



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No.1475 Vienna, 23 May 2024

## EU Statement on the International Day of Solidarity with Political Prisoners in Belarus

1. On 21 May, we mark the International Day of Solidarity with Political Prisoners in Belarus. Since the death of political prisoner and activist Vitold Ashurak in prison in May 2021, at least five more political prisoners have died in the regime's places of captivity: Mikalai Klimovich, Ales Pushkin, Vadzim Khrasko, Ihar Lednik, and Aliaksandr Kulinich. They were unjustly persecuted for their political opinions and beliefs, and they were deprived of adequate medical attention and care.
2. Since August 2020, Belarusian authorities have made over 40,000 politically motivated arrests and pursued at least 12,000 politically motivated criminal cases. Today, there are still nearly 1 400 political prisoners in Belarus. Hundreds have serious health issues, including mental health issues, or are vulnerable for other reasons, including disabilities. They are illegally detained and subjected to torture and ill-treatment, including deprivation of necessary medical assistance. Many of these prisoners have been kept for long periods of time without contact with their lawyers and relatives.
3. The regime is also increasingly targeting those who have fled the country. The European Union condemns the most recent wave of raids and property seizures of political activists who continue their pro-freedom activities in exile. 104 persons have been added to the suspect list of the ongoing mass criminal investigation against Belarusians abroad.
4. On the occasion of this day of solidarity, the EU condemns the repression and demands the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners and their effective rehabilitation. The EU calls on the authorities to comply with Belarus' international obligations and OSCE commitments, notably ensuring

access to adequate health services. The EU urges the Belarusian authorities to cooperate fully with international and regional human rights mechanisms.

5. The EU reiterates its strongest condemnation of Belarus' continued involvement in Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable, and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine.
6. We will continue to support the Belarusian people on their path to an independent, democratic and prosperous country that is part of a peaceful Europe.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\* as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.