Statement by the Group of Independent Experts on the Human Rights Situation in Belarus

12 March 2026

To be delivered by:

Karinna Moskalenko, Chair of the Group of Independent Experts on the human rights situation in Belarus

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am honoured to present, together with Dr. Susan Bazilli and Prof. Monika Płatek, the second report of the Group of Independent Experts on the Human Rights Situation in Belarus, as requested by the Council in resolution 58/19.

Since January 2025, we have continued our work despite operating at approximately 50 per cent capacity due to the United Nations liquidity crisis. During this period, the Group conducted five investigative missions, carried out 181 interviews with victims and witnesses — including 82 in person — and collected approximately 2,000 pieces of information. We also reviewed 35 written submissions from individuals, civil society organizations, and academics. We thank them for their contributions. This report draws on that substantial body of work.

In line with our mandate, we continued to cooperate with other mechanisms. We held consultations on accountability with several interlocutors, including the Special Rapporteur on Belarus, the International Labour Organization, the International Accountability Platform for Belarus, and Belarusian civil society organizations monitoring the human rights situation.

In parallel, the Group worked on establishing which State structures had enabled the human rights violations documented since May 2020. Together with the report before this Human Rights Council, we published consolidated organigrammes of all Belarusian units and entities involved in the commission of gross human rights violations, including arbitrary detentions, torture and political persecution.

The report documents a systematic campaign of repression by Belarusian authorities against real or perceived opponents, and the profound harm inflicted on victims and their families.

Since 1 May 2020, State authorities, through their security apparatus, have systematically suppressed the fundamental rights of the Belarusian people. Individuals have been arbitrarily arrested and detained for exercising their rights to freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly, and association. Courts have imposed lengthy prison sentences in trials marked by serious and systematic violations of fair trial guarantees.

Prisoners have been subjected to inhuman detention conditions (including exposure to extreme cold and sleep deprivation), ill-treatment, and torture. Political prisoners were routinely placed in punitive isolation on fabricated disciplinary grounds. Many described being punched, kicked, beaten with batons or other objects, and subjected to electroshock devices on multiple parts of their bodies.

We verified several cases of incommunicado detention, some lasting more than two years. During that time, prisoners were denied visits and phone calls with relatives and lawyers. They were prevented from sending or receiving letters and parcels and were held in complete isolation.

Women detained on politically motivated charges were denied adequate access to gender-specific healthcare. Detention conditions harmed their health. Some reported sexually explicit and degrading remarks by male guards, including comments about their motherhood.

The rights of LGBTQI persons were also violated. Witnesses described derogatory comments by penitentiary guards and members of the Committee for State Security. Some LGBTQI persons were subjected to particularly harsh and humiliating detention conditions.

Arrests and detentions have devastated not only the victims but also their children. Many children were separated from their parents for years. They experienced trauma and strained family relationships. One witness told the Group: “Both as a child and as a parent, you can never replace that lost time.” She described the difficulties of reconnecting with children who felt abandoned.

We are deeply concerned about the deaths in detention of eight individuals. Some of these deaths may have been preventable and appear linked to inhuman detention conditions and inadequate medical care.

Mr. President,

We note that in 2025 nearly 200 prisoners — most detained on political grounds — were released following negotiations with the United States. However, the manner of release raises serious concerns. It involved the forced expulsion and arbitrary deportation of Belarusian citizens and foreign nationals to third countries, the deprivation of identity documents in some cases These measures violate international human rights standards.

More than 1,131 people reportedly remain unlawfully or arbitrarily detained in Belarus. We urge the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners.

Belarusians are not safe ev en in exile. The Group documented a campaign of transnational repression. Authorities initiated criminal proceedings, conducted trials in absentia, froze assets, and confiscated property of individuals who participated in peaceful demonstrations abroad, gave interviews to media labelled extremist, or posted photos with opposition leaders. We also verified cases in which security forces harassed and intimidated family members of exiled Belarusians.

Mr. President,

The Group confirms its previous finding of a complete lack of accountability. No meaningful investigations or disciplinary proceedings have taken place. Instead, officials allegedly implicated in serious violations were promoted or received State awards.

Despite repeated requests, the Government of Belarus continues to refuse engagement with the Group, as requested by this Council. We remain ready to engage in constructive dialogue in the interest of victims.

RUSSIAN PARAGRAPH

Уважаемый господин Председатель,

Уважаемые делегаты,

Мы по-прежнему стремимся предоставлять возможность высказаться тем, чьи права были ущемлены и кто по-прежнему находится в нечеловеческих условиях.

Мы продолжим расследование, сбор, анализ и сохранение свидетельств и доказательств для будущих процессов привлечения к ответственности. На

данный момент мы собрали более 400 свидетельств и около 4 500 информационных материалов, включая видеозаписи, фотографии, цифровые материалы, официальные заявления, медицинские записи и судебные документы. Мы также продолжим сотрудничество с национальными и международными механизмами по привлечению к ответственности.

Уважаемые члены Совета, я призываю вас продолжать уделять пристальное внимание ситуации с правами человека в Беларуси и жертвам, права которых должны быть защищены.

Благодарим за внимание.