Human Rights Council - Urgent Debate Belarus 18SEP2020

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Shotlist

1. Exterior wide shot, Palais des Nations flag alley, nations’ flags flying, a beautiful day.
2. Wide shot, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.
3. SOUNDBITE (English): Nada Al-Nashif, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights: “We witnessed thousands of arrests, hundreds of reports of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence and the reported torture of children. The violent abduction of people in broad daylight by masked individuals, presumably on the basis of their peacefully expressed opinions.”
4. Medium shot, profile of podium speakers who are also shown on TV screen, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.
5. SOUNDBITE (English): Nada Al-Nashif, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights: “Harassment, intimidation, pressure and reported expulsion from Belarus of members of the Opposition, including the members of the Coordination Council, should stop.”
7. SOUNDBITE (English) — Anaïs Marin, Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus (video message): “Mr. Lukashenko’s eagerness to remain in power after the end of his current term appears to be the main cause of a current political deadlock in Belarus.”
8. Medium shot, Russian delegate raising his sign, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.
9. **SOUNDBITE (English):** Anaïs Marin, Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus (video message): “As demonstrations have spread to all sectors of society – from housewives to factory workers and students - I call on the police to immediately stop escalating violence.”

10. Medium shot, Russian delegate raising his sign, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.

11. **SOUNDBITE (English):** Germany’s Ambassador Michael von Ungern-Sternberg for the European Union: “We are alarmed at the Special Procedure mandate holder’s report of attacks on and torture and cruel inhumane or degrading treatment of peaceful protesters as well as intimidation and detention of Opposition leaders. Enforced disappearances, abductions, expulsions and arbitrary detentions continue in Belarus. We call for the immediate release of all those who have been arbitrarily deprived of their liberty.”

12. Medium shot, delegate walks below podium where Nada Al-Nashif, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, is speaking, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.

13. **SOUNDBITE (English):** Germany’s Ambassador Michael von Ungern-Sternberg for the European Union: “For these reasons, the EU has tabled a resolution requesting the High Commissioner to make an interim oral update with recommendations to this Council before the end of the year and to present a comprehensive written report on the human rights situation in the lead-up to, during and after the 2020 Presidential election in Belarus at the 46th session, followed by an interactive dialogue.”


15. **SOUNDBITE (English):** Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, opposition candidate in 2020 Belarusian Presidential election: “We demand to immediately cease violence against peaceful citizens. We demand immediate release of all political prisoners. We demand to allow entry and free movements to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Belarus. Finally, we demand free and fair elections so the citizens of Belarus can freely choose their Government according to the laws of the country.”

16. Medium shot, delegates listening, one raising his country’s nameplate to make a point of order, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.

17. **SOUNDBITE (English):** Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, opposition candidate in 2020 Belarusian Presidential election: “Belarus needs fast and resolute decisions. It’s very important to recognize that standing up for the democratic principles and human rights is not interfering in internal affairs; it is a universal question of human dignity.”

18. Medium shot, Belarus delegate straightening his country’s nameplate, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.

19. **SOUNDBITE (English/Russian):** Ekaterina Novikava, Belarusian protester: “I saw men with weapons and bullet-proof vests. The yard was covered with men lying on the ground who had been beaten with sticks, with truncheons, being kicked, there was blood everywhere, there were men kneeling with their face against the walls, everyone was being beaten. We were asked, ‘Did you vote for Tikhanouskaya? You wanted change,’ they said, ‘We’ll kill you all, that’s how it’s going to end.’”

20. Close-up: Human Rights Council’s current President, Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger (Austria), shown on TV camera monitor, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.

21. **SOUNDBITE (English/Russian):** Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, Yury Ambrazevic: “The Government rejects any such unfounded allegations that undermine the validity of the elections which were a reflection of the sovereign right of the people to make their own choice. The use of alternative assessments of reality at international fora we see as an intervention in domestic affairs.”


24. Wide shot, central alley way between delegates with podium to rear, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.

25. **SOUNDBITE (English, Russian):** Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, Yury Ambrazevic: “The administrators of this Telegram channels continue to call for actions and protests in the streets and are coordinating their tactics through the social network.”

