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*South Africa*

**Mantas Adomenas**  
*Lithuania*

**Hoda Chalak**  
*Lebanon*

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*Singapore*

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*Portugal*

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*Cameroon*

## STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL INTERNATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES (ISC/CD) ON ELECTIONS IN BELARUS 23 December 2010

The nongovernmental International Steering Committee of the Community of Democracies (ISC/CD) joins with numerous other governmental and non-governmental organizations in condemning the recent electoral process in Belarus, which was full of manipulations and outright fraud and culminated in a brutal police repression of peaceful demonstrators in the central Government Square of Minsk on Sunday evening. Dozens of people protesting the official results of the vote and journalists were severely beaten; more than six hundred were detained, including seven out of ten presidential candidates. Detainees have been treated in a degrading and inhuman way, have been repeatedly beaten in custody, and have had no access to health care, food and water. Closed trials that have already taken place are a parody of justice, with false witnesses from among the police, fabricated evidence, and no access to lawyers and the public. Offices of several leading human rights NGOs monitoring the elections and collecting complaints of the election fraud were raided by the police and security services, their staff detained and computers confiscated. President Alexander Lukashenko who will rule his country for the fourth consecutive term in an absence of free and fair elections, threatens opposition members with harsh criminal prosecution and many years of prison terms. He also warned journalists and Internet users about repressions for their exercise of freedom of expression.

These dramatic events have once again demonstrated the true face of the dictatorial regime in Belarus. No one should be fooled by recent warming up of Lukashenko's rhetoric towards the European Union. Despite its nominal adherence to the principles of the OSCE Copenhagen Agreement of 1990, and notwithstanding repeated criticism and technical advice from the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and ODIHR-led election observation missions, the government of Belarus has once again turned elections into a meaningless mockery of a democratic process and left people of Belarus no other choice but to protest in the streets. Lacking legitimacy at home and respect outside of the country, Alexander Lukashenko continues to follow the most repressive and undemocratic tactics resembling the days of the Soviet Union.

The International Steering Committee, in solidarity with democracy activists and civil society organizations in Belarus who have endured years of persecution, condemns the election fraud and following repressions and calls upon the Lukashenko Government to abandon its despotic ways and immediately free all those detained this week. We support the OSCE conclusions not recognizing the elections as free and fair and the position of the US government in not accepting

# International Steering Committee



## The Nongovernmental Process of the Community of Democracies

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results of the elections. We urge that no democratic government recognize results of these elections and treat Alexander Lukashenko as a legitimate leader. Only by embracing democratic principles will Belarus be able to join fully the region's progress towards development and economic growth.

The ISC/CD looks forward to the day when members of civil society from Belarus will be able to join their counterparts in Europe and other regions of the world in a common effort to ensure the fruits of democracy for all their fellow citizens. We stand in solidarity with democracy activists in Belarus and join them in their demand of freedom for their country.