



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

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Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

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EU statement on recent developments in Belarus

The European Union condemns the severe sentencing by Belarusian courts of Syarhei Parsyukevich and Andrei Kim on 22 and 23 April 2008 for their active participation in demonstrations of entrepreneurs in January 2008. The EU is of the opinion that these trials have been politically motivated and that the sentences are disproportionate to the charges. The EU urges the Belarusian authorities to release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally, as well as to refrain from further arrests of peaceful demonstrators.

Furthermore, the EU expresses its great concern over the increased harassment of human rights defenders and independent media representatives in Belarus, as well as over the continued practice of short term sentences against participants of peaceful demonstrations.

The EU reiterates that it would consider the unconditional release of all political prisoners in Belarus as a concrete step towards Belarusian compliance with core European values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This would provide for a possibility to review the restrictive measures in place against certain Belarusian officials, and to enable the EU to progressively re-engage with Belarus, in connection with further steps by Belarus in that direction.

The EU is also concerned with recent developments in the relationship between Belarus and the USA. In particular we regret the decision of the Government of

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Belarus to declare 10 US diplomats *persona non gratae*. The EU is of the opinion that such a measure is unjustified and harmful to the interests of the people of Belarus.

The EU would like to express its solidarity with the USA and its diplomatic service. We call on the Government of Belarus to revoke its decision. The EU hopes that immediate steps be taken allowing for a normalisation of the relationship between Belarus and the USA on the basis of mutually beneficial cooperation.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

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