26. Medium shot, TV camera operator, delegates to rear, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.

27. **SOUNDBITE (English, Russian):** Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, Yury Ambrazevic: “Thousands of people have been detained because they violated the law. Despite claims of the opposite, between 12 and 19 of August not all of the protests were peaceful; very often, stones, sticks, cars and so-forth were used or indeed Molotov cocktails that were prepared in advance.”

28. Close-up, TV camera monitor showing Belarus delegate in centre of shot, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.

29. **SOUNDBITE (English, Russian):** Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Gennady Gatilov: “Not interfering in the affairs of another State is the basis of international law. The challenges before Belarus are domestic. The initiators of today’s debate on the supposed violations of human rights in Belarus are nothing other than an attempt through pressure and threats to destabilize the situation in the country and provoke a political crisis, as they already did in the neighbouring country.”

30. Wide shot, delegates and TV cameraman, standing, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.

31. **SOUNDBITE (English):** “The time-honoured principle enshrined in the UN Charter, namely the respect of the integrity, sovereignty and the political independence of all States should continue to be upheld by this Council. Furthermore, as stipulated in the resolution that established the Council, all States have the obligation and the obligation and responsibility to protect their own people including to ensure the protection and the promotion of human rights. In this connection, Indonesia is confident that the Government of Belarus should take all necessary steps to de-escalate the situation and to refrain from using unnecessary and excessive use of force against civilian demonstrators and protesters.”

32. Medium shot, delegates, sitting and masked, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.

33. Close-up, delegate in foreground, blurred, then coming into focus, with other delegates to rear, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.

34. Medium shot, delegates, sitting and masked, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.

35. Medium shot, delegates, sitting and masked, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.

36. Medium shot, delegate, sitting and masked, General Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations.
Belarus debate in spotlight at Human Rights Council

The Belarus Government should end “violent crackdowns” and “increasing repression” against protesters who are still contesting the result of last month's Presidential elections, UN deputy rights chief Nada Al Nashif told the Human Rights Council on Friday.

At the end of a memorable day of back-and-forth discussions between the Council President and delegations - featuring more than a dozen points of order by delegations who questioned the right of some of those addressing the Council to speak and no less than 17 amendments to a European-Union sponsored call for action – the Geneva-based forum finally adopted a resolution on the deteriorating rights situation in Belarus. It passed by 23 votes for, two against and with 22 abstentions.

Delivering a statement for UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, Ms. Al Nashif said that despite violence by state security officers and thousands of arrests, peaceful mass demonstrations have continued.

“We witnessed thousands of arrests, hundreds of reports of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence and the reported torture of children. The violent abduction of people in broad daylight by masked individuals, presumably on the basis of their peacefully expressed opinions. Harassment, intimidation, pressure and reported expulsion from Belarus of members of the opposition, including the members of the Coordination Council, should stop.”

Successive UN Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in Belarus had consistently described a deeply oppressive environment for human rights in the country, Ms. Al Nashif noted.

The December 2010 election had been followed by “a massive crackdown” on political opponents, human rights groups and media, and hundreds of arrests, with allegations of torture and ill-treatment in custody”, the Deputy High Commissioner continued, citing a report by the Office of the High Commissioner, OHCHR, which had made 15 recommendations to the Government.

Few of these were implemented, she maintained, “and almost 10 years after the December 2010 election, we are seeing many of the same patterns recurring. Some are intensifying.”

The opening comments of the Urgent Debate on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus - the sixth to be held by the Geneva forum since its creation in 2006 – also included those by the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus.

“Mr. Lukashenko’s eagerness to remain in power after the end of his current term appears to be the main cause of a current political deadlock in Belarus,” said Anaïs Marin, via video message. “As demonstrations have spread to all sectors of society – from housewives to factory workers and students - I call on the police to immediately stop escalating violence.”

The Council also heard opening remarks from the European Union delegation, which had led an earlier request for an Urgent Debate, on the grounds that the Presidential election of 9 August 2020 had been held without meaningful international observation and was neither free nor fair.

