

STATEMENT ON THE DAY OF FREEDOM

PRESERVING BELARUS IN THE HEART OF EUROPE



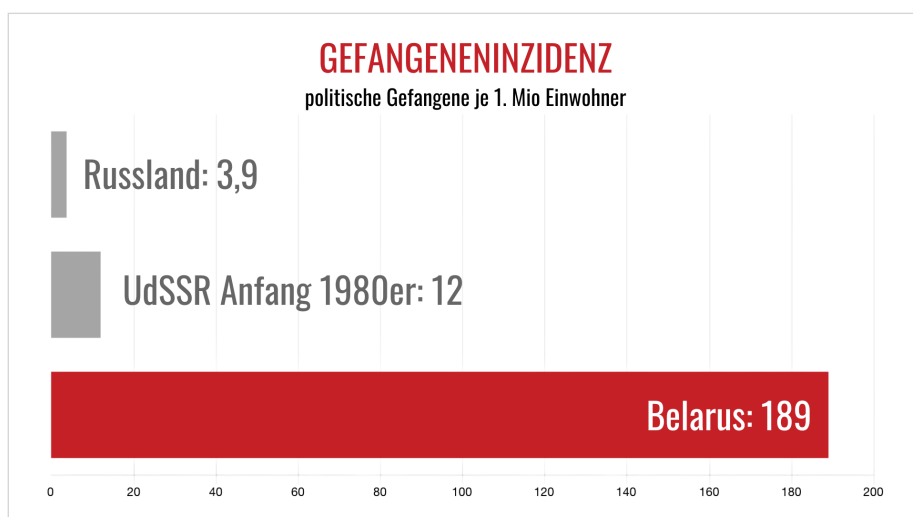
THE LONG ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

On March 25, 1918, the executive body of the 1st Belarusian People's Congress - the Rada - declared the independence of the Belarusian People's Republic (Belarusian: BNR). After more than 350 years of foreign rule, the first democratic unitary state emerged on the territory of present-day Belarus. The proclamation of the BNR was a response to the forced partition of Belarus between the German Kaiserreich and the Russian Bolsheviks. March 25, 1918 marked the beginning of a long road to the final attainment of independence for the Republic of Belarus in 1991.

CREEPING ANNEXATION

Today, we celebrate March 25 as "Dzień Voli" or the "Day of Freedom". This day is more important than ever, as the Lukashenka regime brings Belarus into ever-greater dependence on Russia, endangering the sovereignty of our country. We are witnessing the creeping annexation of Belarus by Russia, which poses a clear threat to Europe's security.

However, we must not forget that Belarus is a European country with a European culture, identity, and history at its core. The years 2020-2021 have shown that the Belarusian people want and are capable of fighting for a free, democratic, and independent Belarus. Resistance from within the country, however, is almost impossible today. Two years ago, the regime made the fight against people with different opinions and a free civil society the core of its policy. The number of political prisoners exceeds any historical experience of the last decades.



Among the political prisoners are people from all walks of life. The mere presumption of disloyalty to the regime can lead to arrest and long prison sentences. An independent cultural and art scene no longer exists in Belarus. Belarusian-language media, publishing houses, and schools are closed. The

use of the Belarusian language, our official language, leads to harassment in everyday life and is sometimes punished with imprisonment. Russian is increasingly dominating the public sphere.

This policy buttresses Putin's abstruse and dangerous concept of a "triune Russian people," which ultimately aims to erase both Belarusian and Ukrainian identities. While the war against Ukraine has led to decisive action by Europe and its democratic allies, few are aware of the silent catastrophe in Belarus.

PRESERVING BELARUS IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

On today's "Day of Freedom," we appeal to German and European politicians to stand up for the preservation of Belarus' state sovereignty, to stop the creeping de facto annexation, and to send a clear political signal that there is a European perspective for Belarus' future. The doors of the European Union are open for a democratic Belarus. A clear political message that a free, democratic Belarus is desired in the European family is of immense importance for all those who want to preserve Belarus in the heart of Europe. *Živie Bielaruś!*

Extended Board of the Association of Belarusians in Germany RAZAM e.V.

Yuliya Salauyova, 1st Chairwoman

Ina Rumiantseva, 2nd Chairwoman

Yauheni Fedarovich, Treasurer

Lena Borries, Assessor

PD Dr. Dmitry Chigrin, Assessor

Yauheniya Hukava, Assessor

Ales Moisseenko, Assessor

Maria Rudz, Assessor

Ina Valitskaya, Assessor