

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Recommendation 1657 (2004)¹ Disappeared persons in Belarus

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its Resolution 1371 (2004) on disappeared persons in Belarus, and recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

i. request the competent Belarusian authorities:

a. to launch a truly independent investigation into the above-mentioned disappearances by the competent national authorities, after the resignation of the current General Prosecutor, Mr Sheyman, who has been accused of having himself orchestrated the disappearances in his previous function, and to keep the families of the missing persons fully informed of the progress and results of this investigation;

b. to initiate criminal investigations with a view to clarifying, and punishing, as the case may be:

– the alleged involvement of the current General Prosecutor (previously Head of the Security Council), Mr Sheyman, the current Minister for Sports and Tourism (previously Minister of the Interior), Mr Sivakov, and a high-ranking officer of the special forces, Mr Pavlichenko, in these disappearances;

– the crime of perversion of the course of justice possibly committed by certain other high-ranking officials who have been involved in the investigations carried out so far and who may have falsified, dissimulated or destroyed evidence in their possession in order to protect the true perpetrators of the crimes.

ii. consider suspending the participation of Belarus in various Council of Europe agreements and activities,

as well as any contacts between the Council of Europe and the Belarusian Government on a political level, until sufficient progress has been made regarding the request under paragraph 1.i above and, meanwhile, to step up its co-operation with civil society in Belarus with a view to promoting respect for human rights;

iii. invite its member and Observer states:

a. to apply political pressure (including sanctions) on the Belarusian Government in order to send it a strong signal that impunity for enforced disappearances is not tolerated by the international community; and

b. to continue protecting, to the best of their ability, those women and men in Belarus who are working for the establishment of the truth.

2. The Assembly urges the member states of the Council of Europe and the international community as a whole to exert maximum political pressure on the current leadership of Belarus, including through sanctions, until a credible, independent investigation of the alleged involvement of high-ranking officials in the disappearances, or their cover-up, has been carried out.

3. It invites, in particular, the judicial authorities of those countries whose domestic laws give their national courts international jurisdiction for cases of serious human rights abuses, either in general, or in the presence of certain territorial links, to begin proceedings against certain high-ranking Belarusian officials for the alleged murder, for political reasons, of one or more of the four disappeared persons, as cited in its Resolution 1371 (2004).

1. *Assembly debate* on 28 April 2004 (12th Sitting) (see Doc.10062, report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mr Pourgourides).

Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 April 2004 (12th Sitting).