



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Belarus

The European Union is seriously concerned that Belarus has still not undertaken a full and credible and independent investigation into the possible involvement of three Belarusian officials in the disappearances and subsequent deaths of three Belarusian opposition leaders and one journalist in the years 1999-2000. This was detailed in the Pourgourides report of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, adopted on 28 April 2004.

In a declaration of 14 May 2004 the European Union called for a independent investigation to be opened under a neutral investigator. Pending such investigation, the EU has also questioned whether the persons against whom these serious allegations were put forward, should remain in their current positions of authority.

The EU has received no official reaction by Belarusian authorities to its declaration, and is not aware of any independent and impartial investigation by the Belarusian authorities. Those persons who according to the Pourgourides report carried the main responsibility for the disappearances, and those who have failed to launch an investigation into these disappearances, have remained in their positions or have moved to other important positions of authority.

P R E S S

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In view of the apparent obstruction of justice and the absence of an investigation as requested, the European Union has decided today to restrict admission to its territory of those high officials who are considered primarily responsible for failing to initiate such an investigation and prosecution of the alleged crimes, as well as those who are considered by the Pourgourides report key actors in the disappearances and subsequent cover-up.

Furthermore, the EU considers the presence of those persons at public meetings at the EU institutions or in its member states inappropriate.

The EU reserves the right to consider additional measures at a later date.

The EU will review its position in the light of future developments, taking into account the willingness of the relevant Belarusian authorities to have the disappearances fully and transparently investigated, and those responsible for such crimes brought to justice.

In this context, the EU calls once more on the Belarusian authorities, including on the President of the Republic of Belarus, to undertake the actions as requested by the EU.

The Candidate Countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia *, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.