



United States Mission to the OSCE

On the International Day of Solidarity with Belarus

As delivered by Ambassador Michael R. Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 16, 2023

On November 12, 2020, Raman Bandarenka, an artist and aspiring designer from Minsk, succumbed to the horrific injuries that Belarusian security forces inflicted on him the previous day. His tragic and wholly avoidable death has yet to be investigated. Those responsible for it have yet to be brought to justice.

It is in memory of Raman and in support of the hundreds of thousands of Belarusians who took to the streets in peaceful protests in 2020 that we marked November 12 as the International Day of Solidarity with Belarus. Since rigging the presidential election, the Lukashenka regime's attempts to destroy the pro-democracy movement have only intensified. Human Rights Center Viasna has documented 1,454 political prisoners, although there are likely many more. These include: Viktor Babaryka, Syarhey Tsikhanouski, Mikalai Statkevich, Maria Kalesnikava, Maksim Znak, Ales Bialiatski, and Ihar Losik. The work of independent media and civil society organizations has been almost completely curtailed within Belarus, as authorities have targeted members of the democratic opposition, civil society activists, human rights defenders, journalists, and ordinary Belarusians for political repression. Those who haven't been jailed have been forced to flee abroad, bravely carrying on their work in pursuit of a future democratic Belarus, despite the difficulties the Lukashenka regime continues to impose from afar, such as stopping the issuance of passports and other documents from consular offices.

According to the Moscow Mechanism report from earlier this year, Belarus has completely failed to abide by its OSCE human dimension commitments and human rights obligations. We call on the Lukashenka regime to release all political prisoners, repeal laws targeting independent organizations and the media, and hold human rights abusers to account.

The United States will continue to stand in solidarity with the people of Belarus. We will continue to support their democratic aspirations, defend their human rights, and work to promote accountability for the Lukashenka regime's abuses. We will use the recently established Group of Friends of Democratic Belarus here in the OSCE to find new and creative ways in which we can aid the people of Belarus and hold Belarusian authorities to account for their abuses. Let us all be inspired by the courage and resilience of the people of Belarus who refuse to give up on their country and a democratic future.

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