

UN Human Rights Council 47: UK general comment on the resolution on Belarus

Thank you, Madam President.

The United Kingdom would like to make a general comment on draft resolution A/HRC/47/L.13 entitled 'Situation of human rights in Belarus'.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned by the human rights situation in Belarus. The report by the UN Special Rapporteur makes clear that the situation in Belarus continues to worsen. Tightening the laws on media and mass events has made it more difficult than ever for individuals to exercise their rights to peaceful assembly, freedoms of association and expression, and for journalists to carry out their work safely.

The authorities' systematic harassment of independent media, human rights defenders, civil society, and members and supporters of the opposition has intensified. The forced diversion and landing of a civilian airliner in Minsk in order to arrest an independent journalist and his partner, and the recent crackdown of regional non-state media, has highlighted the lengths that the Belarusian authorities will go to in order to try and silence critical voices.

The number of people detained on political grounds increases by the day. Criminal charges on the most spurious grounds are being brought against anyone who has spoken out against the actions of the regime.

While this continues, the Belarusian authorities continue to refuse to launch investigations into the thousands of allegations of torture and ill treatment in detention. And the disregard for the international community continues with the reported recent closure of the OHCHR office in Minsk.

It is therefore of great importance that the mandate of the Special Rapporteur is extended for another year, so that she is able to continue monitoring and reporting on the situation in the country.

We would also like to thank the EU for the inclusive and transparent negotiations held on this draft resolution, and for engaging constructively on the proposals put forward by other states.

The UK has co-sponsored this resolution. We urge all members of the Council to join us in supporting the resolution.

Thank you, Madam President.