

*Brussels and Minsk, 25 June 2020*

**Joint Statement of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership  
Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) and the Coordinating Committee of the  
Belarusian National Platform of the EaP CSF**

on

**Mass repressions in the Belarus presidential election campaign**

We, the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) and the Coordinating Committee of the Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (BNP EaP CSF), strongly condemn the actions of the Belarusian authorities during the ongoing presidential campaign in the Republic of Belarus, as detailed in the following sources:

- Reports of the 'Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections' independent election monitoring campaign, conducted by the Viasna Human Rights Centre and the Belarusian Helsinki Committee (both member organisations of the BNP EaP CSF);<sup>1</sup>
- Appeals of the above-mentioned organisations to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and a number of UN special rapporteurs;<sup>2</sup>
- Joint statement by Belarusian human rights organisations demanding the release of Viktor Babaryka.<sup>3</sup>

We consider the following actions by the Belarusian authorities to represent gross violations of national and international law, democratic principles and human rights:

- **The arrest, detention and criminal prosecution of potential presidential candidate, Viktor Babaryka, as well as the leader of his initiative group, Eduard Babaryka.** The two committees consider the arrest of Viktor and Eduard Babaryka to be arbitrary and illegal, since they were deprived of the constitutional right for timely legal assistance, and the reason for their detention was politically motivated. We consider the political persecution of his friends, former colleagues and work partners at Belgazprombank, as well as the introduction of an interim administration in Belgazprombank by the Belarusian authorities, as constituting political and psychological pressure on a potential election candidate.
- **The arrest, detention and persecution of Siarhiej Cichanoŭski, head of the initiative group to nominate Sviatlana Cichanoŭskajaa for the presidency,**

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<sup>1</sup> [Analytical weekly report on the results of observation: May 8-17, 2020](#); [Analytical report on the results of observation for registration of initiative groups for the nomination of presidential candidates](#); [Analytical report on monitoring the formation of territorial election commissions](#); [Analytical weekly report on the results of observation: May 25-31, 2020](#); [Analytical weekly report on the results of observation: June 1-7, 2020](#); [Analytical weekly report on the results of observation: June 8-14, 2020](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Violence, threats, detentions: human rights defenders appealed to the UN special rapporteurs](#); [Human rights defenders appealed to special rapporteurs about violations of the rights of Viktor Babaryka and hindering the work of lawyers](#).

<sup>3</sup> [We demand the immediate release of Viktor Babaryka and the detained members of his initiative group](#).

**as well as other members of this initiative group.** We believe that the detention of Siarhiej Cichanoŭski and his associates occurred in a situation of clear provocation by law enforcement officials. We draw particular attention to Sviatlana Cichanoŭskaja's claim that psychological pressure was exerted upon her by unknown persons, and that internal affairs bodies refused to investigate these facts.

- **The administrative arrests of Paviel Sieviaryniec, Mikola Statkievič and other opposition politicians and activists for participating in legal pickets to collect signatures for candidates for the presidency of Belarus.** According to Belarusian human rights organisations, from 6 May 6 to 18 June 2020, 97 people were placed under politically-motivated administrative arrest for expressing their opinion, and received a total of 1246 days in prison. According to the same source, 105 people received fines totalling some 90,000 BYN (33,000 EUR).<sup>4</sup> We pay particular attention to the poor living conditions of prisoners in temporary detention facilities, which we consider to be cruel, inhuman and degrading.
- **The crackdown on peaceful street actions demonstrating solidarity with detainees and repressed individuals, leading to the forcible and cruel detention of their participants.** On 19 June 2020, around 270 reports on administrative violations were drawn up against citizens for allegedly violating the procedure for organising or conducting public events, and for disobeying a legitimate demand by an official.<sup>5</sup> According to the Viasna Human Rights Centre, some 30 people were detained on 20 June for participating in peaceful demonstrations of solidarity in Belarus.<sup>6</sup>
- **The detention of journalists performing their professional duties during coverage of peaceful street demonstrations.** According to the Belarusian Association of Journalists, on 19 June 2020, thirteen media representatives were forcibly detained in Belarus.<sup>7</sup> On 20 June, two journalists from the 'First Region' website were forcibly detained during coverage of a peaceful protest in Gantsevichi, having been accused of disobeying a legitimate demand by an official.<sup>8</sup>
- **Pressure on journalists and media during the election campaign.** From 1 May to 21 June 2020, two journalists from the independent Belsat television channel, Zmicier Łupač and Michaś Aršynski, were sentenced to 10 and 21 days of administrative arrest, respectively. A further eleven journalists of this channel were fined 10,179 BYN (3,800 EUR) for working without accreditation and 22 pieces of equipment were confiscated.<sup>9</sup> In a separate development, the head of the Belarusian Bureau of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty received a warning from the Minister of Information of Belarus, threatening to deprive the Bureau of accreditation, due to the way in which its editorial staff covers events in the country.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [We demand the immediate release of Viktor Babaryka and the detained members of his initiative group.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [The Interior Ministry told how many people were detained on Friday at pickets and rallies of solidarity.](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Detentions in Belarus continue on June 20 and 21 \(updated\).](#)

<sup>7</sup> [CIS journalists were detained across the country.](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Gantsevichi journalists will be tried for disobedience. Editor's statement.](#)

<sup>9</sup> Information received by the BNP EAP CSF Secretariat from the official representative of Belsat TV channel in Belarus, Iryna Slaunikava.

<sup>10</sup> [Head of Radio Liberty: the police treated our journalists as criminals.](#)

We believe that the facts above represent politically motivated repressions against democracy and its mechanisms. Under the conditions created by the Belarusian authorities, elections cannot be held in a transparent and democratic way.

**We urge the Belarusian authorities to:**

- Take heed of recent statements by the European External Action Service,<sup>11</sup> members of the European Parliament,<sup>12</sup> and Belarusian human rights organisations;<sup>13</sup>
- Release all politicians, members of initiative groups, and political activists arbitrarily detained during the election campaign immediately;
- Cease further persecution and unlawful interference in the election;
- Ensure a democratic, transparent and open electoral process.

**We urge the international community to:**

- Put pressure on the Belarusian authorities to end the persecution and repression of citizens participating in the presidential election and demanding democracy and the rule of law by peaceful, constitutional means;
- Show solidarity with detained politicians, members of initiative groups, activists and politically repressed citizens.

**We urge citizens of Belarus, civil society, political parties, and non-governmental organisations to:**

- Show solidarity with the repressed;
- Unite in promoting their civic position to the authorities;
- Demand truly democratic elections.

***Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership  
Civil Society Forum***

***Members of the Coordinating Committee of the Belarusian National Platform  
of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum***

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<sup>11</sup> [Belarus: Statement by the Spokesperson of the European External Action Service on the recent developments.](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Statement on Belarus – Changes in Belarus are truly needed.](#)

<sup>13</sup> [We demand the immediate release of Viktor Babaryka and the detained members of his initiative group.](#)