

Human rights violations in Belarus: UK statement

World news story

Delivered by Nicola Murray, Deputy Head of Delegation, at the OSCE Permanent Council on 15 October 2020.



Mr Chair,

We join others today in expressing our concerns – again – about the current situation in Belarus.

Since the last meeting of the Permanent Council we have, unfortunately, witnessed a deterioration of the situation. Peaceful protesters have been met with water cannons, stun grenades and rubber bullets. Pepper spray, tear gas and flash grenades have also been used against elderly participants of the Pensioners March. Many peaceful protesters have been injured by the actions of the security forces.

Reports from local Human Rights groups suggest that many were seriously injured at last weekend's protests in Minsk – at least 16 ambulances were spotted leaving detention centres. Large numbers, estimated at over 700, of protesters and journalists have been detained in just the last week alone. Protests across every walk of society have been overwhelmingly and indisputably peaceful. Meanwhile, the Belarusian Ministry of Interior announced on 12 October that security forces are authorised to use lethal weapons against so called "extremely radical" protesters.

These are not the actions of a government seeking to resolve this crisis.

The extensive number of alleged human rights violations perhaps makes it tough to single out individual cases above others but we share the concerns of the EU and US colleagues about the spurious detentions of Marfa Rabkova and of Vitali Shkliarov – two examples from the many credible reports of arbitrary detentions by the Belarusian authorities.

We continue to be concerned by the Belarusian authorities' lack of

willingness to engage with the offer from the Chair in Office to help promote a national dialogue. We urge the Belarusian government to reconsider their current position.

However, the first steps towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis are clear – the Belarusian authorities must cease their campaign of violence against peaceful protesters and release all those unjustly imprisoned.

Thank you.

Published 15 October 2020