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Canadian Delegation to the
Organization for Security & Cooperation
in Europe



Délégation du Canada auprès de
l'Organisation pour la sécurité et la coopération
en Europe

AS DELIVERED

**DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE
STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR FREDERICKA GREGORY
ON THE SITUATION IN BELARUS
852ND MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
03 MARCH 2011**

Mr. Chairman:

Canada would like to address the Permanent Council once again on the situation in Belarus. My remarks today are in response to the conviction by Belarus of Mr. Vasil Parfyankov, a member of the political opposition who participated in demonstrations that were brutally suppressed by Belarusian authorities last December 19 in Minsk, following the flawed presidential election.

Canada deplores the Belarusian authorities' lack of respect for the fundamental rights of freedom of assembly and of expression. We condemn the ongoing persecution of Belarusian citizens, such as Vasil Parfyankov, and call for the immediate release of all detained protestors.

Canada urges Belarus to respect the rule of law and the principle of an independent judiciary and to end the harassment of political opponents, human rights activists and independent media.

Mr. Chairperson,

Canada is deeply disappointed by Belarus's decision to close the OSCE's Office in Minsk. We believe that there is need for a continued OSCE presence in Belarus and therefore see this decision as a step backwards. We once again call on the Government of Belarus to agree to renew the mandate of the OSCE Office in Minsk, immediately and without condition, and to continue to engage with the OSCE and its executive structures across all three Dimension of our OSCE work.

In particular, we urge the Belarusian authorities to uphold their OSCE commitments to democracy and human rights, and to allow for OSCE observers to access and monitor court proceedings of members of the political opposition and others arrested in connection with December 19 demonstrations. We also urge Belarusian authorities to allow the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatovic, to visit with journalists in Belarus, as she has requested, and which is in conformity with OSCE commitments.

Canada will continue to work with other free and democratic societies and with civil society to ensure that the people of Belarus can exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms.

Thank you – Merci.