

May 31, 2021

Dear Vice President and High Representative **Josep Borrell**,  
Dear Vice President **Vera Jourova**,  
Dear Vice President **Dubravka Šuica**,  
Dear Commissioner **Maria Gabriel**

Every year, June 1st marks the International Day for Protection of Children. Every child has the right to grow up in a safe and inclusive environment. Regretfully, this is not the case in Belarus.

Since August 2020, Belarusian children feel uncertainty and insecurity due to ongoing systemic repressions and daily terror by the state. Lukashenka's regime does not shy away from treating them as a tool to pressure their parents, who are being threatened with losing custody over their children for taking part in the ongoing protests.

Furthermore, Belarusian minors are becoming the targets of political repressions themselves. According to the data available to us, there are at least seven political prisoners under 18 in Belarus:

- Siarhei Hatskevich, 17, sentenced to 3 years in juvenile detention centre
- Dzmitry Khars, 17, sentenced to 1 month in prison
- Dzianis Khazei, 17, sentenced to 3 years in juvenile detention centre
- Eduard Kudyniuk, 17, sentenced to 3 years in juvenile detention centre
- David Zbaranski, 17, detained and kept in pre-trial detention center No. 7
- Nikita Zolotarev, 17, detained on 11th August, 2020 at the age of 16 and sentenced for 5 years in juvenile detention centre, despite his serious illness
- Vital Prokharau, just turned 18, detained on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2021 at the age of 17 and sentenced to 2 years in juvenile detention centre.

Last week 18 year old Dmitry Stakhovsky took his own life as he could no longer bear the pressure exerted on him by investigation officers for taking part in anti-government protests last year. He was 17 when the criminal case was initiated against him. A country which deprives its

children of a future has no future itself. Denying their rights to the children means denying the future for Belarus.

While sanction packages and other measures require time and thorough preparation, some actions may be taken by the EU institutions already now. The EU may join forces with UNICEF, international NGOs and other international actors and demand an immediate release of the above-mentioned teenagers and all the detained minors. The EU should also demand that the EU officials be allowed to meet the detained minors and their parents in the nearest future. The time to act is now.

**Mr. Gabrielius Landsbergis,**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of  
Lithuania



**Ms. Monika Navickienė,**  
Minister of Social Security and Labour of the  
Republic of Lithuania



Also signed on behalf of:

**Mr. Svetlan Stoev,**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria

**Mr. Andrey Kuzmanov,**  
Minister of Youth and Sports of Bulgaria

**Mr. Gordan Grlić Radman,**  
Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of  
Croatia

**Mr. Josip Aladrović,**  
Minister of Labour, Pension System, Family  
and Social Policy of Croatia

**Mr. Nikos Christodoulides,**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus

**Mr. Prodromos Prodromou,**  
Minister of Education, Culture, Sports and  
Youth of Cyprus

**Mr. Jakub Kulháněk,**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech  
Republic

**Mr. Robert Plaga,**  
Minister of Education, Youth and Sports of  
the Czech Republic

**Ms. Eva-Maria Liimets,**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of  
Estonia

**Ms. Signe Riisalo,**  
Minister of Social Protection of the Republic  
of Estonia

**Mr. Nikos Dendias,**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece

**Ms. Niki Kerameus,**  
Minister of Education and Religious Affairs  
of Greece

**Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs,**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of  
Latvia

**Mr. Jean Asselborn,**  
Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of  
Luxembourg

**Mr. Bogdan Aurescu,**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania

**Mr. Anže Logar,**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia

**Ms. Ilga Šuplinska,**  
Minister for Education and Science of the  
Republic of Latvia

**Mr. Claude Meisch,**  
Minister for National Education, Children  
and Young People of Luxembourg

**Mrs. Raluca Turcan,**  
Minister of Labour and Social Protection of  
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**Mr. Janez Cigler Kralj,**  
Minister of Labour, Family, Social Affairs  
and Equal Opportunities of Slovenia