



CMRCET MUN



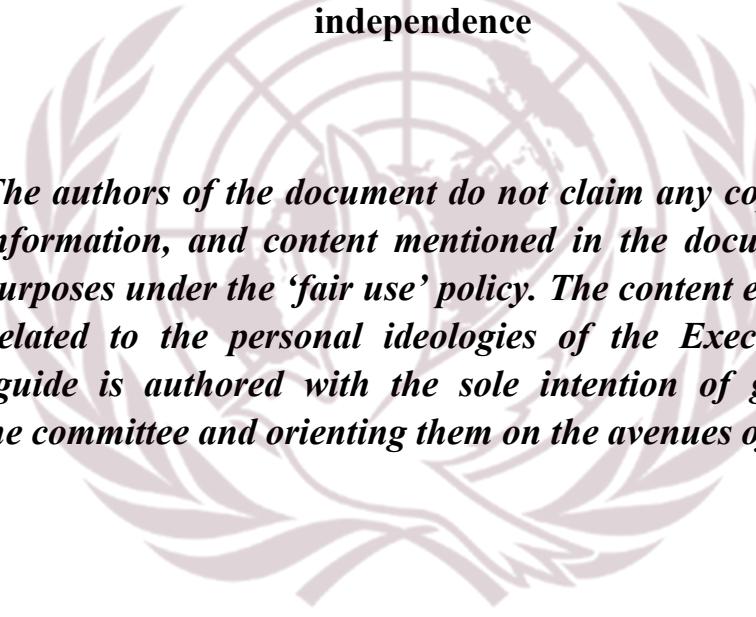
Background Guide

UNHRC
CMRCETMUN 2026

UNHRC Background Guide

Agenda: Assessing the human rights situation in Belarus with special emphasis on political prisoners, freedom of expression and judicial independence

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CMRCET
MUN

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Delegates, it is with utmost pleasure that we welcome you all to the Conference

We are eager to see you all for three days of intense debate, deliberation,

and discussions in this simulation of the **UNHRC at CMRCET MUN**

We hope your preparations are going smoothly and are sure that the efforts put in by the management, secretariat, organising committee, and all the Executive Board members will culminate in an unforgettable conference for all of you.

This background has been written to provide insight into the committee, agenda, and how it is relevant to the modern scenario. It also consists of all the information necessary for it to act as a foundation for all your further research. Please note that this background guide is neither the beginning nor the end of your research. It should simply act as a catalyst for you to go above and beyond. It is the first step towards understanding the agenda. Remember, understanding a problem is the first step towards solving it.

From a first-timer's perspective, we understand that an MUN conference can be overwhelming. That being said, please do not hesitate to contact any of your Executive Board members during the duration of your research for any sort of clarification.

New ideas, by their very nature, are disruptive.

Finally, we cannot wait to see all the new ideas and solutions all of you are going to come up with and all the very best.

Best regards,

Chair: Kingshuk Maulik

Co-Vice-Chairs: Banda Sai Karthik and Shiva M

Rapporteur: Aniksha Reddy Dandam

Note: We strongly encourage you to conduct a **PESTAL** analysis of your assigned portfolio, covering the following areas:

- 1. Political Landscape:** Understanding the domestic and international policies shaping education
- 2. Economic Factors:** Evaluating the financial infrastructure, investments, and funding models supporting development
- 3. Social Demographics:** Examining cultural, ethnic, and social factors that influence public participation
- 4. Technological Development:** Investigating advancements in science, facilities, and training techniques
- 5. Analysis of Current Events:** Staying up to date with the latest trends and data relevant to the agenda
- 6. Legal Framework:** Understanding the legal environment governing regulations and policies at both national and international levels

What do you need to do?

Basic Preparation and Research

1. The most basic thing to do in a Model UN is to research, speak and rebut.
2. Do a basic **PESTAL analysis** of your country, which is connected with the agenda.
3. Prepare around **2 to 3 speeches** for the General Speakers' List (GSL). Such speeches are generally **60 - 90 seconds** long. Their length should never exceed more than **200 words**.
4. Always **give your remaining time to questions** while ensuring that you try to get more speaking time from others through something called "yields".
5. Prepare a list of **at least 3 subtopics**. Have a **60-second speech** ready for each mentally.
6. You must listen **to the speeches of other delegates**. This helps you find questions and rebuttal points for future speeches. More than research, questions involve **logic**.
7. **Have some solutions ready beforehand in an "Operative Clause" format.** Solutions in a MUN follow a very legal and diplomatic language, which can be noticed in the past UN documents and resolutions. Refer to the following link-bestdelegate.com

Techniques to Write Good Speeches

1. HPA Method - Hook, Point, Action

[How to Write an Opening Speech - Best Delegate Model United Nations](#)

2. LEET Method - Label, Explain, Example, Tieback

[Example of LEET](#)

3. FLL Approach - Fact, Legality and Logic

This is a very technical and substantive approach to certain subtopics. You need to analyse the facts of the situation along with the legal realities surrounding it. Then one needs to connect both the facts and legalities through logic to weave a story and frame a narrative that they wish to portray to the public/audience. **PEN Method - Punchline, Example, Nail**

4. in the Coffin

This is a more aggressive style of debate, which is relevant for defensive arguments or rebuttals to allegations. One can start with a "punchline, which is generally the main observation or summary of the speech delivered in a humorous, satirical, aggressive or fairly dramatic fashion. One needs to back such an observation with substantive arguments, examples or legal references. Then, similar to a Tieback, you need to put the nail in the coffin with a concluding statement to remind the audience why you believe your particular interpretation of the subject matter is the right one. **IRAC Method - Issue, Rule, Application and Conclusion** This method is usually used in a lot of MUNs.