The EU bloc tabled a resolution calling on the UN High Commissioner to provide an oral update to the Council “before the end of the year” and to present a report on the human rights situation during and after 2020 Presidential election in Belarus at the 46th session, followed by an interactive dialogue.

“We are alarmed at the Special Procedure mandate holder’s report of attacks on, and torture and cruel inhuman or degrading treatment of peaceful protesters, as well as intimidation and detention of opposition leaders. Enforced disappearances, abductions, expulsions and arbitrary detentions continue in Belarus,” said Germany’s Ambassador Michael von Ungern-Sternberg. “We call for the immediate release of all those who have been arbitrarily deprived of their liberty. For these reasons, the EU has tabled a resolution requesting
the High Commissioner to make an interim oral update with recommendations to this Council before the end of the year and to present a comprehensive written report on the human rights situation during and after 2020 Presidential election in Belarus at the 46th session followed by an interactive dialogue.”

Speaking via video link, opposition candidate in the 2020 election, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, appealed to the Belarusian authorities to “immediately cease violence against peaceful citizens. We demand immediate release of all political prisoners. We demand to allow entry and free movements to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Belarus. Finally, we demand free and fair elections so the citizens of Belarus can freely choose their Government according to the laws of the country.”

She insisted on the Opposition’s’ “willingness to talk with the authorities and look for peaceful rights-based solutions to the crisis” affecting the country.

“Belarus needs fast and resolute decisions,” she said. “It’s very important to recognize that standing up for the democratic principles and human rights is not interfering in internal affairs; it is a universal question of human dignity.”

Another video message from protester Ekaterina Novikava provided insight into the alleged brutal treatment of people taken into custody.

“I saw men with weapons and bullet-proof vests. The yard was covered with men lying on the ground who had been beaten with sticks, with truncheons, being kicked,” she said. “There was blood everywhere, there were men kneeling with their face against the walls, everyone was being beaten. We were asked, ‘Did you vote for Tikhanouskaya? You wanted change,’ they said, ‘We’ll kill you all, that’s how it’s going to end.’”

Rejecting the EU’s call for an oral update on Belarus by the High Commissioner for Human Rights before the end of the year, along with a report and interactive dialogue at the Council’s 46th session, the Belarusian delegation insisted on their country’s sovereignty in its internal affairs.

“The Government rejects any such unfounded allegations that undermine the validity of the elections which were a reflection of the sovereign right of the people to make their own choice,” ,” said Permanent Representative to the UN Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, Yuri Ambrazevich. “The use of alternative assessments of reality at international fora we see as an intervention in domestic affairs. The supposed serious violation and deterioration of the human rights situation in Belarus is something we do not agree with.”

Confirming that thousands of demonstrators had been arrested because they had broken the law and that not all protests had been non-violent, the ambassador maintained that social media chat platforms had been used by demonstrators to coordinate “tactics”.

“The administrators of this Telegram channels continue to call for actions and protests in the streets and are coordinating their tactics through the social network,” he said. “Thousands of people have been detained because they violated the law. Despite claims of the opposite, between 12 and 19 of August not all of the protests were peaceful; very often, stones, sticks, cars and so-forth were used or indeed Molotov cocktails that were prepared in advance.”

Questioning the Council’s involvement in the affairs of Belarus, the Russian delegation echoed the stance of other Member States by insisting that “not interfering in the affairs of another State is the basis of international law”.
Gennady Gatilov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, added that the challenges before Belarus were “domestic. The initiators of today’s debate on the supposed violations of human rights in Belarus are nothing other than an attempt through pressure and threats to destabilize the situation in the country and provoke a political crisis, as they already did in the neighbouring country.”

The Indonesian delegation, meanwhile, recalled the UN Charter, highlighting “the time-honoured principle” of “respect of the integrity, sovereignty and the political independence of all States” that “should continue to be upheld by this Council. Furthermore, as stipulated in the resolution that established the Council, all States have the obligation and the obligation and responsibility to protect their own people including to ensure the protection and the promotion of human rights. In this connection, Indonesia is confident that the Government of Belarus should take all necessary steps to de-escalate the situation and to refrain from using unnecessary and excessive use of force against civilian demonstrators and protesters.”