

106TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. CON. RES. 304

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the condemnation of the continued egregious violations of human rights in the Republic of Belarus, the lack of progress toward the establishment of democracy and the rule of law in Belarus, calling on President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's regime to engage in negotiations with the representatives of the opposition and to restore the constitutional rights of the Belarusian people, and calling on the Russian Federation to respect the sovereignty of Belarus.

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

Whereas in the Fall of 1996, Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka devised a controversial referendum to impose a new constitution on Belarus and

abolish the Parliament, the 13th Supreme Soviet, replacing it with a rubber-stamp legislature;

Whereas President Lukashenka organized a referendum in violation of the 1994 Belarusian Constitution, which illegally extended his term of office to 2001;

Whereas Lukashenka's legal term in office expired in July 1999;

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, Semyon Sharetsky, was forced to flee Belarus to the neighboring Baltic state of the Republic of Lithuania in fear for his life;

Whereas several leaders of the opposition, including Viktor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovsky, and Yuri Zakharenka have disappeared;

Whereas the Belarusian regime harasses and persecutes the independent media and works to actively suppress freedom of speech;

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

Whereas the Lukashenka regime provoked the clashes between riot police and demonstrators at the October 17,

1999, “Freedom March”, which resulted in injuries to demonstrators and scores of illegal arrests;

Whereas hundreds of peaceful demonstrators and over thirty journalists were arrested during a March 25, 2000, pro-democracy rally in Miensk, once again illustrating the Lukashenka regime’s disregard for freedom of assembly, association, and information;

Whereas the Lukashenka regime has refused to engage in meaningful dialogue with the opposition and has used the tactics of delay and obfuscation in disregarding the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)-mediated dialogue process;

Whereas genuine dialogue with the opposition and legitimate, free and fair elections cannot take place in the present climate of repression and fear existing in Belarus;

Whereas on April 3, 1996, Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin and President Lukashenka signed an agreement to form a Union State of Russia and Belarus;

Whereas there have been credible press reports that the Government of the Russian Federation has been providing assistance to the Lukashenka regime since the signing of the agreement to form a Union State, such as official Russian Federation Government credits, uncollected customs duties, assistance for export sales of Belarusian arms and joint manufacturing of arms, and reduced prices for energy supplies;

Whereas there has been a credible estimate cited in press reports that Russian Federation economic subsidies to Belarus reached \$1,500,000,000 to \$2,000,000,000 in 1996 and 1997 alone, enabling the Lukashenka regime

to maintain a large police force and state control of the economy;

Whereas the Union Treaty, signed on December 8, 1999, by Belarus and the Russian Federation, undermines Belarus sovereignty and the prospect of democracy;

Whereas the Consultative Council of Belarusian opposition parties appealed to the Government of the Russian Federation, the State Duma, and the Federation Council calling for a cessation of support for the Lukashenka regime;

Whereas the former Chairmen of the Belarusian Supreme Soviet, Stanislav Shushkevich and Semyon Sharetsky, have stated that economic support from the Russian Federation has been crucial to the survival of the Lukashenka regime;

Whereas a Union Treaty between the Russian Federation and Belarus was ratified by the Russian Parliament and the illegitimate parliament of Belarus;

Whereas the Union Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Lukashenka regime violates Russian Federation Government respect for the sovereignty of Belarus per the memorandum on security guarantees signed by Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin at the December 1994 Summit of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Heads of State in Budapest, Hungary; and

Whereas the introduction of any nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus, a declared non-nuclear state under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, would be a violation of Belarus's obligations under that Treaty: Now, therefore, be it

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

3 (1) condemns continued egregious violations of
4 human rights by President Alyaksandr
5 Lukashenka’s regime in the Republic of Belarus;

6 (2) further condemns the Lukashenka regime’s
7 conviction and sentencing of Andrei Klimov, Vasiliy
8 Leonov, and Vladimir Koudinov on politically moti-
9 vated charges and urges their release;

10 (3) is gravely concerned about the disappear-
11 ances of Viktor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovsky, and
12 Yuri Zakharenka and calls on the Lukashenka re-
13 gime to ensure a full and timely investigation of
14 these cases;

15 (4) calls for immediate dialogue between the
16 Lukashenka regime and the opposition and the res-
17 toration of a democratically elected government in
18 Belarus;

19 (5) urges the Lukashenka regime to respect
20 and ensure the human rights of all Belarusian citi-
21 zens, including those members of the opposition who
22 are currently being illegally detained in violation of
23 their constitutional rights and further urges the re-
24 gime to respect the rule of law and an independent
25 judiciary;

1 (6) further urges Lukashenka to hold legiti-
2 mate, free and fair parliamentary elections in ac-
3 cordance with Organization for Security and Co-
4 operation in Europe (OSCE) standards;

5 (7) supports the appeal by the Consultative
6 Council of Belarusian opposition parties to the Gov-
7 ernment of the Russian Federation, the State
8 Duma, and the Federation Council calling for a ces-
9 sation of support for the Lukashenka regime;

10 (8) calls on the international community to sup-
11 port the opposition in Belarus by continuing to meet
12 with the legitimately elected parliament;

13 (9) supports Belarus's sovereignty, independ-
14 ence, and territorial integrity, as well as its market
15 democratic transformation and integration among
16 the broader trans-Atlantic community of nations;

17 (10) calls on the President of the United
18 States—

19 (A) to ensure assistance to and cooperation
20 with Belarusian opposition figures;

21 (B) to ensure that adequate resources are
22 made available on an urgent basis to support
23 those programs aimed at strengthening inde-
24 pendent media, human rights, civil society,

1 independent trade unions, and the democratic
2 opposition in Belarus; and

3 (C) to support the free flow of information
4 into Belarus;

5 (11) calls on the President of the United States
6 to raise the issue of financial support provided by
7 the Russian Federation to the Lukashenka regime
8 at the highest levels of the Russian Federation Gov-
9 ernment;

10 (12) calls on the President of the United States
11 to urge the Government of the Russian Federation,
12 in accordance with its international commitments, to
13 fully respect the sovereignty of Belarus, particularly
14 in light of the illegitimate nature of the Lukashenka
15 regime; and

16 (13) calls on the President of the United States
17 to prepare and transmit to the Congress a report
18 on—

19 (A) the human rights situation, democratic
20 process, elections, independence of the media,
21 and the Lukashenka regime's control of the
22 economy in Belarus;

23 (B) the steps undertaken by the United
24 States to persuade the Russian Federation Gov-

1 ernment to end support to the Lukashenka re-
2 gime in Belarus; and
3 (C) the status of Russian Federation-
4 Belarus military integration.

Passed the House of Representatives May 3, 2000.

Attest:

Clerk.