



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN BELARUS

Delivered by Minister Counsellor Henning Hj. Johansen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 29 July 2021

Madame Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Canada, Iceland and Norway.

Last year, a female triumvirate fronting the people of Belarus' demand for change and free and fair elections, hit world headlines and created optimism and hope. People from all parts of society, young and old, took to the streets with flowers in their hands and an invitation to dialogue.

However, peaceful protests were met with repression and violence. Over time, the authorities have shown that they shy away from nothing to cling to power, while rejecting all opportunities for dialogue. What could have been a peaceful process towards a society with increased choice and freedom has turned into a brutal crackdown on civil society – unprecedented in modern Europe. In Belarus we witness an attempt to completely eliminate opposition and to silence all alternative voices.

People are dead, tortured, jailed, and exiled simply because they asked for the democratic rights they are entitled to.

The authorities have again and again demonstrated a blatant disregard for their international obligations and their commitments under the OSCE. Offers from the OSCE chairmanship to facilitate dialogue have been rejected, while the findings and recommendations of the Benedek report have been ignored.

We reiterate our deep admiration for the courage and endurance of the people of Belarus in their struggle for freedom.

We repeat our call for the authorities to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and strongly urge the authorities to cease raiding human rights organisations and independent media outlets and detaining journalists and activists

Belarus increasingly acts as a state of terror and fear, where there is no trust between those who rule and those who are ruled. In such a society there will be no development, progress, or room for prosperity.

The leadership needs to realise that the strategy it is currently following, in addition to violating international obligations, is not sustainable. It is our common responsibility as participating states in the OSCE to persuade and assist the leadership of Belarus to reverse its dangerous course.

Thank you.