



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1353 Vienna, 3 February 2022

EU Statement on the political prisoners in Belarus

1. The number of political prisoners in Belarus has now reached 1022 and continues to grow. This shameful milestone reflects the ongoing crackdown of the Lukashenka regime against the population of Belarus. In addition, many thousands of protestors have fled the country to avoid persecution.
2. In today's Belarus, the space for democratic political opposition and free and independent media activities has been drastically closed off. The Lukashenka regime continues detaining and imprisoning people in appalling conditions, exposing them to ill-treatment and torture, and having them condemned to long prison sentences in political trials conducted behind closed doors.
3. Legally defending political prisoners has become dangerous, with more than 40 lawyers reported to have their licenses revoked. Belarusian Human Rights organizations, i.e. the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, "Pravovaja Initsiativa" and "Viasna" have also been targeted by the authorities, thus making their work in Belarus nearly impossible.
4. Belarus must adhere to its international commitments and obligations within the OSCE and UN. The EU reiterates its demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, as well as their rehabilitation. The EU will continue to work for justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators, including through our support to the International Accountability Platform for Belarus.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.