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**Belarus**

# **“Unprecedented and unacceptable”**

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**This is how the European Union described the hijacking by Belarus of the Ryanair plane to seize journalist and opposition figure Roman Protasevich. The Belarusian regime intercepted a commercial flight from Athens to Vilnius. [1]** This is obviously outrageous and represents another step in the repressive offensive that Lukashenko and his henchmen are waging against all those who dare to oppose him. [2]

Nevertheless, there is one expression too many in the EU's formula: “unprecedented”. There is at least one precedent and it is French. On 22 October 1956, the French army captured an Air Atlas-Air Maroc plane flying from Rabat to Tunis outside French airspace, carrying five of the most important political leaders of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), including Ahmed Ben Bella. To intercept it, military planes took off from a French military base in Algeria with orders to force the Air Maroc plane to land, including shooting at it if it refused to do so. Ben Bella and his comrades remained prisoners until 1962.

This reminder does not aim to relativize the interception of Protasevitch and the dangers that he could run. The NPA obviously associates itself with the calls of the Belarusian opposition for his release. But so-called “rogue” regimes or groups labelled as terrorists do not have exclusive rights to hijacking. Apart from the French example, there is evidence that the CIA was informed of a planned attack on a Cuban airliner by a group of anti-Castro fighters and did nothing to prevent it; the attack actually took place in October 1976 just after the plane took off from Barbados and resulted in the death of 73 people.

Some have called the Belarusian act state terrorism; we agree. But many other states have resorted or still resort to terrorist practices. In 2016, François Hollande openly referred to France's use of targeted assassinations in a book published by two *Le Monde* journalists. The Turkish state hunts down its opponents, especially Kurds (including the 2013 assassination of three activists in the premises of the Kurdistan Information Centre in Paris). Putin's regime has a predilection for poison. As for the Israeli services, a recent book (*Lève-toi et tue le premier*, Grasset, 2020) traces their practices in this area. In fact, behind their grand proclamations, more or less humanistic, all bourgeois states do not hesitate to resort, more or less discreetly, to dirty methods.

25 May 2021

PS:

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[1] *The Guardian*, 23 May 2021 [“Belarus accused of ‘hijacking’ Ryanair flight diverted to arrest blogger”](#).

[2] BBC, 26 May 2021 [“Belarus journalist Roman Protasevich's colleagues fear for their lives”](#).