

1 [Condemning the Arrests of Peaceful Protesters in Belarus and Declaring Solidarity With the
2 Bay Area’s Belarusian Community]

3 **Resolution condemning the arrests of peaceful protesters in Belarus prior to and**
4 **following the August 9, 2020, presidential election, which has been widely decried as**
5 **rigged and illegitimate; and declaring support for the Belarusian community across the**
6 **San Francisco Bay Area.**

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8 WHEREAS, Long-term President Alyaksandr Lukashenko has ruled Belarus as an
9 undemocratic dictatorship since the first presidential election in Belarus in 1994 and recently
10 declared a landslide victory in an election fraught with crackdowns and arrests of opposition
11 leaders; and

12 WHEREAS, Belarus law provides citizens the ability to choose their government in free
13 and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage, but
14 the Government of Belarus has consistently denied citizens that ability; and

15 WHEREAS, In the most recent 2010 and 2015 presidential elections, and in the
16 months leading up to the August 9, 2020, presidential election, Lukashenko has arbitrarily
17 disqualified or jailed key opponents ahead of and after the elections; and

18 WHEREAS, According to the Department of State 2019 Country Report on Human
19 Rights Practices for Belarus, Lukashenko has consolidated his rule over all institutions since
20 his first term as president and undermined the rule of law through authoritarian means,
21 including manipulated elections and arbitrary decrees, such that all subsequent presidential
22 elections fell well short of international standards; and

23 WHEREAS, Authorities in Belarus routinely impede the activities and legal status of
24 opposition political parties by refusing to register them, while allowing approximately six
25 largely inactive but officially registered pro-Lukashenko political parties to operate freely; and

1 WHEREAS, The Central Election Commission of Belarus (CVK) disqualified the
2 majority of potential candidates from the upcoming August 9, 2020, presidential election for
3 politically motivated purposes and banned and subsequently arrested at least four opposition
4 leaders for attempting to challenge Lukashenko; and

5 WHEREAS, Between May 6 and June 16, 2020, courts in Belarus convicted 97
6 individuals as part of a new wave of political persecution for “illegal protesting” and sentenced
7 those individuals to various terms of detention for a total of 1,246 days, while 105 individuals
8 were fined a total of 90,000 rubles, approximately 40,000 United States dollars; and

9 WHEREAS, On May 31, 2020, Belarusian human rights group Viasna (Spring) reported
10 that 50 opposition activists were arrested by police while they were gathering signatures to
11 allow opponents to participate in the presidential election; and

12 WHEREAS, According to the Belarusian Association of Journalists, on June 19, 2020,
13 police officers detained at least 14 journalists, including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
14 (RFE/RL) reporter Alyaksandra Dynko and cameraperson Andrey Rabchyk, who were
15 covering protests against the efforts of Lukashenko to undermine the electoral process; and

16 WHEREAS, On June 29, 2020, Amnesty International issued a statement condemning
17 that “[t]here is no safe environment for political debate in Belarus, and there is a growing
18 crackdown on human rights in the context of the forthcoming election,” and moreover,
19 “[o]pposition candidates along with their supporters are smeared, targeted and incarcerated
20 under trumped-up charges, with women particularly targeted;” and

21 WHEREAS, On July 14, 2020, during protests over the unjustified disqualification of
22 several presidential candidates, authorities used unnecessary and excessive force to detain at
23 least 220 individuals across the country; and

24 WHEREAS, On July 15, 2020, Amnesty International issued a statement in response to
25 the arrest of protesters in Minsk on July 14, 2020, stating that “[a]nyone detained simply for

1 peacefully protesting in Minsk, or other cities, is a prisoner of conscience, and must be
2 immediately and unconditionally released;” and

3 WHEREAS, On July 22, 2020, the Central Election Commission announced it would
4 severely limit the number of observers during early voting and on election day; and

5 WHEREAS, On August 9, 2020, Lukashenko declared a landslide victory against lead
6 opposition candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya in an election widely perceived and decried
7 as “rigged” and illegitimate; and

8 WHEREAS, Since the disputed election on August 9, 2020, protests have continued in
9 numbers of up to 250,000 demonstrators against Lukashenko’s iron-fisted suppression of
10 dissent, which have resulted in widespread arrests of peaceful protesters; and

11 WHEREAS, August 25, 2020, marked the 29th Anniversary of the declaration of
12 independence of Belarus from the Soviet Union and the re-adoption of the white-red-white
13 flag, triggering a new round of protests; and

14 WHEREAS, California and the San Francisco Bay Area are home to a large Belarusian
15 community, among whom San Francisco is a symbol for positive change; now, therefore, be it

16 RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco condemns the crackdown on
17 and arbitrary arrests of peaceful protesters, opposition party members, human rights activists,
18 and independent media by authorities in Belarus; and, be it

19 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco stands in solidarity
20 with the people of Belarus, including human rights defenders, bloggers and journalists who
21 are exercising their right to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression; and, be it

22 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco stands in solidarity
23 with the diaspora Belarusian community in and around the San Francisco Bay Area as they
24 seek confirmation of the well-being of family and friends from abroad.

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