



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply to Belarus

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 8, 2022

I feel compelled to defend the Secretary General from the baseless attacks by the representative of Belarus, who fails to understand that the mandate of the Secretary General is to defend and uphold the principles and commitments upon which this organization was founded and which his country unfortunately routinely violates. This includes using the good offices of the Secretary General to facilitate dialogue with members of civil society. I was proud and happy to have moderated an event with the participation of at least a dozen permanent representatives from this Council, ministers and representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly as well. Ms. Tsikhanouskaya is not at all someone who is seeking an extra-constitutional overthrow of anything. In fact, she's working for peaceful, democratic change in your country, something that the Belarusian regime certainly knows nothing about, since it is engaged in repression on a scale not seen since Soviet totalitarian times. It has imprisoned now close to 1,500 political prisoners and kept them in the worst conditions of detention, often involving torture, often sending many of these political prisoners to intensive care units as a result of mistreatment that occurs. And I would highlight in particular the case of Maria Kalesnikava, who was unfortunately recently discovered in an intensive care unit after allegations of mistreatment during her detention in a Belarusian prison.

The twisting of information, the misuse of facts, the blatant lies that have been perpetrated in that previous intervention really cannot go unanswered. It is entirely within the rights and mandate of the Secretary General to meet with members of civil society, indeed with opposition leaders, leaders of democratic forces in this case, whenever she chooses to do so. And your suggestions to the contrary are based on absolutely nothing other than your regime's propaganda. Thank you very much.

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