

## **P6\_TA(2004)0045**

### **Result of the referendum and elections in Belarus**

#### **European Parliament resolution on the political situation in Belarus after the parliamentary elections and referendum of 17 October 2004**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Belarus, in particular its resolution of 16 September 2004<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the opinion on the referendum of 17 October 2004 in Belarus adopted by the 60th Plenary Session of the Venice Commission on 8-9 October 2004,
- having regard, in particular, to its resolution of 24 October 1996 on the situation in Belarus<sup>2</sup>, in which it decided that no further steps would be taken towards ratification of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with that country until clear signals had been given by the Belarussian authorities of their intention fully to respect basic democratic and human rights,
- having regard, in particular, to its resolution of 5 July 2001 on Belarus<sup>3</sup>, adopted prior to the 2001 presidential elections, and to the reports of the Parliamentary Troika (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and European Parliament) published after the 2000 general election (30 January 2001) and the 2001 presidential election (4 October 2001),
- having regard, in particular, to its resolution of 11 February 2003 on relations between the European Union and Belarus: towards a future partnership<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to the parliamentary elections and the constitutional referendum which took place in Belarus on 17 October 2004,
- having regard to the statement of preliminary findings and conclusions by the International Election Observation Mission for the parliamentary elections in Belarus,
- having regard to the declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the parliamentary elections and the referendum of 17 October 2004 in Belarus,
- having regard to the declaration by the Head of the OSCE Office in Minsk on the attacks on opposition politicians in Minsk, which took place on 19 October 2004,

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P6\_TA(2004)0011.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 347, 18.11.1996, p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 65 E, 14.3.2002, p. 373.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 43 E, 19.2.2004, p. 60.

- having regard to the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, which was signed by the President of the USA on 20 October 2004,
  - having regard to Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the International Election Observation Mission for the parliamentary elections in Belarus has come to the conclusion that the Belarussian authorities failed to ensure the fundamental conditions necessary for the will of the people to serve as a basis for the authority of the government and that democratic principles were largely disregarded by the authorities,
  - B. whereas the elections were marred by active exclusion and de-registering of opposition candidates, aggressive repressive actions against opposition candidates, their families and campaign workers, detention of campaign workers and seizure of opposition campaign material, strongly biased media attention, pressure on certain groups of voters and a lack of transparency at the majority of the polling stations,
  - C. whereas representatives of the opposition were excluded from the electoral committees, and local and international observers were often prevented from fully observing the voting process and were in some cases refused access to the polling stations,
  - D. whereas by simultaneously holding a constitutional referendum President Lukashenko clearly aimed to overshadow the parliamentary elections,
  - E. whereas the question asked in the constitutional referendum in Belarus was improperly formulated, violating Articles 22, 83 and 113 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, as well as Article 112 of the Electoral Law of the Republic of Belarus,
  - F. whereas the lack of a limit on the term of office of the President of Belarus breaks the democratic principle of a balance of power,
  - G. whereas during the days following the elections peaceful demonstrations by the opposition were violently halted by the Belarussian riot police and whereas the leader of the United Civic Party, Anatoly Lebedko, was hospitalised after having been beaten up in a public restaurant,
  - H. whereas the leader of the Belarussian Social Democratic Party, Mikalai Statkevich, and the Malady Front leader, Pavel Severinets, were arrested, together with about 40 other persons, after these demonstrations and detained; whereas several journalists were prevented from reporting news of the demonstration and arrested but released after identification,
  - I. whereas the young journalist Vieronika Cherkasova, working for the trade union newspaper “Salidarnasc”, was found murdered in her flat in unclear circumstances,
  - J. whereas these elections and the climate of fear and abuse in which they were conducted have rendered yet more remote the likelihood that Belarus can integrate into Europe's democratic structures and institutions,

- K. regretting that the Russian Government recognised the outcome of the elections without reservation,
1. Stresses that the parliamentary elections and referendum of 17 October 2004 failed to meet international standards for democratic elections and therefore cannot be considered free and fair;
  2. Believes that the parliament elected in Belarus does not possess a true democratic mandate to represent the Belarussian people;
  3. Does not recognise the legitimacy of the referendum;
  4. Does not believe that President Aleksander Lukashenko has a constitutional basis on which to stand as a candidate in the elections of 2006;
  5. Strongly condemns the violent attacks committed by the Belarussian regime against students, leading opposition figures and journalists following peaceful political demonstrations in Minsk; urges the Belarussian authorities to immediately release all those who were detained after these demonstrations;
  6. Expresses its condolences to the family of Vieronika Cherkasova, paying tribute to an important personality who encouraged freedom of information; urges the Belarussian authorities to investigate this crime seriously and prosecute the murderer and the instigators of this act;
  7. Is of the opinion that the way in which these elections and the referendum were conducted and the subsequent violent attacks on political opponents of the regime are the expression of a further step towards the establishment by President Lukashenko of an almost dictatorial regime in Belarus;
  8. Expresses its solidarity with all Belarussians who strive for an independent, democratic Belarus based on the rule of law, as a member of the European community of nations;
  9. Expresses its conviction that the policy of the European Union towards Belarus after the referendum and the elections must be urgently reviewed in the light of these events and that appropriate changes must be implemented;
  10. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the governments of the Member States to continue and wherever possible to reinforce their policy of isolation of President Lukashenko and the members of his regime until clear steps are taken which demonstrate their willingness to respect democratic values and the rule of law;
  11. Urges the Commission, the Council and the governments of the Member States to draw up an Action Plan for further ways to increase - together with other democratic countries and international institutions - support for all remaining democratic forces in Belarus and to assist more effectively those people in Belarussian civil society working for democratic change in Belarus, by reconsidering the EU financial instruments for that country;
  12. Calls, in particular, on the Commission to urgently investigate the possibility of supporting neutral broadcasting to the citizens of Belarus and the creation of a special

educational programme which would grant scholarships for young people and students from Belarus who would like to study in the European Union, and financial support for academic institutions that are prepared to host students from Belarus;

13. Calls on the Council to decide on a set of targeted sanctions against members of the Belarussian regime, including an expansion of the visa prohibition regulation for the authorities of Belarus, including those responsible for the serious election violations, together with increased material support through humanitarian and economic aid to the municipalities which oppose the regime;
14. Calls on the Presidency-in-Office to include the situation in Belarus on the agenda for the forthcoming EU-Russia summit on 11 November 2004 in The Hague, in the light of the close relations between the two countries ;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Governments and Parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of Belarus and the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and of the Council of Europe.