



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

JOINT STATEMENT: ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FRAUDALENT  
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN BELARUS

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires Knut-Are Okstad at the Permanent Council,  
Vienna, 8 September 2023

Thank you, Mr Chair.

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the United Kingdom, Canada, Iceland, and my own country Norway. As we mark the three-year anniversary of the deeply flawed and fraudulent 2020 presidential election, I wish to reiterate our steadfast solidarity with the Belarusian people in the face of relentless, systematic repression, and our support for their hopes of a free and democratic future. The 2023 Moscow Mechanism report and its predecessor in 2020 both found compelling evidence of widespread, continued human rights violations against all parts of Belarusian society.

To quote briefly from Professor Ascencio’s report earlier this year: “so far, the Government of Belarus has not taken any steps to put an end to this situation, nor to provide effective remedies for the victims. On the contrary, the repressive policy has been steadily increasing over the past two years”. In July, the UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus described the current human rights situation as catastrophic, and only getting worse.

We have continuously called on the Belarusian regime to put an end to these egregious human rights violations against its own citizens, and to undertake the necessary free and fair elections for the Belarusian people to determine their own leaders and their own future.

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However, the regime has consistently ignored the recommendations of a range of independent experts, including the UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus, the UNCHR examination, the Moscow and Vienna Mechanisms, the International Civil Aviation Organisation's fact-finding report and the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Commission of Inquiry.

Three years on from the fraudulent elections, the regime is still relentless in brutally targeting its own citizens, systematically liquidating civil society organisations and clamping down on independent journalists, trade unions, human rights defenders and many ordinary people. There are now over 1,500 political prisoners in detention, many of whom are starved of contact with the outside world and subject to cruel and degrading treatment, including torture. We are deeply concerned by cases of deaths in custody and call upon the Belarusian authorities to respect their international human rights obligations and OSCE commitments, including providing access to appropriate medical treatment for those in detention.

Furthermore, the regime is facilitating human rights violations beyond its borders in Ukraine through the support it continues to provide to Russia's illegal invasion. Lukashenko has used Putin's war of aggression to increase his own illegal repression, violently suppressing peaceful anti-war protests and arresting anyone who openly opposes the war.

We will continue to hold the Belarusian regime to account for their human rights violations and support to Russia's illegal war. This includes through targeted sanctions packages and support for accountability measures to ensure that those responsible will one day face justice. We welcome the ongoing work of the International Accountability Platform for Belarus and UN OHCHR in documenting and preserving evidence.

In conclusion, Mr Chair, we urge the Belarusian regime to reconsider the path their government is taking and to address the recommendations made in the Moscow

Mechanism reports of both 2020 and 2023. We urge the Belarusian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners. And we call on Belarus to respect their OSCE commitments on democracy and human rights and to engage in political dialogue. It is for the people of Belarus to determine their own future.

Thank you, Mr Chair.