

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 230

Expressing the strong opposition of Congress to the continued egregious violations of human rights and the lack of progress toward the establishment of democracy and the rule of law in Belarus and calling on President Alexander Lukashenka to engage in negotiations with the representatives of the opposition and to restore the constitutional rights of the Belarusian people.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 16, 1999

Mr. GEJDENSON submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the strong opposition of Congress to the continued egregious violations of human rights and the lack of progress toward the establishment of democracy and the rule of law in Belarus and calling on President Alexander Lukashenka to engage in negotiations with the representatives of the opposition and to restore the constitutional rights of the Belarusian people.

Whereas the United States has a vital interest in the promotion of democracy abroad and supports democracy and economic development in Belarus;

Whereas in the Fall of 1996, President Lukashenka devised a controversial referendum to impose a new constitution

on Belarus and abolish the Parliament, replacing it with a rubber-stamp legislature;

Whereas Lukashenka illegally extended his own term of office to 2001 by an illegitimate referendum;

Whereas Belarus has effectively become an authoritarian police state, where human rights are routinely violated;

Whereas Belarusian economic development is stagnant and living conditions are deplorable;

Whereas in May 1999, the Belarusian opposition challenged Lukashenka's unconstitutional lengthening of his term by staging alternative presidential elections, unleashing the government crackdown;

Whereas the leader of the opposition, Simyon Sharetsky, was forced to flee Belarus to the neighboring Baltic state of Lithuania in fear for his life;

Whereas several leaders of the opposition—Viktor Gonchar, Yuri Krasovsky, Yuri Zakharenka, Tamara Vinnikova, and other members of the opposition, have disappeared;

Whereas the Belarusian authorities harass and persecute the independent media and work to actively suppress the freedom of speech;

Whereas the former Prime Minister Mikhail Chygir, who was a candidate in the opposition's alternative presidential elections in May 1999, has been held in the pretrial detention on trumped up charges since April 1999;

Whereas President Lukashenka's government provoked the clashes between riot police and the demonstrators at the October 17, 1999, "Freedom March", which resulted in injuries to demonstrators and scores of illegal arrests;

Whereas President Lukashenka addressed a session of the Russian State Duma on October 26, 1999, advocating a merger between Russia and Belarus; and

Whereas Anatoly Lebedko, Chairman of the Committee for International Affairs of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Belarus, Nikolay Statkevich, leader of the Social Democratic Party, and Valery Shchukin, Deputy of the Supreme Council, were arrested and imprisoned for taking part in the Freedom March: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
 2 *concurring)*, That the Congress—

3 (1) condemns the current Belarusian regime;

4 (2) further condemns the arrests of Anatoly
 5 Lebedko, Nikolay Statkevich, and Valery Shchukin;

6 (3) is gravely concerned about the disappear-
 7 ances of Viktor Gonchar, Yuri Krasovsky, Yuri
 8 Zakharenka, Tamara Vinnikova, and other members
 9 of the opposition;

10 (4) calls for immediate dialogue between Presi-
 11 dent Lukashenka and the Consultative Council of
 12 Belarusian opposition and the restoration of a civil-
 13 ian, democratically elected government in Belarus;

14 (5) calls for a duly constituted national legisla-
 15 ture, the rule of law, and an independent judiciary;

16 (6) urges President Lukashenka to respect the
 17 human rights of all Belarusian citizens, including
 18 those members of the opposition who are currently

1 being illegally detained in violation of their constitu-
2 tional rights;

3 (7) further urges President Lukashenka to
4 make good on his promise to hold free parliamentary
5 elections in 2000;

6 (8) supports the appeal by the Consultative
7 Council of Belarusian opposition parties to the Gov-
8 ernment of Russia, the State Duma, and the Fed-
9 eration Council for a cessation of support for
10 Lukashenka's regime;

11 (9) calls on the international community to sup-
12 port the opposition by continuing to meet with the
13 legitimately elected parliament; and

14 (10) calls on the President of the United States
15 to continue to—

16 (A) fund travel to the United States by the
17 Belarusian opposition figures;

18 (B) provide funding for the nongovern-
19 mental organizations in Belarus; and

20 (C) support information flows into
21 Belarus.

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