

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SHOULD REACT IMMEDIATELY AND STRONGLY TO RIGGED PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND MASSIVE VIOLENCE OF SECURITY FORCES AGAINST PEACEFUL PROTESTORS IN BELARUS

Appeal by members of the Civic Solidarity Platform

10 August 2020

The undersigned organizations, members of the Civic Solidarity Platform, express their shock and outrage about the way the 9 August presidential elections in Belarus have been manipulated by the government.

We support peaceful protests of Belarusians against this flagrant violation of standards for the conduct of elections agreed in the OSCE. We strongly denounce disproportionate and excessive use of violence by security forces and mass detention of several thousand of protest participants across the country.

The weeks preceding the election day have been marred by systemic and systematic violations of fundamental rights and freedoms. This created no conditions for free and fair elections according to international standards. We have witnessed independent candidates illegally disqualified from running in elections. Several candidates, their supporters, and others questioning the current government policies were persecuted through penal and administrative means, and their freedom of expression was severely limited. According to Belarusian human rights organizations, [26 political prisoners](#) were held in detention in the run-up to the elections. Independent domestic observation of the elections has been thwarted under false pretexts, and many independent observers were illegally detained. International election observation, including by the OSCE, was blocked by the authorities. Media coverage was severely restricted.

On the election day, the few independent election observers who were present at the polling stations, as well as journalists and civic activists, have reported mass falsifications. A number of foreign journalists were detained and taken to the police stations due to lacking accreditation which most of them applied for in a timely manner but received rejections. Internet and mobile connection in the country was poor since early morning of the election day and most of social media and independent news sites were blocked. By the evening, military vehicles arrived in Minsk and public transport was shut down. After the preliminary official results were announced in the evening, mass peaceful protests started in the city centers in Minsk, Brest, Mogilev and dozens of other cities across the country. Witnesses reported brutal assaults of the protestors by the riot police. They used water cannons, flash grenades, rubber bullets, tear gas, and brutal force against the protestors. [Dozens of injured protestors](#) are in hospitals; several are in critical conditions. According to the official data, at least three thousand protestors have been detained. We consider disproportionate and brutal use of force and detention of protestors illegal.

Given the developments in the run-up to the elections and on the election day, we consider these elections the most violent and non-transparent in the modern history of Belarus. Official results of the elections cannot be considered reflecting the true will of Belarusian people.

We demand that the Belarusian authorities:

- Acknowledge massive irregularities in holding the elections and publish the election results reflecting the true choice of the Belarusian people;
- Engage in direct dialogue with representatives of independent candidates to negotiate a peaceful and legal way out of the crisis;
- Immediately stop unwarranted violence against protesters, release the detained, and respect the right to peaceful assembly;
- Observe the rights of all detainees and immediately notify their families about their whereabouts and provide unhindered access for lawyers;
- Hold an independent, prompt and effective investigation of cases of violence, with maximum transparency and under international control, to end impunity on the part of the security forces;
- End the blocking of the Internet and obstructing the work of journalists.

We call on the international community, and in particular other OSCE participating States:

- Not to recognize the election outcome that has been officially announced;
- Direct urgent efforts towards de-escalation and launching a mediated dialogue on a peaceful way out of the crisis respecting the principles of international law, that would include all sectors of Belarusian society that want to engage on this basis;
- Hold an urgent discussion in the OSCE on the crisis in Belarus, and consider the invoking the OSCE Moscow Mechanism as the most relevant and expedient way to hold an internationally trusted investigation into the events in Belarus;
- Hold urgent consultations in the EU on the events in Belarus and consider relevant and adequate reaction to the possibly most violent and non-transparent elections in the modern Belarus history;
- Hold an urgent debate on the crisis in Belarus at the upcoming session of the UN Human Rights Council. We urge the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights to take a lead in the UN Human Rights reaction to the events in Belarus and the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus to produce an urgent report and present it to the upcoming session of the UN General Assembly.

List of organizations supporting the appeal:

1. Center for Civil Liberties (Ukraine)
2. Center for Participation and Development (Georgia)
3. Truth Hounds (Ukraine)
4. Hungarian Helsinki Committee
5. Association of Ukrainian Human Rights Monitors on Law Enforcement (Ukraine)
6. Public Verdict Foundation (Russia)
7. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
8. Foundation of Regional Initiatives (Ukraine)
9. Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia
10. International Partnership for Human Rights (Belgium)
11. World Organization against Torture (OMCT) (Belgium)
12. Human Rights Center (Georgia)
13. Kharkiv Regional Foundation Public Alternative (Ukraine)
14. Public Association "Dignity" (Kazakhstan)
15. Netherlands Helsinki Committee
16. Human Rights Center ZMINA (Ukraine)
17. Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadzor (Armenia)
18. DRA – German-Russian Exchange (Germany)
19. Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights (Russia)
20. The Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House
21. Freedom Files (Poland)
22. Office of Civil Freedoms (Tajikistan)
23. Human Rights House Foundation (Norway)
24. Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland)
25. Social Action Centre (Ukraine)
26. Public Association "Human Rights Movement: Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan"
27. Swiss Helsinki Committee
28. Citizens' Watch (Russia)
29. Norwegian Helsinki Committee
30. Institute for Reporters Freedom and Safety (Azerbaijan/Switzerland)
31. Human Rights Club (Azerbaijan/Switzerland)
32. Moscow Helsinki Group (Russia)
33. Public Foundation "Voice of Freedom" (Kyrgyzstan)
34. Human Rights Center Memorial (Russia)
35. OSCE Network (Sweden)