



EaP CSF Steering Committee statement on the Georgian-Belarusian security cooperation agreement

Brussels, 31 August 2021

The EaP CSF Steering Committee is deeply concerned by the [“Agreement on Cooperation between the State Security Committee of the Republic of Belarus and the State Security Service of Georgia”](#), signed in 2016, which entered into force on 1 August 2021. By enforcing the agreement, the Georgian authorities would effectively assist the unlawful regime of Aliaksander Lukashenka in persecuting its opponents on trumped-up charges of terrorism, disclosing state secrets or attempting to overthrow the constitutional order based on manipulation of Belarusian domestic law by the regime. Many Belarusians have been seeking shelter in Georgia - a partner country that is considered to be adhering to its Eastern Partnership and AA/DCFTA obligations and seeking EU membership.

The fraudulent presidential election in August 2020 sparked a wave of peaceful protests across Belarus to which the regime of Aliaksander Lukashenka responded with unprecedented repression, including political persecution, arbitrary detentions, abductions, physical violence and torture. Ever since, the country has faced repeated [attacks against civil society](#) activists and organisations, human rights defenders, and journalists. The regime’s decision to [suspend Belarus’ participation in the Eastern Partnership](#) and the Readmission Agreement paves the way for a further deterioration of the situation, evidenced by the recent large-scale [liquidation of civil society](#).

International human rights organisations have recognised more than 600 people as political prisoners. All presidential candidates, as well as many of their relatives, friends and colleagues, are in prisons or in exile. As a result of the violent crackdown led by Belarusian authorities, law enforcement officers have killed at least 10 people. So far, there has been no investigation into these violations and the perpetrators have not faced any charges.

As the violence spirals, activists resisting the usurpation of power are also persecuted beyond Belarusian borders, some of them losing their lives under suspicious circumstances. To seize political opponents of the Belarusian regime, the authorities committed an [act of air piracy](#) by forcing an international Ryanair flight en route from Athens to Vilnius to land. Between 40,000 and 150,000 Belarusian citizens (exact figures are not published by official sources in Belarus) were forced to leave the country only in the last year, fleeing political persecution. Many of them are now residing in Georgia.

Under these circumstances, it is impossible to claim that the regime of Aliaksander Lukashenka cares to follow the fundamental principles of human rights and the rule of law, nor does it adhere to the Constitution. In response to widespread criticism, A. Lukashenka publicly stated that currently, he was "not up to the laws". The actions of Belarusian authorities and law enforcement agencies, including the KGB, have violated dozens of articles of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus in the course of the last year and these violations went unpunished. Due to these unlawful activities and the brutal treatment of their opponents,

Aliaksander Lukashenka himself as well as the heads of the security agencies of the Republic of Belarus, including KGB Chairman Ivan Tertel, are listed on the EU, US and other countries' targeted sanction lists.

For the reasons mentioned above, we believe that validating any agreement on cooperation with the criminal regime that is repressing its citizens and does not adhere to the country's Constitution is both inappropriate and dangerous.

We believe that by any potential future cooperation with the toxic political regime of A. Lukashenka and his punitive bodies, or by enforcing existing agreements like the one mentioned above, the Georgian authorities are running the risk of being discredited in the eyes of their own citizens and the international partners. Moreover, they would directly contribute to intensifying the level of repression experienced by the citizens of Belarus.

The Georgian authorities should refrain from providing any personal information on the opponents of the Lukashenka regime who found temporary refuge in Georgia. Such requests should be rejected, given the fact that Lukashenka's regime is deliberately changing Belarusian legislation and law enforcement practice and procedures to charge critics and opponents of the regime of attempting to overthrow the constitutional order, terrorism and disclosing state secrets.

We call on the Government of Georgia, as well as the State Security Service of Georgia:

- To show goodwill and to publicly terminate or freeze the [Agreement on Cooperation between the State Security Committee of the Republic of Belarus and the State Security Service of Georgia](#) and other intergovernmental agreements with the Belarusian regime that can lead to the persecution of its opponents abroad or to the handing over of personal data;
- To publicly declare the inadmissibility of cooperation with the security services of the Republic of Belarus under the given circumstances until the end of the political crisis in the country;
- To take all necessary measures to ensure the security of the citizens of Belarus residing on the territory of Georgia, following the example of the EU countries - namely Lithuania and Poland - and provide assistance to those who are opposing the illegitimate dictatorial regime of A. Lukashenka;
- To coordinate measures and actions in support of Belarusian citizens seeking shelter from the unlawful regime with partners from the EU and the United States.

We call on the EU institutions and member states to:

- Raise the issue of termination of the [Agreement on Cooperation between the State Security Committee of the Republic of Belarus and the State Security Service of Georgia](#) with the Georgian government;
- Publicly express their condemnation of the commencement of the [Agreement on Cooperation between the State Security Committee of the Republic of Belarus and the State Security Service of Georgia](#);



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- To discuss the situation of Belarusian citizens seeking shelter from the regime in Georgia with the Georgian government, especially the aspect of their personal data protection and personal security.

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