



ORAL STATEMENT Item 4: Interactive Dialogue on High-Commissioner report on Belarus

UN Human Rights Council
55th session
26 February – 5 April 2024

Mr. President,

We thank the OHCHR examination for their report and presentation.

This debate comes as the Belarusian authorities have extended their reprisals, including arbitrary detention, prosecution and imprisonment, to virtually anyone they suspect of dissent and/or participation in peaceful protest in 2020 – and even their families.

The pattern of targeting relatives of people imprisoned for political reasons is not new in Belarus, but the severity of the recent crackdown against such individuals imprisoned for political reasons represents a further escalation of repression of dissent.

Today, almost 1,500 are jailed under politically-motivated charges in Belarus, including for criticising Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine or Belarus' role in it. They face numerous human rights violations, discriminatory treatment, and in some cases torture or other ill-treatment. Many high-profile prisoners have been kept incommunicado for many months, their fate uncertain. The authorities have fostered a climate of fear, outlawing human rights work and threatening families and lawyers of those detained into silence.

We call on Belarus to immediately release all those arbitrarily detained or imprisoned, often in connection with their peaceful activism, and to ensure people can exercise their human rights without fear of reprisals. We call on the Council to take steps to ensure that all those responsible for these grave violations are held accountable.

As the report by the examination concludes, some of the documented violations committed in the wake of the 2020 presidential vote may amount to crimes against humanity.

Mr President,

It is clear that the incremental approach so far taken on Belarus by this Council must advance if there is to be accountability for perpetrators. We urge the Council to support the resolution before it at this session to establish a Group of Experts and to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, and we further call on member states to pursue accountability through national proceedings based on accepted principles of extraterritorial and universal jurisdiction.

Thank you.