5. The methodology of IRAC is something which covers the aspects of the agenda.

Issue - Issue here means that you are bringing up the problem of the agenda to the purview

Rule - Now that you've brought the issue to the purview. Defend this Issue with relevant UN international laws, treaties, declarations and conventions. **Application** - After the Rule, talk about your country's stance on the agenda, and if required, use the laws established by your country's government in relevance to the agenda and committee.

Conclusion - As the name suggests, the conclusion is to conclude what has been stated so far

"A good speaker is not one who only knows how to start it well, but also to end it well."

Important Points to Remember: A few aspects that delegates should keep in mind while preparing:

1. Procedure: The purpose of putting in procedural rules in any committee is to ensure a more organised and efficient debate. The committee will follow the UNA-USA Rules of Procedure. Although the Executive Board shall be fairly strict with the Rules of Procedure, the discussion of the agenda will be the main priority. So, delegates are advised not to restrict their statements due to hesitation regarding procedure.

2. Foreign Policy: Following the foreign policy of one's country is the most important aspect of a Model UN Conference. This is what essentially differentiates a Model UN from other debating formats. To violate one's foreign policy without adequate reason is one of the worst mistakes a delegate can make.

3. Role of the Executive Board: The Executive Board is appointed to facilitate debate. The committee shall decide the direction and flow of debate. The delegates are the ones who constitute the committee and hence must be uninhibited while presenting their opinions/stances on any issue. However, the Executive Board may put forward questions and/or ask for clarifications at all points in time to further debate and test participants.

4. Nature of Source/Evidence: This Background Guide is meant solely for research purposes and must not be cited as evidence to substantiate statements made during the conference. Evidence or proof for substantiating statements made during formal debate is acceptable from the following sources:

a. United Nations: Documents and findings by the United Nations or any related UN body are held as credible proof to support a claim or argument. Multilateral Organisations: Documents from international organisations like OIC, NATO, SAARC, BRICS, EU, ASEAN, the International Court of Justice, etc., may also be presented as credible sources of information.

b. Government Reports: These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country.

c. NewsSources:

i. Reuters: Any Reuters article that clearly makes mention of the fact or is in contradiction of the fact being stated by a delegate in council.

ii. State-operated News Agencies: These reports can be used in support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any country as such, but in that situation, may be denied by any other country in the council. Some examples are— RIA Novosti (Russian Federation), Xinhua News Agency (People's Republic of China), etc.

*****Please Note: Reports from NGOs working with UNESCO, UNICEF and other UN bodies will be accepted. Under no circumstances will sources like Wikipedia or newspapers like the Guardian, Times of India, etc. be accepted. However, notwithstanding the criteria for acceptance of sources and evidence, delegates are still free to quote/cite from any source as they deem fit as a part of their statements.****

Hierarchy of evidence. Evidence can be presented from a wide variety of sources, but not all sources are treated as equal. Here is the hierarchy in which evidence is categorised:

Tier 1: Includes any publication, statement, resolution, or document released by any of the Nations' official organs or committees; any publication, statement, or document released by a UN member state in its own capacity. The evidence falling in this tier is considered most reliable during the simulation.

Tier 2: Includes: any news article published by any official media source that is owned and controlled by a UN member state. E.g.: Xinhua News (China), Prasar Bharti (India), BBC (United Kingdom), etcetera. The evidence falling in this tier is considered sufficiently reliable in case no other evidence from any Tier 1 source is available on that particular fact, event, or situation.

Tier 3: Includes: any publication from news sources of international repute such as Reuters, The New York Times, Agence-France Presse, etc. The evidence falling under this tier is considered the least reliable for this simulation. Yet, if no better source is available in a certain scenario, it may be considered.

Foreign Policy and Foreign Relations

Foreign policy, in simple terms, is what your country aims to achieve regarding the issue at hand or in general with its relations with other countries. 1. **What role must foreign policy play in your research?** Understanding the foreign policy of your country must be a checkbox that you tick off at the very beginning of your research. Your foreign policy should dictate everything from the arguments you make, the reasoning you give for making those arguments, and the actions you take in the Council.

2. Where do I look to find foreign policy?

Most of the time, foreign policy is not explicitly stated. It must be inferred from the actions and statements issued by the country. Reading the meeting records from previous meetings of the

UNSC (or any other UN body where your country might have spoken on the issue) is a great place to start. If such records are unavailable, look for statements from your country's Foreign Ministry (or equivalent like Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, etc.) and top leadership (PM, Pres., Secretary of State, Defence Minister). Foreign Relations, on the other hand, refers to the diplomatic ties that one country has with another and considers elements such as the mutual presence of embassies, consulates, ambassadors & diplomatic dialogue. More often than not, foreign policy is what will be your primary concern during your MUN, but it is also important to consider any extremities in your allotted country's foreign relations.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE:

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is an intergovernmental body within the United Nations system, established in 2006 by the General Assembly through Resolution 60/251. It is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and making recommendations on them. The Council is composed of 47 Member States, elected by the General Assembly for staggered three-year terms, with seats distributed among regional groups to ensure equitable geographical representation

Seats are distributed geographically:

- Africa: 13
- Asia-Pacific: 13
- Latin America and the Caribbean: 8
- Western Europe and Others: 7
- Eastern Europe: 6

Members serve for three-year terms and are not immediately eligible for re-election after two consecutive terms.

The Council's Bureau includes a President and four Vice-Presidents, representing different regional groups.

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights (CHR), established in 1946 under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), was the first UN body dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights globally. It comprised 53 Member States elected by ECOSOC for three-year terms and met once a year for about six weeks. While it introduced important mechanisms such as Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups, over time, it faced widespread criticism for politicisation, selectivity, and allowing countries with poor human rights records to influence decisions.

