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Polish American Congress
Slovak League of America
Ukrainian Congress Committee
of America
Ukrainian National Association

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January 24, 2011

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We are writing on behalf of the Central and East European Coalition (CEEC), which is comprised of 18 national ethnic organizations and represents over 20 million Americans. We wish to express our appreciation for the statements already issued, and respectfully ask you to take further, decisive and effective actions with respect to the regime of Belarusian strongman Alexander Lukashenka.

As you are aware, the December 19, 2010 presidential election in Belarus was neither free nor fair. In addition, we remain deeply troubled by the brutal post-election crackdown by Lukashenka's regime on peaceful demonstrators, democratic activists, journalists and civil society. We are concerned about the wider implications, if left unchecked, these actions may have for democracy and security in the region as a whole. Therefore, we strongly urge that the United States press for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners still being held in Belarusian jails as a result of the post-election crackdown.

In addition, we not only concur with, but would like to underscore the recommendations set forth by prominent U.S. advocates for democracy and human rights in their January 14, 2011 open letter to you. In particular, we believe that the imposition of wider visa bans, targeted economic sanctions, reduced/waived visa fees for Belarusian citizens, support for/placement of students facing expulsion for their participation in the protests, and greater support for civil society activities will demonstrate our readiness to confront the dictatorial nature of this current regime, as well as help to safeguard the basic principles of democracy.

Finally, solidarity with the EU and other European governments against Europe's last dictator and in support of Belarusian civil society is critical. As so aptly stated in the January 14 letter, your leadership on this issue would send a powerful message about linking rhetoric with action to European foreign ministers.

We appreciate your consideration of these recommendations, and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you as a Coalition to discuss this and other critically important matters.

Sincerely,

Frank Spula
President
Polish American Congress

Michael Sawkiw, Jr.
Director
Ukrainian Congress Committee of America

Karl Altau
Managing Director
Joint Baltic American National Committee

Cc:

Senator John F. Kerry
Senator Benjamin L. Cardin

Senator Richard J. Durbin
Senator Richard G. Lugar

Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Representative Howard L. Berman
Representative Christopher H. Smith