

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 441

Condemning the authoritarian repression of the Belarusian democracy movement by the Lukashenka regime and calling for the release of all political prisoners as well as free and fair elections.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 24, 2023

Mr. KEATING (for himself, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Ms. KAPTUR, and Mr. WILSON of South Carolina) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Condemning the authoritarian repression of the Belarusian democracy movement by the Lukashenka regime and calling for the release of all political prisoners as well as free and fair elections.

Whereas the Republic of Belarus is an authoritarian state currently under the rule of Alyaksandr Lukashenka, who maintains tight control over military and security forces;

Whereas Freedom House has rated Belarus 8 on a scale of 100, classifying the country as “not free” and stating that “Belarus is an authoritarian state in which elections are openly rigged and civil liberties are severely restricted”;

Whereas the Republic of Belarus held a Presidential election on August 9, 2020, that was found neither free nor fair by international observation groups;

Whereas the August 2020 Presidential election took place without appropriate observation from local independent groups and international delegations;

Whereas, since the Presidential election, Belarusians have demonstrated their strong desire and commitment to a democratic future by organizing peaceful protests in Minsk, across the country, and around the world;

Whereas women play a leading role in the Belarusian democratic movement as both opposition leaders and organizers of peaceful demonstrations;

Whereas Belarus' democratic opposition, led by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, and Belarusian civil society have called for the resignation of Alyaksandr Lukashenka, as well as the peaceful transition of power, the organization of new, free, and fair elections, and the release of all political prisoners;

Whereas Belarusian opposition leaders have faced intimidation, harassment, and detention, including direct threats leading to the forced exile of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya in Lithuania as well as the kidnapping and imprisonment of countless opposition leaders and activists;

Whereas, since the 2020 election, Belarusian authorities have arbitrarily detained and brutally assaulted tens of thousands of peaceful protesters, journalists, and opposition figures, of which 1,516 remain in detention;

Whereas human rights groups have documented hundreds of horrific accounts of torture, including sexual violence and rape, along with other instances of ill-treatment and ex-

cessive force used against detainees arrested for peaceful protest;

Whereas human rights groups have also documented specific acts of violence intended to focus on female detainees, including restricting access to hygiene products and sanitary pads;

Whereas the Lukashenka regime has penalized the celebration of Belarusian culture and cracked down on the use of Belarusian language in media, books, and schools;

Whereas thousands of Belarusians have fled to neighboring countries seeking political asylum;

Whereas independent journalists and the free media in Belarus have faced intimidation, violence, mass arrests, and prosecution, with many foreign journalists being stripped of their accreditation;

Whereas Belarusian blogger and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist Ihar Losik was unlawfully arrested in June 2020 and has been sentenced to 15 years in a maximum security prison on charges which represent a violation of the rule of law and the tenets of a free press, and his wife has also been arrested and sentenced unlawfully on the unjust charge of facilitating extremist activity;

Whereas a transatlantic community of legislators has emerged in support of uplifting the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people;

Whereas in response to an increase in antidemocratic policies by the Lukashenka regime, the United States has enacted a series of punitive measures against Belarus;

Whereas the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Canada have enacted sanctions and other punitive measures against dozens of individuals and enti-

ties found responsible for the perpetration of violence against peaceful demonstrators, opposition members, and journalists, among others;

Whereas Executive Order 14038 issued on August 9, 2021, which expanded the scope of Executive Order 13405, found that “the Belarusian regime’s harmful activities and long-standing abuses aimed at suppressing democracy and the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Belarus—including illicit and oppressive activities stemming from the August 9, 2020, fraudulent Belarusian presidential election and its aftermath, such as the elimination of political opposition and civil society organizations and the regime’s disruption and endangering of international civil air travel—constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States”;

Whereas, as of March 2023, the United States Government has designated 94 individuals, 69 entities, and 3 aircrafts pursuant to Executive Orders 13405 and 14038 including Alyaksandr Lukashenka, other Government officials, and State-owned companies and has utilized other mechanisms such as the Global Magnitsky Sanctions Program to impose punitive measures on Belarusians who commit human rights violations;

Whereas, on April 8, 2022, President Biden signed the Suspending Normal Trade Relations with Russia and Belarus Act (Public Law 117–110) and further restricted exports to Belarus under the Export Administration Regulations;