In response to these shortcomings, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) was created in 2006 by UN General Assembly Resolution 60/251, replacing the CHR. Unlike its predecessor, the UNHRC functions as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, reflecting its elevated status and broader accountability.

Types of Sessions in the UNHRC

1. Regular Sessions

- Held three times a year. Regular sessions address both thematic and country-specific human rights issues
 - 1. March (Main Session): Focused on the annual report of the High Commissioner and key human rights issues
 - 2. June Session: Thematic discussions and follow-ups.
 - 3. September Session: Review of reports from Special Procedures and UPR outcomes

2. Special Sessions

- Convened at any time to address urgent human rights situations or emergencies (e.g., conflicts, humanitarian crises)
- Can be called if one-third of the Council's members request it
- Example: Special Sessions on the situation in Syria (2011) and Sudan (2023)

3. Organisational Sessions

- Held at the beginning of each Council year to elect the Bureau (President and Vice-Presidents) and plan the annual program of work

4. Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Sessions

- Conducted under the UPR Working Group, composed of all UNHRC members
- Review the human rights records of each UN Member State once every 4–5 years

MANDATE AND FUNCTIONS

The UNHRC serves as the principal intergovernmental forum within the United Nations for addressing human rights issues. Its functions include:

- **Promoting Universal Respect:** The Council works to promote universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner
- **Addressing Violations:** It can discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year. The Council responds to human rights emergencies and makes recommendations on how to better implement human rights on the ground
- **Universal Periodic Review (UPR):** One of the Council's key mechanisms is the UPR, a state-led process that reviews the human rights records of all UN Member States periodically. This mechanism is designed to ensure equal treatment for every country and provides an opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve human rights situations and to fulfil their human rights obligations
- **Special Procedures:** The Council appoints independent human rights experts, known as Special Procedures, which serve as the eyes and ears of the Council by monitoring situations in specific countries or by looking at specific themes. These experts report their findings to the Council and provide recommendations

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND DOCUMENTATION

The UNHRC holds regular sessions three times a year, in March, June, and September, at the United Nations Office at Geneva. Additionally, the Council can convene special sessions at any time to address urgent human rights situations, provided that one-third of the Member States request such a session.

During its sessions, the Council adopts resolutions or decisions that express the will of the international community on given human rights issues or situations. These resolutions, while not legally binding, carry significant political weight and can prompt governments to take action to remedy human rights violations. The Council also holds panel discussions, interactive dialogues with Special Procedures, and considers reports from various human rights mechanisms.

The Council's resolutions and decisions are documented and made publicly available, ensuring transparency in its proceedings. These documents can be accessed through the official website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The UNHRC produces a variety of official documents that serve different purposes.

These documents are coded and categorised for easy reference.

1. Official Documents (A/HRC/...)

These are the main working and outcome documents of the Council. They include:

- ***Resolutions and Decisions:*** Formal outcomes adopted by the Council (e.g., A/HRC/RES/...)
- ***Reports of the Sessions:*** Summaries of discussions and conclusions (A/HRC/.../Add 1)
- ***Reports of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:*** Analytical or thematic reports (A/HRC/xx/xx)
- ***Reports of Special Procedures:*** Submitted by Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts, or Working Groups on specific issues or countries
- ***Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Documents:*** Contain national reports, compilations of UN information, and stakeholder summaries
- ***Advisory Committee Reports:*** Research-based recommendations to the Council.

2. Informal Documents (Conference Room Papers – CRPs)

- Used for negotiation or information-sharing during sessions. These are not official UN documents but are distributed during meetings for convenience

3. Summary Records and Meeting Reports

- Provide detailed accounts of the debates and statements made during Council sessions.

4. Written and Oral Statements by NGOs and Delegates

- Civil society and national representatives submit written statements and make oral interventions that become part of the Council's public record

For more detailed information about the UNHRC, its mechanisms, and its activities, you may refer to the following resources:

- 1. About the Human Rights Council**
- 2. Human Rights Council Mechanisms and Entities**
- 3. Universal Periodic Review**
- 4. Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council**

Map of the Region



Key Figures

1. Alexander Lukashenko – President of Belarus: Central authority accused of overseeing systemic repression and erosion of democratic institutions.
2. Roman Golovchenko – Prime Minister of Belarus: Represents executive governance and implementation of state policies.
3. Ivan Kubrakov – Minister of Internal Affairs: Key figure linked to policing, arrests, and treatment of political detainees.
4. Valery Vakulchik – KGB leadership: Security apparatus implicated in surveillance, intimidation, and repression.

5. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya – Leader of the Belarusian democratic opposition:

Internationally recognised opposition figure advocating for human rights and democratic reform

repression and lack of fair trial guarantees

Case highlights

6. Maria Kalesnikava – Opposition leader and political prisoner:

Symbol of political

repression and lack of fair trial guarantees

judicial politicisation

7. Viktor Babaryka – Former presidential candidate and political prisoner:

Prominent advocate for political prisoners; Nobel Peace Prize laureate

detainees and international concern

Key Terms

1) Political Prisoner: An individual detained or imprisoned primarily due to their political beliefs, activities, or peaceful opposition to the government, often without fair trial guarantees
Associated Documents:

- *UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) Opinions*
- *ICCPR, Articles 9 & 14*

2) Arbitrary Detention: Detention carried out without legal basis, due process, or in violation of international human rights standards

Associated Documents:

- *ICCPR, Article 9*
- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 9*
- *WGAD Mandate*

3) Due Process of Law: The right of individuals to fair legal procedures, including timely access to legal counsel and an impartial hearing

Associated Documents:

- *ICCPR, Article 14*
- *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990)*

