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**36th Session of the Universal Periodic Review**

**Review of Belarus**

2 November 2020

**Statement by Austria**

(1 min 10 sec)

Austria welcomes the delegation of Belarus and thanks them for their presentation today.

We are deeply concerned about restrictions on the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. Austria is also alarmed by the serious allegations of arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment of people following the presidential elections in August 2020.

Austria recommends:

1. to effectively and impartially investigate all allegations of torture or ill- treatment of peaceful protestors and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice;
2. to immediately release all those who have been arbitrarily detained solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, protect human rights defenders and to stop all forms of gender-based violence directed against peaceful protestors;
3. to guarantee a favourable environment for the work of journalists and bloggers by reviewing the Law on Mass Media to ensure it does not unduly restrict freedom of expression and media, including by removing the extrajudicial procedure of blocking internet websites;
4. to introduce a moratorium on the death penalty as a short-term objective and consider the full abolition of the death penalty and accession to the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR;
5. to ensure that any constitutional reform process includes all relevant stakeholders and guarantees the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in international and regional human rights treaties.