



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE FORCED LANDING IN MINSK
OF RYANAIR'S FLIGHT FROM ATHENS TO VILNIUS

Delivered by Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Henning Hj. Johansen
at the Special Permanent Council, Vienna, 25 May 2021

Madame Chair,

Falsely reporting a bomb threat to hijack a civilian aircraft travelling through Belarus' airspace in order to arrest someone critical of the regime is as the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs stated on Sunday, "shocking and totally unacceptable".

Norway calls for the immediate release of Mr. Raman Pratasevich, as well as his associate Sofia Sapega, who were illegally detained during the forced landing.

Through the words of Mr. Pratasevich, people in and outside Belarus are informed about the atrocities taking place in the country. Those opposing the regime are also made aware of the support of the international society. For this he has been accused of inciting hatred against the government. He has also been put on a list of "individuals involved in terrorist activity", and his actions have been labelled "extremist".

This is deplorable. These definitions are being exploited in order to silence those who dare to speak out against the regime. Nevertheless, it is not a crime to speak one's mind and tell the truth. On the contrary, this is an inalienable right and one of the many that Belarus has committed to uphold.

Norway has joined earlier restrictive measures invoked by the EU against Belarus. The incident on Sunday will require new actions. We will work together with other concerned countries to make the Belarusian regime stop its dangerous course.

It is time for Belarus to react constructively to the statements given by a huge majority of participating States in this Permanent Council over the last nine months. Let me yet again urge Belarusian authorities to start cooperating with representatives from its broader civil society, and not only the handpicked representatives from selected organisations, to find a way to introduce democracy and rule of law.

Thank you

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