

The All Belarusian People's Assembly: UK statement

World news story

Nicola Murray, Deputy Head of Delegation, delivers a UK statement on the All Belarusian People's Assembly to the OSCE Permanent Council.



Madam Chair,

The All Belarusian People's Assembly, which opened on 11 February, claims to include representatives of all sectors of Belarusian society, brought together to determine Belarus' priorities for the next five years and possible amendments to the constitution. In reality, the Assembly is neither inclusive nor representative. The 2,000 delegates have been vetted and handpicked by the authorities. No opposition voices will be allowed to attend or contribute.

Meanwhile, the authorities continue their sustained campaign of repression against all those campaigning for genuine democratic change, and the independent media actors who are reporting these events. Human rights groups now list 246 political prisoners, including all significant opposition leaders. Over 33,000 demonstrators have been detained, false charges of tax evasion or phytosanitary breaches are being brought against civil society organisations and there is no progress on investigating the hundreds of complaints of brutality by the security forces.

The UK is clear that repression, brutality and stage managed assemblies will not resolve the political and human rights crisis in Belarus. This can only be achieved through genuine inclusive dialogue. We call on the Belarusian authorities to implement and adhere to the recommendations in the Moscow Mechanism report as a route to a lasting and peaceful solution to the crisis, one which meets the democratic rights of its people.

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