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## **EU Parliament: Ms Tsikhanouskaya (Belarusian opposition), Lukashenko is a dictator. “We are no longer safe in our country, and neither are Europeans”**

(from Strasbourg) “Right now in Belarus there are more political prisoners than Members of this Chamber. 882 of my fellow citizens have been imprisoned for exercising basic political rights”. They have been imprisoned and tortured. “On behalf of them and fellow Belarusians who believe in the freedoms this Union represents, I speak to you today”. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya is a prominent leader of the democratic opposition in Belarus. In her address to the European Parliament gathered in a formal sitting in Strasbourg today, she drew a dramatic picture of the situation, marked by denied rights, escalating violence, poverty, and threats. “It is getting late. There have been ample gestures and expressions of solidarity”, but we need Europe’s help. She said, quite openly, that Alexander Lukashenko is a dictator (the EU did not recognise the presidential elections of 9 August 2020) and that he should not be called “president” because “he is not”. He is an unscrupulous dictator, who kills opponents, holds the country in fear, silences the media, and uses migrants to threaten Poland and Lithuania, and all of Europe with them. “Belarusians – Ms Tsikhanouskaya said – are no longer safe in their country and abroad. And neither are Europeans. The regime in Belarus has shown itself willing to seize individuals from international flights”, punish citizens, and “weaponize migrants in a way deliberately designed to undermine the stability and security of Europe. We can feel paralysed by fear or we can take our destiny into our hands”.

Valentina Bombelli