibility for the violence against Belarusian citizens. We believe that sanctions imposed by the EU should aim to punish most swiftly and also discourage to the highest degree the parties involved in treading upon fundamental rights and freedoms on the European continent and on the borders of the EU. The speed with which the EU imposes sanctions is, in our view, also important for the image of the EU's capacity for action.
5. Tightening the control of resources provided to Belarus within the purview of foreign and development cooperation that are often misused by the regime and the close associates of A. Lukašenka – apart from humanitarian aid.
6. Preparing a clear plan for future economic cooperation with Belarus after the fall of Lukašenka's regime.

As free countries we have the full right to decide who is our business partner. Mutually beneficial trade with an undemocratic regime economically strengthens and reinforces it. Even though sanctions are harmful to us as well, it is immoral to shut our eyes because of it. Nonetheless the future holds the prospect of a

cooperation of two democratic partners. We can support the current efforts of the Belarusian men and women by introducing this new vision of economic cooperation.

We appreciate the solidarity shown to the Belarusian civic society in the European parliament. Even so, we take the liberty to make an appeal to you, the elected representatives of the citizens in the European Parliament, to ensure that the measures taken are not only declaratory, but as effective as possible. The speed and efficacy of the measures taken are, in our view, a crucial message about the EU's capacity for action in the field of protecting human rights.

We believe that the upcoming plenary session of the European Parliament will be very befitting for these steps.

Respectfully,

