**UN rights expert: Belarus rights situation not improving**

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By [Alonso Diaz](http://jurist.org/paperchase/2016/02/un-rights-expert-reports-belarus-human-rights-record-worse.php)

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The UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus [reported](http://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17026&LangID=E) [press release] Tuesday that the country's dismal human rights conditions have remained unchanged since the October presidential election. Miklós Haraszti, UN Special Rapporteur, reported human rights violations since the election that include harassment of those who attempted to practice their individual, civil, political and other rights. For example, freelance journalists have continued to be sanctioned and fined along with participants of political demonstrations against the death penalty. Haraszti highlighted that "Belarus has for twenty years been the only country in Europe where there is no opposition in parliament" and that although EU and US sanctions against the country had been partially suspended in anticipation of improving human rights, the government has not shown any "willingness to reform the entrenched [and] highly oppressive legal system". The Special Rapporteur [said](http://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17027&LangID=E) [press release] that if authorities would form a pluralistic legislative body, it would show that the country is willing to work toward abiding by international standards and he offered his services to the authorities to ensure such a reform.

Belarus has faced continued scrutiny over human rights abuses. In August EU officials [praised](http://jurist.org/paperchase/2015/08/eu-officials-praise-belarus-for-release-of-political-prisoners.php) [JURIST report] Belarus' president for his release of political prisoners. In June UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus Miklos Haraszti [warned](http://jurist.org/paperchase/2015/06/un-rights-advocate-cites-belarus-for-continued-imprisonment-of-opponents.php) [JURIST report] that Belarus continues to sentence and imprison political opponents of the government. In March 2014 he called for the country to end its use of the [death penalty](http://jurist.org/paperchase/2014/04/un-calls-for-moratorium-on-belarus-capital-punishment.php), reiterating [earlier statements](http://jurist.org/paperchase/2013/10/belarus-must-stop-executing-its-citizens-un.php#.U1vQaPldXT8) [JURIST reports] and citing politically motivated courts and the lack of fair trials. In 2011 former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay suggested a [need for UN intervention](http://jurist.org/paperchase/2011/09/un-rights-chief-urges-belarus-to-release-political-prisoners.php) [JURIST report] in Belarus and demanded the nation free non-violent political prisoners. Although Belarus is an active member of the UN and has ratified many of its human rights policies, Pillay noted a sharp deterioration in human rights since the 2010 disputed re-election of President Alexander Lukashenko, who has been in power since 1994.