

Berlin/Minsk 25 June 2020

## BELARUS ELECTION ALERT #2

### Lukashenka attempts to eliminate his competition

Presidential election being held “[in an atmosphere of fear, constant threats and intimidation](#)” - Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections



The end of the signature collection phase for contenders seeking to be nominated as a Presidential candidate was accompanied by a wave of further detentions of candidates last week, this time targeting the perhaps most popular participant of the election, ex-banker Viktor Babaryka, as well as other members and the head of his nomination group who were arrested on June 18. [Babaryka now faces formal criminal charges](#) of alleged involvement in organized crime. The human rights community in Belarus have stated that these and [previous arrests against candidates and activists](#) are illegal and clearly politically motivated.

The Belarusian Helsinki Committee and the Human Rights Center "Viasna" have [written to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and a number of UN thematic rapporteurs](#) asking them to take all appropriate measures to help improve the current human rights situation in Belarus. According to Viasna, between 6 May and 21 June 2020 hundreds of people were detained and sentenced to administrative arrests or were fined on administrative charges for participating in peaceful assemblies and for expressing their opinions. The conditions of serving these sentences in the Minsk Center for the Confinement of Offenders, where most of the detainees are held, amount to torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

Human rights organizations in Belarus, including Viasna and the Belarusian Helsinki Committee,

have also signed a [petition calling on the Prosecutor General's Office to take action](#) to stop the illegal detention of civilians and activists, and to force law enforcement agencies to stop their use of violence and mistreatment of peaceful protestors.

These arrests have prompted harsh criticism from the international community including the [European Union](#) and by several [MEPs](#), who call on the Belarusian authorities to stop the harassment and persecution of politicians and opposition activists, to immediately release candidates and their campaign activists and managers from detention, and to stop any restrictions of candidates' and people's rights and guarantee a free, fair, and transparent election process. In a [video address](#), MEP Andrius Kubilius reiterated the demand to release detained candidates Pavel Sevyarynets, Viktor Babaryk and Siarhei Tikhanouski.

Election observation organizations have called on the OSCE participating states to use all means at their disposal to encourage Belarus' compliance with its human rights obligations and OSCE commitments, and to increase the OSCE's engagement in Belarus to deal with the situation. To this date, it is still unclear whether OSCE ODIHR will send an observation mission to the Presidential election in Belarus or what the scope of a mission, if they were to send one, would be.

More reports on the election campaign in Belarus can be found on the website of the "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" [here](#).

More news on Belarus also available at [www.epde.org](http://www.epde.org)

*EPDE is financially supported by the European Union and the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. The here expressed opinion does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the donors.*