

Belarus: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the forced diversion of Ryanair flight FR4978 to Minsk on 23 May 2021



On 23 May, the Belarusian authorities, in an inadmissible step, forced a civilian plane to perform an emergency landing in Minsk. The plane, owned by an EU company, flying between two EU capitals and carrying more than 100 passengers, was forced to land by a Belarusian military aircraft.

One of the flight passengers, Mr Raman Pratasevich, an independent journalist from Belarus, was retained by the Belarusian authorities and prevented from boarding the plane at the Minsk airport to its original destination. This is yet another blatant attempt by the Belarusian authorities to silence all opposition voices.

We call for the immediate release of Mr Pratasevich.

In carrying out this coercive act, the Belarusian authorities have jeopardised the safety of passengers and crew. An international investigation into this incident must be carried out to ascertain any breach of international aviation rules.

This situation will be raised at the upcoming meeting of the European Council. The EU will consider the consequences of this action, including taking measures against those responsible.