

A Joint Address by the Coalition for a European Continent Undivided by Visa Barriers on the Presidential Election in Belarus of December 19, 2010

The Coalition for a European Continent Undivided by Visa Barriers expresses utmost concern about the ongoing human rights violations in Belarus that started on December 19, 2010:

- The peaceful demonstration against fraudulent election results that took place on December 19, 2010 was violently dispersed and resulted in the arrest of over 600 persons. The daily arrests took place also well beyond election day, and searches of homes and offices of members of political, social and human rights organizations and journalists continue to this day.
- Seven candidates for the Belarusian presidency were arrested in violation of Belarusian law (which guarantees their legal immunity at least until the official election results are announced) and have been held in custody in the investigative isolation unit of the Belarusian KGB. Many Belarusian citizens face charges of participating in and organizing mass unrest, which carry the possibility of imprisonment from 5 to 15 years.
- The situation of the detainees is unacceptable. After violent arrests during which many of the arrested protestors and all of the arrested candidates experienced physical violence, they were detained for two weeks with restricted access to medical care, contacts with their relatives and legal assistance.
- Students who participated in the demonstration might face expulsion from universities all across Belarus.

The repressive acts of the Belarusian government against its citizens can no longer be regarded as a domestic issue and requires joint action by all EU Member States and the EU institutions. The Coalition for a Europe Undivided by Visa Barriers strongly believes that visa policy is one of the best tools for expressing solidarity with Belarusian society and imposing selective sanctions on government officials according to the principle that any sanctions against the government must not infringe upon the well-being of ordinary citizens.

Therefore, the Coalition for a European Continent Undivided by Visa Barriers calls on the governments of all EU Member States and the EU institutions to follow the positive example set by Poland as of January 1, 2011:

- **To waive the fees charged for national visa processing and issuance for citizens of the Republic of Belarus.**
- **To restore previous and impose additional visa sanctions on Belarusian officials and representatives of law enforcement and judicial agencies participating in and responsible for the violence against peaceful protestors and mass human rights violations.**

The Coalition also urges that the perspective of visa-free travel be kept open to Belarus (as foreseen by the Eastern Partnership) and sustain the negotiations on a Visa Facilitation Agreement.

Coalition for a European Continent Undivided by Visa Barriers
6th January 2011

MEMBERS and PARTNERS of the coalition:

Analytical Center on Globalization and Regional Cooperation, Armenia
Association for International Affairs (AMO), the Czech Republic
Belarus Watch, Lithuania
Civic Belarus, the Czech Republic
Center for International Relations, Poland
Center for Social Innovations, Belarus
Eastern Europe Studies Centre, Lithuania
ECAS, Brussels
Education for Democracy Foundation, Poland
Europe without Barriers, Ukraine
EUROBELARUS
Free Belarus Initiative, Poland
Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies
Hungarian Europe Society, Hungary
Institute for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation, Ukraine
Institute for Public Policy, Moldova
Institute of Public Affairs, Poland
Office for Democratic Belarus, Belarus/Brussels
Open Estonia Foundation, Estonia
Open Society Institute, Brussels
Open Society Institute Sofia, Bulgaria
Östgruppen - Swedish Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights, Sweden
Public Movement "Multinational Georgia" (PMMG)
Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Slovakia
Soros Foundation – Latvia
Stefan Batory Foundation - Poland