4) Fair Trial Standards: Guarantees ensuring equality before courts, presumption of innocence, and independent adjudication
Associated Documents: - *ICCPR, Article 14* - *UDHR, Article 10*

5) Judicial Independence: The ability of courts and judges to act without interference from the executive or legislative branches
Associated Documents: - *UN Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary (1985)*

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- *ICCPR, Article 14(1)*

6) Rule of Law: Governance principle where all individuals and institutions are accountable under publicly disclosed and equally enforced laws

Associated Documents:

- *UN Secretary-General's Report on the Rule of Law (2004)*
- *UDHR*

7) Impunity: Failure to hold perpetrators of human rights violations legally accountable

Associated Documents:

- *UN Updated Set of Principles to Combat Impunity (2005)*

8) Accountability Mechanisms: Judicial or quasi-judicial processes used to investigate, prosecute, and remedy human rights violations

Associated Documents:

- *OHCHR Accountability Framework*
- *UNHRC Resolutions on Accountability*

9) Freedom of Expression: The right to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas without UDHR, Article 19

10) Media Freedom: Protection of journalists and independent media from censorship, intimidation, or criminal prosecution

Associated Documents: - *UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists*

- ICCPR, Article 19

11) Press Censorship: Suppression or control of information by the state through legal or extralegal means

Associated Documents:

- ICCPR, Article 19(3)

- UNHRC General Comment No. 34

12) Digital Surveillance: Monitoring of online communication that may infringe on privacy and expression rights

Associated Documents:

- ICCPR, Articles 17 & 19

- UNHRC Resolution on the Right to Privacy in the Digital Age

13) Criminalisation of Dissent: Use of criminal law to punish peaceful political opposition or criticism of the state

Associated Documents:

- ICCPR, Articles 19, 21, 22

- UN Special Rapporteur reports on freedom of expression

14) Civil Society Organisations (CSOs): Non-governmental groups that promote civic participation and human rights advocacy

Associated Documents:

- UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998)

15) Human Rights Defenders: Individuals or groups working peacefully to promote or protect human rights

Associated Documents:

- UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders

- UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs Mandate

16) Freedom of Assembly: The right to peacefully gather for protests, demonstrations, or public expression

Associated Documents:

- ICCPR, Article 21

- UNHRC General Comment No. 37

17) Reprisals: Acts of intimidation or punishment against individuals cooperating with UN mechanisms

Associated Documents:

- *UN Secretary-General's Report on Reprisals*
- *UNHRC Resolution 12/2*

18) Targeted Sanctions: Restrictive measures imposed on individuals responsible for serious human rights violations

Associated Documents:

- *UN Charter, Chapter VII*
- *UNHRC Accountability Resolutions*

19) Universal Jurisdiction: Principle allowing states to prosecute grave human rights crimes regardless of where they occurred

Associated Documents:

- *Geneva Conventions*
- *UN Principles on Universal Jurisdiction*

History of the Region

Belarus is a small Eastern European country landlocked by states like Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland and Latvia, whose current modern politics is shaped by a long experience of foreign rule, and incomplete democratic transition. For most of the twentieth century, it existed as the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, tightly controlled from Moscow, with a centralised economy, powerful security services and one ruling Communist Party. The Second World War devastated the territory, killing a huge share of the population and leaving a trauma that made ideas of stability and peace very powerful elements in later politics.

Around the late 1980s, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev brought in new reforms, which finally led to the formation of new groups that allowed open discussions on politics and national identity among people in Belarus and the rest of the Soviet Union. These newly formed groups started to talk about the implementation of the Belarusian language, improvement in political openness, and environmental impacts after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. In July 1990, Belarus's parliament said in a formal declaration that its own laws should come first, and after a failed coup in Moscow in August 1991, it wrote this idea into the constitution, which in reality meant Belarus was now an independent country while the Soviet Union was falling apart around it. Unlike some neighbouring countries that quickly adopted the market reforms and multiparty competition, Belarusian elites largely preserved Soviet-style economic structures and relied on the inherited KGB and bureaucracy system to govern.

Once in power as president, Lukashenko moved fast to concentrate power into his own presidency. In 1995 and 1996, controversial referendums were introduced which expanded his presidential powers, extended his term, weakened the parliament and brought back Soviet-style symbols like the red-green flag and the old coat of arms. Opposition parties and Western observers questioned both the way these votes were run and the shifting of power to one person, and these votes increased worries about how much power was shifting to one person, with the Council of Europe later deciding to freeze Belarus's special guest status because of those democratic concerns. By the end of the late 1990's, the security services, which were still referred to as the KGB and officials loyal to the president had become very powerful figures, while several opposition politicians and businessmen disappeared under suspicious circumstances, which deepened public fears and increased repression.

By the 2000s, Belarus was running as a very authoritative and centralised presidential system. Elections for parliament and local council took place, but they were far from a fair contest with pro-government forces dominating the chambers, state TV constantly praising the president, and people who went against the authorities were fined, removed from jobs, or imprisoned. International observers like the OSCE and other bodies declared that the 2001, 2006 and 2010 presidential elections have fallen short of even the basic democratic standards with heavy biased media coverage, harassment of opposition candidates and lack of transparency in vote counting. After the 2010 election, peaceful crowds in large numbers gathered in central Minsk to protest what they believed was fraud, but security forces used force and arrested hundreds of protesters and opposition leaders, sending a clear message to anyone thinking about organising any revolt against the ruling government.

One big reason this system lasted for a long period was because of what is called the "Belarus model" of the economy and welfare. Unlike in many postSoviet states, Belarus preferred keeping key infrastructure, most big factories and farms in state hands, while trying to guarantee jobs, controlling prices and providing subsidies so that unemployment stays low and living standards stay stable. This system worked because Russia sold Belarus cheap oil and gas, refined and re-exported these fuels, and kept its market open for Belarusian products, which made the country economically dependent on Moscow but also gave it a kind of assured safety. Many Belarusians considered this tight political control in return for stability and a basic level of social security a reasonable deal for a certain time period.

