

## STATEMENT BY THE CIVIC SOLIDARITY PLATFORM ON THE SITUATION IN BELARUS

22 September 2020

The undersigned organizations, members of the international NGO network “Civic Solidarity Platform”, have been following the events unfolding in Belarus in the recent months with increasing concern about actions of the authorities and with great respect towards the participants of peaceful protests.

We reiterate our solidarity with and support for peaceful protests of Belarusians against the flagrant violations of standards for the conduct of free and fair elections agreed in the OSCE. We admire the people in Belarus who are determined to stand up by peaceful means against the electoral fraud, violence and repression. We particularly commend active participation of Belarusian women in the political processes as engaged citizens, leaders, campaigners and voters. Persistence of the people of Belarus and their dedication to human rights, democracy and rule of law is truly inspiring for us, coming from many different countries.

We vehemently condemn the continuing violent crackdown brutally carried out with impunity by the Belarusian security forces, torture and ill-treatment, of hundreds of people on the streets, in police trucks and detention centers, enforced disappearance, arbitrary deprivation of life, mass arbitrary detention and arrests of participants of peaceful demonstrations, abduction and arbitrary expulsion, intimidation and unlawful, politically motivated persecution of independent journalists, human rights defenders, lawyers and labor and political activists, including members of the Coordination Council.

We welcome the efforts of all stakeholders and international partners to support the Belarusians who have chosen the path of peaceful transition towards a society founded on the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law by actively defending their fundamental freedoms. We strongly support the invocation of the OSCE Moscow mechanism in relation to serious human rights violations in Belarus initiated by 17 OSCE Participating States on 17 September 2020. We also support the UN Human Rights Council Resolution on the situation of human rights in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and in its aftermath, and the European Parliament resolution, both adopted by a large majority of votes, and the recent statement of the PACE Legal Affairs Committee.

Strong and consistent reaction by inter-governmental bodies demonstrates the clear position of the international community on the situation in Belarus and its support to democratic aspirations of the Belarusian society. Prompt, impartial and comprehensive international investigation of gross human rights abuse in Belarus is urgent and will serve as an important condition for ending the crackdown, ensuring accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims, restoring fundamental rights and freedoms in the country, and paving a way to a democratic transition process.

The situation in Belarus requires quick and decisive actions and further steps need to be taken in order to ensure the future of independent and democratic Belarus.

**We urge the authorities of Belarus to:**

- Fulfil their obligations under international human rights treaties;
- Not stand in the way of a genuine, transparent and inclusive national dialogue to negotiate a peaceful and legal way out of the existing crisis; refrain from imitating national dialogue by staging communication and events with participation of government-controlled entities; engage in direct dialogue with the democratic opposition, independent groups and representatives of the protest movement, including Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and the Coordination Council, created at her initiative, and civil society;
- Fully cooperate with the mission of experts within the framework of the OSCE Moscow mechanism and with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, including by granting them free, full and unhindered access to the territory of the country, including unhindered access to all places of detention;
- Accept the offer extended by the current and incoming OSCE Chairpersons-in-office to assist in organizing a national dialogue process;
- Immediately stop unwarranted violence against the Belarusian people;
- immediately and unconditionally release and drop all charges against all persons detained for political reasons, including all persons detained for their participation in protests against the election results or against the violence used by the authorities or for their expressions of support to these protests;
- Hold an independent, prompt, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation of cases of violence by law enforcement bodies and their proxies, with maximum transparency and under international control, and bring perpetrators to justice, to end impunity on the part of the security forces.

**We call on the international community, and in particular the OSCE and its participating States and the European Union and its Member States to:**

- Reinforce the support of the proposal by the current and incoming OSCE Chairpersons-in-office to assist in organizing a national dialogue process and continue efforts to bring the authorities of Belarus to agree with this offer; ensure that this offer stands only in the case of holding a genuine, transparent and inclusive dialogue, involving the democratic opposition, independent groups and representatives of the protest movement, including the Coordination Council, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, and civil society, and is withdrawn in the case the authorities imitate national dialogue by staging communication and events with participation of government-controlled entities and engage in “reforms” consolidating the authoritarian political system;
- Continue to seek input from the Coordination Council, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya

and civil society in designing international community's steps addressing the situation in the country, invite their representatives in deliberations about these steps, and continue giving them voice and recognition;

- Insist towards the Belarusian authorities that any constitutional reform process can only take place in full transparency and with broad participation from society, including the Coordination Council and other democratic forces, and with assistance and expertise offered by ODIHR and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe;
- Introduce targeted political and economic sanctions (both at the EU and national levels) against individuals, state and non-state actors and other entities responsible for the falsification of the election results and grave human rights abuse in Belarus, including high and middle-ranking officials as well as entrepreneurs and companies known for supporting the regime or dismissing their employees for participation in strikes;
- Apply the tool of universal jurisdiction to bring perpetrators of torture and ill-treatment in Belarus to justice;
- Freeze any fund transfers to the current Belarusian regime and projects implemented by the state bodies;
- Ensure a package of economic support for a democratic Belarus, including both the immediate support for civil society, human rights defenders, independent unions and independent media, victims of repressions and their families, and substantial, multi-billion Euro financial package of economic assistance to support future reform efforts and the restructuring of the economy after democratic, free and fair elections take place;
- Do everything necessary to counter hybrid threats from third parties and help protecting sovereignty and independence of Belarus from any attempts of a takeover and establishing external control;
- Ensure effective coordination of multilateral actions in respect of the situation in Belarus by various stakeholders, including intergovernmental organizations and concerned states, to exert sufficient international pressure on the authorities and provide adequate and timely support to democratic aspirations of the Belarusian society.

#### **List of organizations supporting the statement:**

1. Public Association "Human Rights Movement: Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan"
2. Public Verdict Foundation, Russia
3. Belarusian Helsinki Committee
4. Human Rights Center ZMINA, Ukraine
5. Article 19, UK
6. Netherlands Helsinki Committee
7. Solidarus e.V., Germany
8. DRA – German-Russian Exchange, German
9. Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, Russia

10. Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Poland
11. Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadzor, Armenia
12. Center for Participation and Development, Georgia
13. The Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House, Lithuania
14. Promo LEX Association, Moldova
15. Libereco Partnership for Human Rights, Germany
16. International Partnership for Human Rights, Belgium
17. Human Rights Center Memorial, Russia
18. Center for Civil Liberties, Ukraine
19. Norwegian Helsinki Committee
20. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom/WILPF, Germany
21. humanrights.ch, Switzerland
22. Human Rights Center of Azerbaijan
23. Freedom Files, Poland
24. World Organization against Torture (OMCT), Belgium
25. Public Association Dignity, Kazakhstan
26. Truth Hounds, Ukraine
27. Human Rights Matter, Germany
28. Human Rights Monitoring Institute, Lithuania
29. The Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims – GCRT
30. Human Rights Center Viasna, Belarus
31. Swedish OSCE Network
32. IDP Women Association "Consent", Georgia