



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN BELARUS

Delivered by Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Henning Hj. Johansen  
at the Special Meeting of the Permanent Council  
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Mr. Chair,

Norway joins others in expressing deep concern about the conduct of the presidential election in Belarus and the brutal crackdown on peaceful demonstrators by the security forces. We condemn the mass detentions, violence and indiscriminate use of force.

The people of Belarus are sending a strong, yet peaceful message of discontent and outrage. Peaceful protests must be met with dialogue, not violence. A constructive political dialogue is the only meaningful way forward. The last couple of years have shown certain signs of a more conducive environment for civil society and alternative voices in Belarus. The violent and unconstructive reactions from the country's authorities are deeply disappointing.

We note that the Belarusian government, represented by the Minister of Interior, has apologised for the use of violence. An investigation has been promised. Further, the OSCE Chairmanship has offered support and engagement with all stakeholders in Belarus. This would contribute to a necessary impartiality for the investigation to enjoy trust. Norway strongly supports the Chairmanship's initiative and hope this offer is welcomed in Minsk.

The OSCE can also play a constructive role as facilitator, helping the parties find a common platform for dialogue. This would not be an interference into Belarus' internal affairs. On the contrary, the OSCE – based on its mandate, should be seen as an honest broker. We welcome a discussion on how various OSCE tools could be applied in Belarus.

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What is unfolding in Belarus is not, and should not be framed as, a tug of war between the East and the West. This has been stated by the presidential candidate Svetlana Tikhanovskaya herself. She has been clear that the protests are not pro-west or pro-east, but pro-Belarus. This is a situation where the Belarusian people is protesting against election fraud and violence. They demand that their voice be heard and respected.

Mr. Chair,

Norway demands the immediate release of all the detained protesters and a full stop in the use of violence and the use of administrative measures to silence the opposition. All detained journalists must likewise be released without delay and measures taken to ensure freedom of the press and free access to information. We urge the Belarusian authorities to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the opposition. We call upon Belarus to fulfil their obligations and to give access to, and engage with, international bodies. The OSCE Chairmanship has offered the Belarusians the necessary assistance to get the process on to a constructive track, we hope the authorities in Minsk decide to accept this assistance.

Thank you.