Belarus's foreign policy largely followed its domestic choices. The country integrated deeply with Russia and has been very close to the Union State framework, with shared air-defence and regular joint military drills, as well as membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation and later the Eurasian Economic Union. Lukashenko later tried to balance Russian dependence by improving relations with the European Union by hosting peace talks between the Russia-Ukraine conflict in eastern Ukraine in Minsk, which helped reduce Western criticism. Yet today, Russia controls Belarus's energy supplies, trade access and security guarantees.

Society inside Belarus was also evolving, cities were growing in number with more young people going to university, and the rapid spread of internet access, especially in major towns like Minsk, creating a more outward-looking modern generation. With many not willing to accept a paternalistic state and being more familiar with democratic examples in nearby countries like Poland and Lithuania, around the same time, independent news sites, Telegram channels, and political bloggers became crucial sources of information in a media space where state television was tightly controlled and largely pro-government.

All of these long-term changes led to dramatic clashes which took place around the 2020 presidential election. Lukashenko, by this time, had been in power for more than 25 years using the tightly controlled political system, but expectations in society, especially among urban professionals, younger people, and women, had shifted. The 2020 elections led to huge protests, and in response the harsh crackdown was conducted, which began the current phase in Belarus's history, facing a deep human-rights crisis, issues of political prisoners, freedom of expression and a threat to judicial independence.

BACKGROUND OF THE AGENDA

The agenda for this committee discusses how Belarus's political system has turned into a long-running human-rights crisis, with major acceleration after the 2020 presidential election. Those elections were widely not considered free or fair by many Belarusians and international observers, which was initially followed by huge, peaceful demonstrations across the country and then followed by a heavy crackdown from the authorities. Security forces detained thousands of people, and in the years that followed, the state has focused less on normal political competition and more on wiping out organised opposition and independent media.

In the centre of this crisis stand political prisoners since 2020, several thousand people have faced criminal charges linked to protests, online posts or peaceful activism, and at times, roughly 1,200-1,300 people have been recognised as being behind bars on politically motivated grounds. Reports from UN experts and NGOs repeatedly described torture and ill-treatment, solitary confinement, denial of medical care, and new disciplinary charges that add years to their sentences, and prisons end up becoming a punishment with no clear end. To an extent where even relatives and friends face the risk of being charged themselves upon sending money, letters or basic supplies to prisoners, which pushes fear far beyond the prison gates.

Alongside the arrests, the government has shut down any room for freedom of expression and independent civic life. Independent media outlets have been closed or are officially branded as 'extremist', with many sites being blocked, and even sharing opposition posts or donating to support groups can lead to criminal cases. Many NGOs, trade unions and cultural organisations have been shut down, leaving activists and journalists with a choice of going into exile or being

forced into silence. Leaving the state television and official channels as the main source of news inside the country, while critical media operate from outside Belarus, facing ongoing threats of being sentenced in absentia and losing their homes or assets

The Belarusian justice system has been criticised as a core part of the problem where Belarusians Courts routinely been identified as convicting government critics in rushed or closed proceedings, with heavy sentences based on vague extremism or terrorism provisions. Defence lawyers who take on politically sensitive cases risk disbarment, prosecution or imprisonment, which violates the basic fair-trial guarantees. UN mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur and a Group of Independent Experts, have raised warnings that practices of some abuses, such as widespread imprisonment and persecution on political grounds, may amount to crimes against humanity, making Belarus's situation a priority for this committee.

Timeline of Key Events

- **1986** – Chernobyl disaster contaminates large parts of Belarus
- **Mar 1990** – First competitive elections to the Supreme Soviet.
- **27 Jul 1990** – The Soviet Union adopts the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Belarus.
- **25 Aug 1991** – Declaration of the independence of Belarus.
- **Dec 1991** – Stanislau Shushkevich signs the Belavezha Accords with Russia and Ukraine, dissolving the USSR and creating the CIS.
- **Mar 1994** – Adoption of the new constitution
- **Jul 1994** – Alexander Lukashenko wins the first presidential election
- **May 1995** – Referendum boosting presidential powers, and restoring Russian as a state language.
- **NOV 1996** – Introduction of Further referendums.
- **1997-1999** – Belarus and Russia sign and deepen the “Union State” project.
- **2001-2006** – Lukashenko re-elected president in votes criticised by the OSCE as failing to meet democratic standards.
- **Dec 2010** – Mass protests in Minsk following the presidential election.
- **2014-2015** – Minsk acted as a host for negotiations on the conflict in eastern Ukraine.
- **Oct 2015** – Lukashenko wins a fifth presidential term
- **2017 (from march starting)** – Protests against the “social parasite tax” on underemployed citizens.
- **2019** – Growing public frustration over stagnating wages and deeper integration with Russia.
- **May-Jul 2020** – Viktar Babaryka and Syarhei Tsikhanouski were arrested or restricted from competing.

- **9 Aug 2020** – Presidential election official results show Lukashenko winning with 80% of the vote.
- **Aug-Sep 2020** – Largest protests in Belarusian history.
- **2021** – Arrests, raids on media and NGOs, and long prison sentences for protesters and journalists.
- **24 Feb 2022** – Russia used Belarusian territory for troops, missiles and logistics to launch its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.
- **2022-2023** – Increased systematic closure of independent media and NGOs.
- **2022-2024** – UN reports torture and persecution of opponents in Belarus may amount to crimes against humanity.
- **Jun 2024** – Release of more than 200 people jailed on politically motivated charges.
- **Sep-Oct 2024** – Lithuania refers the situation in Belarus since 2020 to the ICC.
- **2024-early 2025** – first report from the Group of Independent Experts on Human Rights Situation in Belarus.
- **26 Jan 2025** – Lukashenko claims a seventh term.
- **Throughout 2025** – Ongoing repression with the introduction of new restrictive laws on extremism.
- **13 Dec 2025** – Belarus releases 123 detainees, which includes Nobel laureate Ales Bialiatski and opposition leaders Maria Kalesnikava and Viktar Babaryka.

