

Dear President! Dear Secretary General! Dear friends!

The attention of the world is now riveted to Ukraine, where a bloody and terrible war is going on. The Belarusian people stand in solidarity with you, dear Ukrainian friends. We are doing and will continue to do everything in our power to bring Ukraine closer to victory.

Unfortunately, the Belarusian regime, which has been waging war against its own people for many years, has given the territory of our country to the aggressor. However, I don't think anyone has asked for permission. The loyalty of the Belarusian dictator, whose clutching on to power is only possible with the full support of Russia, needs no curtsies from Russia.

At the same time, the overwhelming majority of Belarusians oppose the war and support the Ukrainian people in their fight for freedom by all available means, including as members of the Ukrainian army. And in the Belarusian regiment, which is fighting in Ukraine, there is a party cell of the Narodnaya Hramada.

Today the world is closer than ever to a world war. "Realpolitik" and the tacit recognition of the classification of small countries as "sphere of interest" of Russia and other large states has led to what we are experiencing today.

Peaceful protests are increasingly violently repressed. Increasingly, the world is sliding towards authoritarianism and there are no effective mechanisms to protect democracy. Concern and deep concern are hardly the only means of international reaction to the bloody crackdown on popular protests, as in Belarus.

During our last meeting in January 2019, Nikolai Statkevich, leader of the Narodnaya Hramada party, said from the rostrum of the Council in San Domingo that Belarusians would no longer tolerate Lukashenko's "elegant victory" in 2020. The electoral farce could end in a popular uprising.

He also addressed the Russian delegation directly, demanding that the Russian leadership respect the right to independence, freedom and alternation of power of its neighbours. And he especially warned them against the temptation to use the "Belarusian balcony" to threaten neighbouring countries.

And so it happened. The Belarusian protest was peaceful, something we are often criticised for. However, just the other day Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov admitted that the Russian Federation was prepared to provide any assistance, including military assistance, to ensure that Luka retained power. Russian troops were at our

border back in 2020. The Belarusian protest may have delayed the outbreak of war in Ukraine.

Mikalai also asked us to stop giving in to dictators and only start a dialogue with them after all the conditions of the international community regarding individual rights and freedoms have been fully met. He said that such actions would discredit democracy itself and the EU in the eyes of Belarusians.

Who then could take such warnings seriously?

Our self-appointed authorities took them as such. That is why Mikalai Statkevich was kidnapped on 31 May 2020, more than 2 months before the election, and has been kept behind bars for more than 2 years since then. This has not stopped our self-proclaimed authorities from announcing in numerous TV propaganda films and official newspapers that he "invented the mass riots" back in 2019 and "instructed Sergei and Svetlana Tikhanovskaya and Pavel Severinets to implement them". The so-called trial took place on the premises of the pre-trial detention centre, in utmost secrecy, for six months. Mikalai Statkevich is sentenced to 14 years in a special regime.

It is not the longest sentence - in Belarus, opponents of the regime are now convicted to 20 and 22 years - but it is the toughest and most inhumane in terms of the conditions. As a rule, the most serious crimes are sentenced to a special regime. So far, no other opponents of the regime have been sentenced to a special regime. He will be held in the cell for at least five years. And only then can he be transferred to a common room with the right of free exit at least to the yard of the penal colony. Now in Belarus there is practically a genocide of its own people. All independent media have been eliminated, with over 800 media outlets, telegram channels, FB pages and even chat rooms deemed extremist materials or even formations. For reposting or even liking their material, for photos from protests, for holding national symbols, people's houses are broken into, their property is destroyed, they are arrested and sentenced to real prison terms. Recently, on 27 May, a law came into force whereby the death penalty can be imposed even for "intending" to commit a terrorist attack. What the self-proclaimed authorities understand by terrorist attacks is easy to understand if we remember that Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, Maria Kolesnikova and our party's General Secretary Sergei Spasich, also arrested long before the election and sentenced to 7 years in prison, were on terrorist lists.

However, Mikalai Statkevich wrote on the subject "those frightened to death are

trying to frighten society with the fear of death".

He believes that the changes that have taken place in society are irreversible and change is inevitable. "This is our delayed victory, this is their delayed defeat," he said a year ago.

The war in Ukraine led to an awareness of the need to reconsider approaches to global politics: to fully defend the principle of inviolability of borders, the need to collectively resist aggression, not to be led by the aggressor, because aggression that is not properly countered inevitably leads to new aggression. World leaders must finally realise that it is their responsibility to preserve peace and inviolable borders in small countries.

I know what Mikalai Statkevich would tell us here today:

Now more than ever, the world needs solidarity. Yes, people get tired... But politicians have no right to look for ways to appease dictators, reduce pressure on them or the extent of help to the victim of aggression.

Unpunished evil returns.

Our strength is in solidarity. We are responsible for the future of our planet."

Dear friends, thank you for your solidarity and support!