

Statement of the Prime Ministers

Ingrida Šimonytė (Lithuania), Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš (Latvia), Kaja Kallas (Estonia) and Mateusz Morawiecki (Poland)

on the hybrid attack on our borders by Belarus

We, the Prime Ministers of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland, express our grave concern regarding the situation on the borders of Lithuania, Latvia and Poland with Belarus. It is clear to us that the ongoing crisis has been planned and systemically organized by the regime of Alexander Lukashenka. Using immigrants to destabilize neighbouring countries constitutes a clear breach of the international law and qualifies as a hybrid attack against the Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and thus against the entire European Union.

In such situation, unprecedented for our region, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland value the clear commitment by the EU and its Member States to stand together in protecting the EU's external border. Unity and urgent diplomatic, financial and technical support by the EU and its Member States is key to responding effectively to the challenge posed by the Lukashenka's regime.

It is equally important to jointly use all available diplomatic and practical means to cut the new irregular migration routes at its inception, as soon as possible.

In the EU we need to use this momentum to rethink our approach towards the protection of our borders. We firmly believe that the protection of European external border is not just the duty of individual Member States but also the common responsibility of the EU. Hence, proper political attention should be paid to it on the EU level and sufficient funding allocated.

We also believe that it is high time to bring the issue of abusing migrants on the Belarussian territory to the attention of the UN, including the United Nations Security Council. We urge the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to take active steps to facilitate the solution of this situation and to require the Republic of Belarus to comply with its international obligations assumed, inter alia, under the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. We also urge the UNHCR office in Minsk to make immediate meaningful efforts to address the matter with the Belarussian authorities.

Belarus must assume its full responsibility for people whose arrival to its territory it has organised itself. It is unacceptable that people who have arrived in Belarus are being unlawfully directed to the EU external border, to be later prevented from returning to their countries of residence. Weaponizing refugees and immigrants threatens the regional security of the European Union and constitutes a grave breach of human rights. Such behaviour should be condemned in strongest terms by the whole democratic community.

We are ready to provide all necessary protection to persons who enter our countries on conditions under the international refugee law and our obligations but we will take all necessary actions, including advancing advocating for the possible new restrictive measures by the EU to prevent any further illegal immigration orchestrated by the Belarussian state.

We, the Prime Ministers of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland urge Belarussian authorities to avoid any further escalation in our bilateral relations and with the European Union. The only way to solve the existing political crisis in Belarus is to launch a genuine internal dialogue with all internal political forces interested in shaping the future of Belarus, the representatives of the Belarussian civil society, including those in exile and to release all political prisoners including national minorities and to organize free and fair elections as soon as possible.