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## **Belarus: EU denunciation, “persecutions, torture and expulsions. Authorities must listen to calls for a democratic future”**

“Six months after the fraudulent elections of 9 August 2020, the brave people of Belarus continue to demonstrate peacefully for their voices to be heard and their choice to be respected, despite the brutal repression of the Belarusian regime”. Thus begins a statement signed by the EU High Representative Josep Borrell and by Enlargement Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi, ahead of the “Day of Solidarity with Belarus”, on 7 February 2021, called for by opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. The statement condemns the “unjust persecutions”, including “hundreds of documented cases of torture”, and the layoffs and expulsions of students, members of the opposition and the civil society, and journalists. “Many thousands - the statement reads - have been detained and several hundred prosecuted on fabricated charges and denied the right to a fair trial”. The EU “continues to stand firmly with the people of Belarus” and calls on the authorities to listen to the persistent “calls for a democratic future and respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights”. Violence must cease at once, all those who were arbitrarily apprehended must be released, and all perpetrators of human rights violations must be held to account. The goal must be “the swift initiation of a genuine, inclusive national dialogue followed by new credible and transparent elections”. The EU has already supported and will continue to support a democratic Belarus “with a variety of means, including a comprehensive plan of economic support”.

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