International Frameworks and Laws Governing Human Rights Violations

1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR): Establishes obligations to protect life, liberty, fair trial, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and political participation (Articles 2, 7, 9, 14, 19, 21, 25). Relevant for analysing cases of arbitrary detention, judicial independence, media freedom, and civic engagement.

2. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): Provides foundational human rights principles, including the right to life, personal security, fair trial, free expression, assembly, and political participation (Articles 3, 5, 9, 10, 19, 20, 21). Guides the assessment of state practices affecting civil and political freedoms.

3. Convention Against Torture (CAT): Defines and prohibits torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment (Articles 1, 2, 11, 12, 16). The framework supports evaluating detention practices, safeguards against abuse, and state responsibilities to investigate allegations.

4. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR): Protects rights related to work, health, education, and cultural participation (Articles 6, 7, 12, 15). Useful for

assessing constraints on labour, access to services, or restrictions on cultural and academic freedoms.

5. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):

Obliges states to eliminate gender-based discrimination in public and political life (Articles 2, 7, 15). Relevant for examining women's access to decision-making, protection against political persecution, and equality under the law.

6. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): Protects children's rights to protection, expression, assembly, and humane treatment (Articles 3, 13, 15, 37). Provides a basis for evaluating youth participation in public life and safeguards in detention or conflict situations.

7. International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance:

Establishes state obligations to prevent disappearances, investigate incidents, and provide remedies (Articles 1, 2, 12, 24). Applicable in analysing cases where individuals go missing, or accountability mechanisms are absent.

8. European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR): Guarantees rights to life, liberty, fair trial, freedom of expression, and assembly (Articles 3, 5, 6, 10, 11). Provides regional jurisprudence for evaluating restrictions on civil and political freedoms.

9. OSCE Helsinki Final Act (1975): Sets commitments on human dignity, political participation, freedom of expression, and the rule of law. Offers a multilateral framework for assessing compliance with democratic norms and civic freedoms.

10. UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms (1990): Outlines rules on necessity, proportionality, and accountability in the use of force. Relevant for evaluating law enforcement operations and crowd-control measures during public demonstrations.

11. UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules):

Establishes principles on humane detention, access to medical care, protection from torture, and legal counsel. Guides assessing detention conditions and treatment of prisoners.

12. UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998): Affirms the rights of individuals and organisations to promote human rights (Articles 1, 5, 6, 12). Useful for evaluating the enabling environment for civil society, advocacy, and legal protections.

13. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court: Defines crimes against humanity, including persecution, imprisonment, and enforced disappearances (Articles 7, 25). Relevant for assessing systematic violations targeting civilian populations.

14. UN Charter (Articles 1, 55, 56): Obliges states to promote universal respect for human rights and cooperate with UN mechanisms. Serves as a foundational reference for evaluating adherence to international obligations.

15. International Labour Organisation Conventions 87 and 98: Guarantee freedom of association and collective bargaining. Relevant for analysing labour rights, union activity, and protections against retaliation in political or economic contexts.

Belarus and NATO

The relationship between Belarus and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has remained tense and confrontational, particularly in the context of Belarus's deteriorating human rights situation. Following the disputed 2020 presidential elections, Belarus witnessed widespread protests that were met with mass arrests, arbitrary detention of political opponents, and severe restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. NATO member states have repeatedly condemned these developments, emphasising concerns over the continued imprisonment of political prisoners, the suppression of independent media, and the absence of judicial independence in Belarus. Although NATO is primarily a security alliance and not a human rights body, it has consistently aligned with international human rights norms and supported diplomatic and economic measures, including sanctions, aimed at holding Belarusian authorities accountable for violations of international obligations under instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In response, Belarus has curtailed cooperation with NATO, framing the Alliance as a threat to its sovereignty and national security, while deepening its political and military alignment with the Russian Federation. This adversarial stance has further justified internal repression under the guise of security concerns, contributing to a shrinking civic space and weakening the rule of law.

Belarus and Ukraine

The relationship between Belarus and Ukraine has significantly deteriorated in recent years, particularly in the context of regional security developments and Belarus's internal human rights situation. Historically, both countries maintained pragmatic and relatively stable relations; however, this dynamic shifted following the 2020 political crisis in Belarus and, more decisively, after the outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine conflict in 2022. Belarus's decision to allow its territory to be used for Russian military operations against Ukraine marked a major turning point, leading to a breakdown in diplomatic trust and cooperation. Ukraine has since viewed Belarus not merely as a neighbouring state, but as a complicit actor in regional aggression, despite Belarusian authorities claiming non-belligerence. This alignment with the Russian Federation has had direct implications for human rights within Belarus, as authorities have intensified repression against

anti-war voices, independent journalists, and civil society actors expressing solidarity with Ukraine. Individuals opposing the war or criticising Belarus's role have faced prosecution, arbitrary detention, and politically motivated trials, further undermining freedom of expression and judicial independence.

Death Penalty

Belarus remains the only country in Europe and Central Asia to carry out the death penalty. In February, Human Rights Defenders Against the Death Penalty in Belarus reported that Viktar Skrundzik, sentenced to death for murder and attempted murder, was executed on July 16, 2022. In March, amendments to the Criminal Code entered into force, expanding the death penalty to cover the crime of "high treason" for state officials and military personnel. In October, the Minsk regional court sentenced Alexander Taratuta, convicted of murder, to death.

