

EUROPEAN UNION

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EU High Representative Catherine Ashton met representatives of the Belarusian opposition and civil society as well as the Belarusian Foreign Minister

Catherine Ashton, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, met today the leading representatives of the Belarusian opposition and civil society. The delegation included, among others, Eva Neklyaeva, daughter of arrested former presidential candidate Vladimir Neklyaev, Irina Bognanova, sister of arrested former presidential candidate Andrei Sannikov, former presidential candidates in the 2006 presidential elections Aliaksandr Milinkevich and Aliaksandr Kazulin and the first head of state of independent Belarus, Stanislaw Shuskevich. The High Representative underlined the EU's solidarity and support to those detained on political grounds and their families in the aftermath of the presidential elections in Belarus on 19 December 2010.

In a subsequent meeting the same day with Belarusian Foreign Minister Sergei Martynov, the High Representative reiterated the EU's condemnation of the violent crack-down against demonstrators, widespread arrests and harassment of civil society representatives in the aftermath of the elections. She insisted on the immediate release of those detained on political grounds and on an immediate end to the persecution of opposition, democratic forces and representatives of civil society.

The High Representative recalled to Minister Martynov that the EU was looking into appropriate measures in response to the post-election events, with a view to decisions to be taken at the Foreign Affairs Council of 31 January 2011.

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