



FORUM
OF DEMOCRATIC
FORCES OF BELARUS

ФОРУМ
ДЭМАКРАТЫЧНЫХ
СІЛ БЕЛАРУСІ

March 16, 2023

The Honorable Qin Gang
State Councilor of the People's
Republic of China and the Minister of
Foreign Affairs

The Honorable Xie Xiaoyun
Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic
of China to Belarus

**Dear Minister Qin Gang,
Dear Ambassador Xie Xiaoyun,**

We, organizations, movements and initiatives representing the citizens of the Republic of Belarus, being united into “Belarus Democratic Forum”, are working to find a solution to release political prisoners in Belarus.

As you are aware of, for the past three years more than fifty thousand people have been imprisoned for political reasons in Belarus. As of March 2023, there were more than 1 450 people on the list the Viasna Human Rights Centre keeps of Belarusian political prisoners, including the Sakharov Prize and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski, courageous people who challenged Lukashenko in the 2020 presidential election Siarhei Tsikhanovsky, Viktor Babaryka, Maria Kalesnikava, Mikola Statkevich. At least 2 900 people who have been convicted in politically motivated criminal cases. Among them are hundreds of journalists, trade union leaders, teachers, doctors, musicians, workers, students, and even elderly and disabled people are currently imprisoned in Belarus for political reasons.

Unfortunately, Belarus has become an area of instability and great economic risks. We are forced to inform you about the measures that may be taken in the very near future by the European Union to release political prisoners in Belarus. We are currently discussing the need for a collective ultimatum to citizen Lukashenko by the EU, the U.S. and the UK, demanding the release of all political prisoners. If all political prisoners without exception are not released, the borders of Belarus with the European Union may be closed to all freight trains. We are in contact with European trade unions and count on international solidarity to act against a regime that grossly violates workers' rights. We are confident that trade unions of EU countries will take united action and will be forced to stop the transit of goods from Belarus in case Alexander Lukashenko does not release all political prisoners. The democratic forces of Belarus will take all necessary measures to release political hostages from prisons until we reach the goal.

In Nicaragua, 222 political prisoners were released in February, and about 22,000 protesters were pardoned in Iran in March. It became possible because of the principal stance of the international community.

The business interests of individuals and companies are nothing compared with the international humanitarian mission to save the lives of political hostages in Belarus. If the EU shuts down cargo transit, the interests of Chinese companies, which deliver cargo to Europe via Belarus, will suffer. It is obvious that the actions of the Lukashenka regime and the political terror organized by it create problems for international partners. We count on your understanding and are not interested in creating artificial barriers to international trade.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Valery Tsepkało,

First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (1994-1997), Ambassador of Belarus to the United States (1997-2002), Director of the Belarusian High-Tech Park (2005-2017), Candidate for the Presidency of Belarus (2020) and other Candidates of the 2020 election who are now in prison as well as other participants of the Belarus Democratic Forum