

European Action Week
18-25 March 2021

DEMOCRACY UNDER PRESSURE

The 15th Anniversary

SUMMARY

- Join the [Facebook Group](#) to share inspiration and receive information,
- Read the [political background of Democracy Under Pressure](#) in 2021,
- Check the [background information](#) on the cases of where democracy and the rule of law are under pressure,
- Start planning your [local activities](#) (p. 3). Give us a hint by [filling out this form](#).
 - Gagging of statues, Clapping, Walk for democracy,
 - Lighting up cities for March 25,
 - Events and other activities,
 - Follow-up: letters to prisoners
- Check out our [social media activities](#) and new logo (p. 5)
- Document all your activities under the hashtag **#DemocracyUnderPressure**

About the campaign

You can find the full [political background of Democracy Under Pressure](#) 2021 in the dedicated document.

History

This year's campaign will mark the 15th anniversary of the action!

Since 2006, the Young European Federalists (JEF Europe) have been organising the “Free Belarus Action” to raise awareness about the Lukashenka regime. The threat to democracy is unfortunately not only coming from dictators in post-Soviet states, but from various groups and situations all over the continent. In 2014 therefore, the “Free Belarus Action” was rebranded as the “Democracy under Pressure Action”, to address the pressure being put on fundamental democratic values such as freedom of speech and the rule of law not only in Belarus, but across Europe.

Goal

The overall goal is to draw attention to the systematic weakening of democratic values, to raise awareness about the situation in several European countries, as well as to show solidarity within our own JEF family.

Between **18 -25 March 2021**, we speak up for those who are silenced.

The campaign is two-fold: an action on the ground and a (social) media part.

How can you participate?

We call on all our national and local sections to participate, whether you choose to do something small or go all in. Local, regional and national coordinators of the campaign can join the [Facebook Group](#), a platform to exchange your ideas and plans to inspire each other, plus a way for us to inform you about the next steps. Document your activities under the hashtag [#DemocracyUnderPressure](#) and - who knows? - you might even win a prize!

We will award local sections for their creativity during the next Federal Committee meeting!

LOCAL ACTION

In addition to social media engagement, a successful campaign should also involve and activate people on the ground. We would like to take stock of how many cities we will have local actions in. Thus, we ask you to give us a hint on your planned activities [by filling out this form](#).

Under lockdown? Add your section to the [list of sections under lockdown](#) to connect and cooperate! **Here are a few tips** while measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 are in force.

A. Street Action

Why? By organising a street action, people inform themselves and visualise the very extreme of what it means to have democracy under pressure, you raise awareness among passers-by and have cool material for photos or videos to post on social media under the campaign hashtag.

How?

(1) Gag a statue

- Make posters with one or more cool slogans (e.g. speak up for democracy, speak up for the voiceless, speak up for freedom of speech, endangered: liberal democracy);
- Go to town, find a statue with a strong symbolic effect;
- Give a short speech explaining the political situation;
- Gag the statue and/or pin one of the posters to it: the statue will be speaking for you and all those who live in endangered democracies;
- Take photos of the statue and/or of yourself and your fellow JEFers;
- Post them on social media under the hashtag #DemocracyUnderPressure. Don't forget to tag JEF Europe!

(2) Clap for Democracy

- Be at least three people;
- Go out in a public place or where it is usually quiet (like in a library);
- Clap.

Why the applause? In Belarus, people found creative ways to protest against the regime, like [randomly clapping on the street](#) - now forbidden - instead of chanting slogans or setting their mobile alarm clocks to go off at the same hour in a public space. That is why clapping is still such a powerful symbol.

(3) Walk for democracy

JEF sections in capital or big cities can go in front of embassies (or consulates) of Belarus, Poland, Hungary or other countries where democracy is under pressure and light candles in front of them. You can then walk with other JEFers to go to the next embassy/consulate.

(4) Other possible street actions

Creativity is essential in street actions. You may consider organising a flash mob, a [projection bombing](#) (of the logo or social media slogans), an artistic expression that would mark in a less ephemeral way your city and its landmarks (e.g. tagging a message on the street with chalk-based spray, using stencils, wheatpaste murals), please make sure to:

- Be aware of the relevant legal provisions and pandemic restrictions in your country and city;
- Get in touch with us to discuss exactly what kind of action you would like to set up, why, and how we can help you achieve your goals.

B. Light up your city in white and red

March 25th, the last day of our action week is the unofficial [Freedom Day](#) celebrated by the democratic opposition in Belarus. Let's light up cities in white-red-white again on that day! Here is a [draft email](#) you can use to contact your city administration. Our advice is to start this process as soon as you read this.

Here is the [list of cities JEFers contacted](#) so you can use it to pressure your city to join the action. Let us know (see [contact details](#) below) when you contact it and its answer so we add it to the list!

C. Event (talk, conference, etc)

Organise an event covering topics under the scope of the Democracy Under Pressure campaign. It can be a broad topic, such as addressing the reasons behind democratic values put under pressure, why do people vote for parties that want to limit individual rights, how the rule of law is under threat in the EU and beyond. The topic can also focus on one specific case, addressing the political situation in specific cases or countries (see the [background info on countries](#)).

As a bonus, consider seeking partnerships with organisations concerned about this topic, e.g. your local Amnesty International group and other experts.

D. Follow-up letters to prisoners

Consider writing a letter to a prisoner in Belarus or if you did it already and that sadly the prisoner is still imprisoned, write a follow-up letter to them! All information on how to write a letter is [here](#).