Situation of Journalism

Journalism in Belarus operates within a highly regulated and restrictive environment shaped by state policies on information control, national security, and public order. **1. Legal and Regulatory Framework** Media activity in Belarus is governed by laws that require state registration and accreditation for journalists and media outlets. Authorities have expanded legislation related to extremism, public order, and information security, which has had a direct impact on journalistic work. Reporting on politically sensitive topics without official accreditation is considered unlawful. **2. Political Prisoners and Journalists** Several journalists have been detained or imprisoned under charges related to extremism, public disorder, or dissemination of prohibited information. The government maintains that such actions are taken in accordance with domestic law, while international observers classify several detained journalists as political prisoners. This divergence highlights differing interpretations of lawful journalism versus political activity. **3. Freedom of Expression** Freedom of expression exists but is subject to significant limitations. Independent media outlets face restrictions such as:

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- Revocation of licenses
 - Blocking of websites
 - Designation of media content as extremist

4. Judicial Independence

Judicial proceedings involving journalists are conducted through the national court system. However, concerns have been raised by international organisations regarding the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, particularly in cases involving media workers and political matters. The state asserts that courts act within the constitutional framework.

5. Media Environment and Public Access to Information

State-affiliated media remain the primary source of information for much of the population. Independent journalism continues to exist in a limited capacity, often through digital platforms or from outside the country. This has resulted in a constrained media pluralism and reduced diversity of viewpoints available to the public.

Situation of Incarceration

The incarceration of individuals classified by international observers as political prisoners remains a significant aspect of the human rights situation in Belarus. These cases are closely linked to restrictions on political activity, freedom of expression, and public assembly.

1. Legal Basis for Detention

Individuals identified as political prisoners have generally been detained under existing national legislation, including laws related to extremism, public order, national security, and unauthorised public activities. The government maintains that these detentions are lawful and based on violations of domestic law, while external actors often view the charges as politically motivated.

2. Conditions of Detention

Reports from international organisations and former detainees indicate concerns regarding conditions of incarceration, including:

Overcrowding and limited access to medical care

Restrictions on communication with family members and legal counsel

Use of disciplinary measures such as solitary confinement

The authorities state that detention facilities operate in accordance with national standards and legal procedures.

3. Access to Fair Trial and Due Process

Judicial proceedings involving political prisoners are conducted through the national court system. However, concerns have been raised regarding due process, including limited access to independent legal representation, closed hearings, and expedited trials. Questions regarding judicial independence have been highlighted by international monitoring bodies.

4. Treatment and Monitoring

Political prisoners are subject to prison regulations applicable to all inmates. International observers have called for independent monitoring of detention facilities, while access for international organisations remains limited. The government emphasises the importance of maintaining security and public order within correctional institutions.

5. Impact on Civil and Political Life

The incarceration of political prisoners has had a broader impact on civil society, political participation, and public discourse. The presence of such detentions contributes to a restrictive civic environment, with implications for opposition activity, media freedom, and public engagement.

Habeas corpus and Per legem terrae

Habeas corpus, understood as the legal safeguard against arbitrary detention, is not explicitly established as a standalone mechanism in the Belarusian legal system. Instead, protections against unlawful detention are incorporated within constitutional and procedural laws.

Per legem terrae, meaning “by the law of the land,” refers to the principle that no person should be deprived of liberty except in accordance with established law and due process. In Belarus, this principle is formally reflected in the Constitution and domestic legal framework, which regulates arrest, detention, and judicial proceedings.

International & Regional Case Law / Precedents

Bialiatski v. Belarus (UN Human Rights Committee, 2014): A prominent and a well known human rights defender and the founder of Viasna was imprisoned with political motivation under the claims of “foreign funding” for the organisation. Violating articles 14,19 and 22 of ICCPR. A well-calculated move to silence civil society. Ales Bialiatski’s case directly mirrors the systematic criminalisation of NGO’s, journalists and independent organisations, which is an issue tied deeply to the agenda.

Komarovsky v. Belarus (UN Human Rights Committee, 2017): Komarovsky was arrested and punished for participating in a peaceful protest, in turn violating articles 19,21 of the ICCPR. Which ruled that Belarus unlawfully restricted freedom and freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Also found that public repression has been on the rise, especially since 2020.

Kovalev v. Belarus (UN Human Rights Committee, 2013): Kovalev was executed after a trial lacking due process. The Committee ruled violations of Articles 6 and 14 of the ICCPR, citing denial of fair trial guarantees and inhuman treatment of the family through secrecy surrounding the execution. This demonstrates Belarus’ structural disregard for judicial independence and human dignity.

Turchenyak et al. v. Belarus (UN Human Rights Committee, 2015): Opposition activists were punished for peaceful assembly. The Committee ruled Belarus violated Articles 19 and 21 of the ICCPR, affirming that restrictions on peaceful protest were unjustified. The same legal violations dominate Belarus’ current protest policy.

Laptsevich v. Belarus (UN Human Rights Committee, 2000): An opposition MP was prosecuted for defamation of the president. The Committee held that Belarus violated Article 19 of the ICCPR, stressing that public officials must tolerate political criticism. Belarus’ criminal defamation laws still operate in direct contradiction to this ruling.

Grishkovtsov v. Belarus (UN Human Rights Committee, 2014): The applicant was arbitrarily detained and beaten while in police custody. The Committee found violations of Articles 7 and 9 of the ICCPR, confirming torture and unlawful detention. This case reflects widespread custodial abuse of political detainees documented since 2020.

