European Parliament

To:
Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council
Mrs. Ursula Von der Leyen, President of the European Commission
Mr. Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission
Mrs. Adina Valean, European Commissioner for Transport

Brussels, 24.05.2021

Dear President Michel,
Dear President Von der Leyen,
Dear High Representative Borrell,
Dear Commissioner Valean,

We, the undersigned members of the Media Working Group of the European Parliament call for your immediate action against the illegitimate regime of Aleksander Lukashenko, following yesterday's hijacking of the Ryanair flight FR4978, kidnapping and arrest of Belarussian journalist Roman Protasevich and his partner Sofia Sapega, in an act that can only be qualified as state-sponsored terrorism.

We strongly condemn their kidnapping and call on you to urge their immediate release from Belarus. In addition to their forceful arrest on board of an EU registered aircraft, flying between two European Union capital cities, the Lukashenko regime also forcefully and illegally detained the passengers and crew of the Ryanair flight FR4978 for several hours, before being allowed to head back to Vilnius.

The Belarussian presidential press service has confirmed that Aleksander Lukashenko personally required the use of a military MiG-29 fighter jet of the Belarussian army for the forceful escort of the 171 passenger EU registered aircraft towards Minsk airport. This measure was taken on the basis of a false security claim, putting in danger the lives of all those on board the aircraft. The use of such dangerous intimidation techniques, the temporary detention of the passengers and crew on Belarussian territory as well as the forceful kidnapping and arrest of Mr. Protasevich and his partner are completely unacceptable and therefore we urge you to take significant measures against those responsible for these actions.

Given the unprecedented and intolerable use of force of the Belarussian regime, we believe that Belarussian airspace can no longer be considered safe for any EU registered passenger aircraft. Therefore, we call for the immediate suspension of flights over Belarussian airspace, suspending all air connections between the EU and Belarus, the immediate closure of EU airspace for all Belarussian registered aircrafts and urge you to demand the International Civil Aviation Authority to strip the country of its membership. Furthermore, we call for a full inquiry into the breaches of international aviation rules of this outrageous act of piracy.

This act of state-sponsored terrorism has brutally attacked the EU, jeopardising the safety of the passengers and crew of an EU registered civilian aircraft. This is an illegal and outrageous act of piracy and kidnapping that must be addressed with a strong and united European response

in the form of extended sanctions towards Aleksander Lukashenko personally as well as towards all those responsible for these acts.

Yours sincerely,

Ramona Strugariu, RE, Co-chair of the Working group
David Casa, EPP, Co-chair of the Working Group
Magdalena Adamowicz, EPP
Irena Joveva, RE
Stelios Kouloglou, GUE/NGL
Alice Kuhnke, Greens
Dace Melbārde, ECR
Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová, Renew
Massimiliano Smeriglio, S&D
Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, Greens