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## Help and support for political prisoners and repressed students in Belarus

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Alexander Lukashenko was re-elected president of Belarus in elections held on December 19, 2010 with the 79.67% of the votes. Surprisingly, all 9 opposition candidates were admitted to the elections and this event has given hopes that a step towards the democratisation of the country has been made. However, the outcome of the **elections** has been contested.

On December 20, 2010 **Catherine Ashton**, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, made the following statement:

*I have taken good note of the preliminary findings of the OSCE/ODIHR-led International Election Observation Mission to the Belarusian presidential elections. They noted that Belarus still has a considerable way to go in meeting its OSCE commitments, although some specific improvements were made. Unfortunately, the trend set by the relative progress during the campaigning period was not followed by a transparent and fair polling process.*

*It is especially regrettable that election night was marred by violence, which I strongly condemn. In particular, the beating and detention of several opposition leaders, including presidential candidates, is unacceptable.*

*I urge Belarus to engage fully in dialogue with the OSCE/ODIHR on reform of the electoral code and how to best implement OSCE/ODIHR recommendations in this respect with a view to future elections.*

*I recall our policy of critical engagement, through which the EU has offered a deepening relationship with Belarus. This is conditional on respect for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The Union remains committed to strengthening its engagement with the Belarusian people and civil society.*

The original document may be found here:

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/118650.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/118650.pdf)

In particular, after the polls closed thousands of opposition supporters converged on October Square in Minsk: in protest of the poll results, they tried to storm the main government building. This prompted police to arrest hundreds of protesters, including opposition leaders.

As part of the **arrests** made during the mass street protests, a group of 10 students from the European Humanities University (Lithuania) was also detained in Minsk and was sentenced behind closed doors. Students and teachers from their home university are doing everything possible to reach their parents and possibly to visit them in the detention centres.

The German association Libereco – Partnership for Human Rights also immediately expressed its support for all detainees in Minsk and victims of human rights violations in Belarus.

In an open letter **Lars Büniger**, Chair of Libereco, invites everyone to help and support all political prisoners and repressed students in Belarus. Help can be given by signing a petition, sending appeals and greetings to the detainees and their families, as well as by sending them photos to show support. Detailed information is available right here:

<http://www.lphr.org/en/news/news-details/article/hilfe-und-unterstuetzung-politischer-gefangener-und-repressierter-studenten-in-belarus//3/>