

A revolution against fear - public greeting to the courageous demonstrators in Belarus.

The pictures and news that have been reaching us from Belarus for a few weeks now strongly remind us of 1989. They evoke experiences and memories. We too had long been confronted with an aggressive state. The violent suppression of the peaceful protests in Beijing in June 1989 unfolded constantly before our eyes, the fear of a "Chinese solution" accompanied those who rebelled against the dictatorship daily. But miraculously, autumn 1989 was largely peaceful and went down in history as the "Peaceful Revolution".

This was made possible by many mosaic stones such as the Solidarność movement in Poland, Charter 77 in what was then Czechoslovakia, the policy of Glasnost and Perestroika by Mikhail Gorbachev and the "Memorial" reappraisal group in the Soviet Union, the resistance in the Baltic States and the ever-increasing number of demonstrators were only the most important beacons.

The large-scale demonstrations in the GDR were undoubtedly preceded by a long opposition of civil rights groups. The mass protests were triggered - as in your case in Belarus - by the state government's blatant rigging of elections. The limit of what people can stand was reached. In this situation, the support of the West German media was of utmost importance to us.

All the more reason for us to feel a deep sense of solidarity with you in your far more difficult situation. In your country, free reporting is prevented, journalists are imprisoned, demonstrators are subjected to arbitrary justice and torture. The danger of targeted Russian intervention has not been averted and the independence of Belarus is threatened.

Experiencing powerlessness is not foreign to us either. It is therefore with great respect that we follow the courageous actions of the men and women, the steadfastness of the strikers, and the public support, for example by the Nobel Prize winner for literature, Svetlana Alexievich.

We would like to send you encouragement and deeply felt support with this greeting address. Do not be intimidated! Keep fighting for a democratic, free and independent Belarus - despite justified fear.

We call on the German Foreign Minister to continue to speak out clearly and unambiguously in favour of the right to peaceful demonstrations and an immediate end to aggressive state violence, as well as for negotiations with the established Coordinating Council (analogous to the Round Tables in Poland and the GDR).

We call on the European Union to take clear steps of diplomacy and to make sanctions that have been decided effective immediately.

Our common hope for Belarus is great: "For an open country with free people".

Civil rights activists of the former GDR