Whereas, since the fraudulent August 2020 Presidential election, the Belarusian economy has been effectively isolated

from the global market as punishment for their domestic human rights abuses;

Whereas international advocacy, including by cohost Latvia, succeeded in preventing the illegitimate Government of Belarus from hosting the 2021 Ice Hockey World Championship;

Whereas Alyaksandr Lukashenka continues to undermine the sovereignty and independence of Belarus through efforts to integrate Belarus into a so-called “Union State” under the control of Russia;

Whereas Alyaksandr Lukashenka is complicit in Russia’s illegal war against Ukraine by allowing Belarusian territory to be used as a staging ground for Russian attacks into Ukraine;

Whereas Belarusian partisans have worked to undermine Russia’s attacks on Ukraine including by sabotaging Russian positions and bases in Belarus;

Whereas the House of Representatives passed the Belarus Democracy, Human Rights, and Sovereignty Act of 2020 with unanimous consent, sending a clear message of overwhelming, bipartisan support for the democratic movement in Belarus;

Whereas the House of Representatives passed H. Res. 124 in support of the people of Belarus and their democratic aspirations and condemning the election rigging and subsequent violent crackdowns on peaceful protesters by the illegitimate Lukashenka regime; and

Whereas the House Friends of Belarus Caucus continues to seek ways to support democracy in Belarus: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

1 (1) finds that the August 9, 2020, Presidential
2 election in Belarus was neither free nor fair and,
3 therefore, does not recognize the government-an-
4 nounced results or Alyaksandr Lukashenka as the
5 legitimate President of Belarus;

6 (2) calls for new free and fair elections under
7 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Eu-
8 rope observation;

9 (3) affirms that the people of Belarus have the
10 right to determine the future of Belarus without un-
11 welcome intervention from the Russian Federation
12 or any outside actors in violation of Belarusian inde-
13 pendence and sovereignty;

14 (4) condemns the human rights violations com-
15 mitted by Belarusian authorities, including against
16 peaceful demonstrators, civil society activists, opposi-
17 tion leaders, students, educators, employees at
18 State-owned enterprises, medical personnel, and
19 journalists;

20 (5) calls for the immediate release of all polit-
21 ical prisoners and those unlawfully detained in con-
22 nection with the peaceful demonstrations including
23 independent journalists;

24 (6) recognizes the sacrifices and bravery of the
25 Belarusian people to peacefully demand a free and

1 fair democratic process while enduring the State-
2 sponsored violence that followed the August 9, 2020,
3 election;

4 (7) calls on Alyaksandr Lukashenka and
5 Belarusian authorities to engage in an open and
6 constructive dialogue with the opposition members
7 and other stakeholders to bring about a peaceful
8 transition of power;

9 (8) calls for the protection of civil society actors
10 and members of the opposition against arbitrary ar-
11 rest and violence;

12 (9) recognizes the Coordination Council estab-
13 lished by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya as a legitimate
14 institution to participate in a dialogue on a peaceful
15 transition of power;

16 (10) urges continued cooperation among the
17 United States and its transatlantic allies and part-
18 ners to explore avenues in support of the democratic
19 movement in Belarus;

20 (11) calls for further targeted actions coordi-
21 nated between the United States, the European
22 Union, the United Kingdom, Canada, and other al-
23 lies and partners against Belarusian authorities who
24 committed human rights violations and engaged in
25 activities that resulted in the falsification of the Au-

1 gust 9, 2020, election results including on individ-
2 uals and entities who violate the fundamental free-
3 dom of the press, are involved in the harassment, as-
4 sault, jailing, or arrest of journalists or their fami-
5 lies as a result of their journalism or otherwise party
6 to or involved in the suppression of a free and open
7 press;

8 (12) calls on the administration to consider the
9 implications of sanctions on Belarusian entities
10 which may further the goals of Russian or Chinese
11 malign actors in Belarus;

12 (13) supports increasing funds available for for-
13 eign assistance to Belarusian civil society groups as
14 well as legal assistance for activists and independent
15 journalists, among others, as called for in the
16 Belarus Democracy, Human Rights, and Sovereignty
17 Act of 2020; and

18 (14) continues to support the aspirations of the
19 people of Belarus for democracy, human rights, and
20 the rule of law, and reaffirms that the fulfillment of
21 such aspirations is critical to ensuring the continued
22 strength of Belarusian sovereignty and territorial in-
23 tegrity.

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