



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 18 December 2011  
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**Joint statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton  
and US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton  
on concerns about human rights in Belarus  
on the anniversary of the 19 December 2010 crackdown**

Today we remember the one year anniversary of the start of the brutal crackdown by the Belarus Government on civil society, political opposition and independent media.

Over the past 12 months, the Belarusian authorities have imprisoned peaceful demonstrators, suppressed non-violent protests, and worked to silence independent voices. There have also been credible reports of degrading and inhumane treatment of political prisoners. A number of them have been set free, but we reiterate our call for all political prisoners to be immediately released and rehabilitated, including presidential candidates Andrei Sannikau and Mikalai Statkevich, and human rights defender Ales Byalyatski.

We also express grave concern over new laws that will further restrict citizens' fundamental freedoms of assembly, association and expression and that target support to civil society.

We reiterate that the improvement of bilateral relations with the United States and the European Union is conditional on progress by the Government of Belarus towards the fulfillment of its OSCE commitments and the respect for fundamental human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles.

The United States and the European Union remain willing to assist Belarus as it works to meet these obligations."

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