



International Panel of
Parliamentarians
for Freedom of Religion
or Belief



Norwegian
Helsinki Committee

April 2024

To Mr Aleksandr Lukashenko
Minsk, Belarus

We write as members of the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB). As a global network of parliamentarians from diverse political, religious, and geographical backgrounds committed to promoting and protecting the freedom of religion or belief for all, we express our deep concern about the new Belarusian Law “on Amending Laws on the Activities of Religious Organizations.” IPPFoRB is hosted by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, a non-governmental organization working to ensure that human rights are respected in practice.

The new law was signed on December 30, 2023. The legislation seems designed to intensify the State's extensive oversight over every aspect of the existence of religious communities, potentially leading to significant impacts on the human right to freedom of religion or belief. It introduces more stringent regulations for religious communities, restricting their engagement in specific religious and political activities.

The provisions of this new law contradict Belarus’s obligations under international human rights law. As you are aware, Belarus has signed the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICCPR Article 18 offers broad protections for the rights of individuals and communities of believers to gather for worship, prayer, and study freely. The provisions of Belarus's new religious law violate these standards.

We echo the [concerns raised by United Nations experts](#) Anaïs Marin (Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus), Nazila Ghanea (Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief), and Clément Nyaletsossi Voule (Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association):



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- We note that the provision on the requirement of mandatory registration, coupled with stipulating that the organizations can only be led by Belarusian citizens with permanent residency in the country, can result in discriminatory practices against certain religious groups.
- We are also concerned by the vague criteria outlined in the provisions of the new law, which targets individuals accused of "discrediting the Republic of Belarus, demeaning national honour, participating in political activities, or engaging in other unspecified extremist behaviours." Given that anti-extremism legislation has previously been employed to suppress dissenting voices, we fear that this new law will further strengthen the overarching state surveillance and control over personal freedoms.
- We further emphasize our concerns regarding the law's imposition of extensive state control over religious education and literature. It mandates that religious education, religious literature, and any other materials with religious content must not conflict with the "generally recognized traditional values of the Belarusian people and the ideology of the Belarusian State." This stipulation risks stifling religious expression and promotes a homogenization of thought that aligns solely with state-approved narratives, potentially eroding the diversity of religious practices and beliefs.

We, members of the IPPFoRB network, are willing to engage in a constructive dialogue on this matter. We are open to collaborating with the Belarusian authorities to find solutions that respect the rights and freedoms of all. We are dispatching this letter to the Norwegian embassies of the countries to which the parliamentarians of our network belong to underscore the urgency of the matter at hand. We urge you to seize this moment to bring Belarusian laws and policies into line with its freely undertaken international commitments. We respectfully urge you to take concrete action to provide freedom of religion or belief to all in Belarus.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.



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The following parliamentarians support this letter in their personal capacity and not as representatives of their government, political party, or any other body.

Abid Raja
MP Norway
Chair of IPPFoRB Steering Group

Sanela Skrijelj
MP North Macedonia
Member of IPPFoRB Steering Group

Paulina Andrea Nuñez
MP Chile
Member of IPPFoRB Steering Group