Relevant Case Studies on Human Rights Violations

1) Bangladesh: Post-election, the repression by the ruling authorities has been very prominent, such as arresting opposition leaders, restricting independent media and violently dispersing protests. MASS detentions and violent torture methods have also been reported, which are a complete violation of Nelson Mandela rules and also violate various frameworks like: ICCPR (art 7, 9, 19, 21, 21), CAT, UDHR. Belarus exhibits the same pattern after its 2020 election: protest suppression, political imprisonment, media control, and denial of accountability, demonstrating a shared authoritarian response to electoral dissent.

2) Nepal: During the recent time of internal conflict, the Nepal government has also exhibited and engaged in the acts of oppressing freedom, such as arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances and repression, especially against students and minors. Accountability, investigations, justice in all and any forms were either tampered with or denied, making this case study very relevant to the agenda, as Belarus now follows a similar trajectory, with disappearances of activists, arbitrary detention, and institutional failure to investigate abuses, risking long-term entrenchment of impunity.

3) Myanmar: After the elections, Myanmar's military arrested political leaders and violently suppressed hundreds of protests across the country. Shutting down independent media as a move to stop the spread of accurate information. Although UN investigations documented these "crimes against humanity, justice is yet to be served to the victims. Once again connecting the dots and pattern to that of the cases in Belarus and its government's actions: electoral manipulation, mass arrests, violent protest repression, and systematic dismantling of civil liberties.

4)Venezuela: Venezuelan authorities have imprisoned opposition figures, violently repressed demonstrations, restricted media, and manipulated judicial processes to silence dissent. But now, after the US's special Military operation in Venezuela to fight narco terrorists, the oppressive leaders are out of authority. The ambiguity faced here is: will the country walk the right path of an oppression-free and fair government, like how it was back in Afghanistan before the taliban rule, or will the locals be exploited by the US government for oil drilling? But the situation before the operation is similar to Belarus: political imprisonment, repression of assembly, erosion of judicial independence, and consolidation of executive power through fear and coercion.

5) Russia: Russia has banned protests, labelled NGOs as “foreign agents,” censored independent media, and prosecuted opposition figures under extremism laws. And also arrested one of the opposing political candidates who opposed the methods of administration: Alexi navalny who was also reportedly poisoned with Novichok nerve agent on a flight. Which violates the fundamental principles of the Human rights ideologies and frameworks, such as ICCPR, UDHR, ECHR, and OSCE commitments.

6) Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe’s government used security forces to suppress opposition protests, detain activists, and manipulate electoral processes. Human rights defenders and journalists faced harassment and criminal charges without any proper justification, and often were denied or had their charges delayed. Violating: ICCPR, UDHR, CAT, African Charter. The common pattern which is currently unfolding in Belarus is the same authoritarian response to political challenge, combining electoral control with state violence and legal persecution of critics.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer

- 1) *How can the arbitrary detention and continued imprisonment of political prisoners in Belarus be effectively addressed and prevented?*
- 2) *What measures can be taken to safeguard freedom of expression, independent media, and digital rights in Belarus?*
- 3) *How can judicial independence and impartiality be strengthened in line with international human rights standards?*
- 4) *What legal reforms are required to prevent the misuse of national security and anti-extremism legislation against political dissent?*
- 5) *How can accountability be ensured for law enforcement and security agencies responsible for human rights violations?*
- 6) *What protections can be extended to civil society organisations and human rights defenders operating in or in exile from Belarus?*
- 7) *How can Belarus be encouraged or compelled to comply with its obligations under international human rights treaties, particularly the ICCPR?*
- 8) *What role should the United Nations Human Rights Council and its Special Procedures play in monitoring and reporting the situation in Belarus?*
- 9) *How can reprisals against families and associates of political prisoners be prevented and addressed?*
- 10) *What international mechanisms can be utilised to ensure justice, accountability, and redress for victims of human rights violations in Belarus?*

Suggested Moderated Caucus Topics

- 1) Evaluating the conditions, legal basis, and treatment of political prisoners in Belarus
- 2) Examining state-imposed limitations on freedom of expression, media, and digital spaces
- 3) Assessing the level of judicial independence and impartiality in Belarus
- 4) Analysing the application of national security and anti-extremism laws against political opposition
- 5) Reviewing the role and accountability of law enforcement and security institutions in human rights violations
- 6) Assessing the impact of state actions on civil society organisations and human rights defenders
- 7) Evaluating Belarus's compliance with its international human rights treaty obligations
- 8) Reviewing the effectiveness of United Nations monitoring mechanisms and special procedures in Belarus
- 9) Examining reprisals against families and associates of political prisoners
- 10) Exploring mechanisms to ensure accountability, justice, and redress for human rights violations in Belarus

Further Readings

1. [UDHR](#)
2. [IHL](#)
3. [Rome Statute ICC](#)
4. [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus \(A/HRC/59/59\)](#)
5. [UN Special Procedures — Contact and reporting page regarding human rights violations](#)
6. [World Report 2025 — Country chapter on Belarus \(crackdown on political prisoners and civil liberties\)](#)
7. [Human Rights Watch — Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Belarus](#)
8. [Amnesty International — Belarus: Human rights situation overview](#)
9. [FIDH / OMCT — Statement on release of political prisoners and call for all arbitrarily detained defenders to be freed](#)
10. [FIDH — Oral statement at the UN Human Rights Council on the Belarus situation](#)
11. [Call for the immediate release of human rights defenders and journalists in Belarus](#)

12. Belarus frees 123 prisoners, including Nobel laureate Ales Bialiatski, after sanctions relief

13. Freed Nobel laureate Bialiatski sees Belarus sliding back to Soviet times

14. Belarus opposition leaders Kalesnikava & Babaryka released



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