SOCIAL MEDIA

📢 It's time to SPEAK UP FOR DEMOCRACY!

As always, the campaign will constantly be run on the hashtag **#DemocracyUnderPressure**. In order to expand the influence and usage of this hashtag, we need to use it on multiple posts, tweets and reels¹.

If we collectively aim to strategically collaborate in the use of this hashtag, we can potentially lift #DemocracyUnderPressure to a trending hashtag, which will give it far more attention.

Please consider updating your social media pages (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc) with the [visual materials](#) (available early March).

📢 New logo and visual identity

Anniversary says gift, so here is ours: a new logo for Democracy under Pressure. You will find the different versions of the logo [here](#).

For our 15th anniversary, we're planning to go big for **#DemocracyUnderPressure**, which is why we went ahead and developed a new visual identity for the campaign (red and black), which aims to embody and capture the sentiments revolving around the #DemocracyUnderPressure campaign; the logo itself is under pressure while the woman is blinded, gagged and oppressed.



Suggested posts/tweets during the action week

Feel free to tag us in your posts! So we do not miss out on your actions and can like and repost!

- Twitter: [@JEF_Europe](#)

¹ Video on Instagram

- Instagram: [@JEF_Europe](#)
- Facebook: [Young European Federalists \[JEF\]](#)

Thursday 18/03 - post/tweet the following (in your national language(s)) with our visual and link to JEF Europe's press release

- This week, JEFers across Europe organise actions to showcase that #DemocracyUnderPressure. #RuleOfLaw is not a political bargaining chip but the fundament of #OurEurope. Find @JEF_Europe's press release here: [*link*](#)

You will find the press release on Google Drive around March 15th. Feel free to translate it and add your own national quote.

Inspiration for further tweets during the week (only inspiration in order to avoid that we have all the same tweets!)

- When those in power are tempted by illiberalism, we choose the rule of law. When those in power are tempted by authoritarianism, we choose democracy. When those in power are tempted by nationalism, we choose Europe. #DemocracyUnderPressure
- Speak up for those who are silenced: we will not tolerate attacks on the #RuleOfLaw. #DemocracyUnderPressure no longer!
- Sign this petition to bring the Belarusian people's flag to Unicode! Yes, we need an emoji for this Belarusian national symbol. <http://chnq.it/kmKtRh8cC>
- When the #RuleOfLaw fails anywhere in Europe, it puts #OurEurope and #DemocracyUnderPressure. Speak up for those who are silenced.
- 🎵 If you're grateful for your freedom, clap your hands 🙌🙌🎵 (because Belarus can't). #DemocracyUnderPressure
- Don't let them bully you into silence. Clap your hands for democracy! 🙌🙌🙌 #DemocracyUnderPressure
- Over recent years, even long-standing democracies have been shaken by populist political forces. The time to act for #OurEurope is now. #DemocracyUnderPressure
- Democracy is in danger. Decline in global freedom is real. The time for action is now. Join our action (**event details**) #DemocracyUnderPressure
- You may choose to be silent about #DemocracyUnderPressure today. Tomorrow, you may have no other choice. Use your freedom to defend it in #OurEurope!
- The democratic stage belongs to everyone. Don't let someone steal the show to act against you! #DemocracyUnderPressure

[#DemocracyUnderPressure daily diary](#)

Challenge yourself to see how it feels to have some of your fundamental rights or freedoms taken from you. You can do it on a chosen day or daily over the Whole Action week. Assuming that the social media is not blocked by the government, you can make a diary on Instagram/Facebook/Twitter showing your struggle with a specific restriction and always

remembering to use the hashtag #DemocracyUnderPressure. Examples:

- Day 1: Freedom of expression. You want to say something but [***] and unfortunately [***] has [***]. It's unbelievable that in [***] such things can happen in 2021. [***]!!!
- Day 2: Right to private property. Give your mobile phone to someone else for the whole day, of course asking them to document your struggle.
- Day 3: Freedom of assembly. Not a real challenge in the COVID19 times, but you can show how you demonstrate against the government. Quietly. Alone. At home.
- Day 4: Personal liberty. Choose someone who will give you commands the whole day. You have to obey (as long as you don't harm yourself or others, physically or mentally) and your only relief is posting about it on social media.
- Day 5: Right to privacy. Write and talk to your friends the whole day about how you want to buy a new *bicycle*. Look for bicycles on Google and visit several websites offering them. Check your social media in the evening and enjoy your targeted bicycle ads.
- Day 6: Democracy. It's all about choice, is it? You can e.g. start a poll on social media asking people to choose the best rapper from among Sean Combs, Puff Daddy, P. Diddy, Puffy and Diddy.
- Day 7: Recap. Make an overview of what you have done during the week, share your reflections and link it with the actual human right violations and democracy restrictions in Europe. The [country backgrounds](#) can help.

CONVENTIONAL MEDIA

The **draft press release** will be sent to you around March 15. Feel free to translate it, add a quote of your board and share the statement to national and local media.

A series of articles addressing the topic will be published by the different language editions of the JEF magazines (e.g. for the English version, check out **The New Federalist**) during the action week. Let us know if you feel inspired to write something about this topic.

CONTACTS

Please do not hesitate if you have any questions. We look forward to seeing how you will choose to implement the campaign in your city!

Diletta Alese and Christelle Savall

diletta.alese@jef.eu

christelle.savall@jef.eu

Contacts in the Executive Board of JEF Europe