

# UK calls for fresh Presidential elections in Belarus

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has called for fresh Presidential elections to be held in Belarus, following the publication of an independent report which confirmed that August's election was "falsified" and exposed the extent of human rights violations committed by Lukashenko's regime.

The UK led the diplomatic campaign for an international and independent investigation through the OSCE into reports of electoral fraud throughout the Presidential elections and the Belarusian authorities' campaign of violence, intimidation and harassment against peaceful protestors.

The UK expressed early concerns about the conduct of the elections and the grisly repression that followed. In September, the UK imposed landmark sanctions on Alexander Lukashenko, his son and senior figures in the Belarusian government under the UK's new human rights sanctions regime in response to the torture and mistreatment of hundreds of peaceful protestors in custody.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

We pushed for this independent investigation and it has exposed the fraud at the heart of the Presidential elections and the despicable actions taken by Lukashenko's regime to suppress the Belarusian people.

New elections which are free and fair must now be organised, and those responsible for the violence against demonstrators held to account.

The UK, alongside 16 international partners, invoked the Moscow Mechanism at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in September which triggered an investigation by an independent human rights rapporteur into electoral fraud and the brutal violation of the rights of the Belarusian people.

The independent OSCE investigation concluded there is overwhelming evidence that:

- The elections were falsified.
- The Belarusian authorities committed massive and systematic human rights violations in response to peaceful demonstrations and protests.
- There is a climate of impunity and no one has been held accountable for torture and inhumane treatment by the security forces.
- The freedom of the media and the safety of journalists are under

sustained attack by the Belarusian regime.

The UK condemns the efforts made by the Belarusian regime to undermine the independent investigation, including its refusal to cooperate with the fact finding mission or to allow the mission to enter Belarus. We strongly encourage Belarus to reverse its decision and engage constructively with the OSCE.

The UK will continue to work with international allies to defend democracy, media freedom and human rights in Belarus. The UK supports the recommendations of the OSCE report and calls on the Government of Belarus to hold new Presidential elections, immediately end the violence, release all those unjustly detained, investigate allegations of torture and take action to ensure humane conditions in detention.

## **Notes to Editors**

Seventeen OSCE participating States invoked the Moscow on 17 September in response to events following the 9 August presidential election in Belarus. The Moscow Mechanism allows groups of OSCE States to trigger expert missions to report on serious human rights concerns.