

Does Britain have different policies to Belarus and Ukraine?

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Three questions to British Ambassador Leigh Turner

British Ambassador to Belarus Rosemary Thomas in an interview to Interfax news agency said that Britain and the European Union are not satisfied with President Alexander Lukashenko's pardoning of political prisoners. Political prisoners, Thomas said, should be fully rehabilitated so that they do not have a criminal record and can fully participate in political life.

Does Britain have a different or similar position on Ukraine? In order to ascertain this, could Ambassador Leigh Turner go on the record in his answers to three questions:

The first question is does Britain also demand that President Viktor Yanukovich not pardon but rehabilitate Ukraine's political prisoners, such as ex-Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko whose trial has been adjourned until Sept. 27. A pardon would still give Tymoshenko a criminal record and prevent her from running in future elections.

The second question is does Britain also insist that all political parties in Ukraine should be able to participate in future elections? Would Britain not recognize Ukraine's 2012 parliamentary elections as not having been held in accordance with democratic standards if Tymoshenko and Yuriy Lutsenko are unable to participate?

The third question relates to democratic progress. Thomas said that "The EU's constant stance was that improvement of relations with Belarus must be based on slow but steady progress in human rights and political sphere." Does Turner agree that Ukraine's relations with Britain and the EU, including negotiations towards a free-trade agreement, should be similarly based on "slow but steady progress in human rights and political sphere?"

Thank you for your answers.

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