

**The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP**

Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London, SW1A 2AH

Sent via email

1 October 2020

**Dear Secretary of State,**

**Human rights abuses in Belarus**

We are writing to you, on behalf of the BMA (British Medical Association), to express our grave concern about the persistent reports of human rights abuses against peaceful protestors in Belarus following the controversial and fraudulent re-election of Alexander Lukashenko in August 2020 .

Peaceful protestors, exercising their right to free speech, have been attacked and beaten by Belarusian police. Rubber bullets and tear gas have been consistently utilised by Belarusian security forces with extreme and unwarranted aggression.

Equally concerning are the reports of what those detained by police in detention centres face. Detainees are often stripped naked and regularly beaten. They are also threatened with serious sexual assault. Amnesty International has stated that the screams of torture victims are audible from outside these detention centres.<sup>1</sup>

The BMA has also received reports that medical students in Belarus have faced particular intimidation from the authorities. Many have been assaulted and those who participate in the protests are threatened with poor grades and disappointing placements after graduation.

The BMA welcomed the statement from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office on 10 August 2020 criticising the electoral practice in Belarus and the subsequent violence. We stand in

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International report, August 2020,  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/08/belarus-mounting-evidence-of-a-campaign-of-widespread-torture-of-peaceful-protesters/>

**Chief executive officer:** Tom Grinyer



solidarity with those in Belarus who seek democratic freedom and urge the UK government to explore providing placements in the UK for Belarusian medical students.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr John Chisholm CBE**  
Chair, BMA medical ethics committee



**Tinaye Mapako**  
Co-chair, BMA medical students committee



**Becky Bates**  
Co-chair, BMA medical students committee

cc: The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP