

EPP Family supports political prisoners in Belarus



Approved by the EPP Political Assembly

7 February 2022

Recognising that:

- After the peaceful protests of 2020-2021 against the fraudulent presidential elections, there are more than a thousand political prisoners in Belarus, who are officially recognized by human rights organisations, and there are several times more of those who have been imprisoned for political reasons.;
- Any attempts to express disagreement with the actions of the authorities, including comments on the Internet, are immediately and with particular cruelty punished by law enforcement agencies;
- During 2020-2021 freedom of the media, freedom of expression and freedom of speech have been virtually completely destroyed in Belarus;
- Opposition parties and civic and non-governmental structures are being persecuted by the Lukashenka regime, including the leader of the United Civil Party (UCP), Mikalai Kazlou, who was imprisoned for his political and citizen's views. He was convicted to three months in prison for refusing to sign an obligation to remain silent, and, allegedly, for the disclosure of materials of illegal criminal cases.

In prison, Mikalai Kazlou is kept in inhuman conditions. During the three months of his incarceration he is entitled to only one visitation and only by a close relative and two parcels. He is put on special record as prone to extremism. Now Mikalai is kept in solitary confinement, in a cell with poor lighting. Because of this, his vision began to deteriorate rapidly. This is worsened by the burn of the cornea of the eyes, which he received during the previous illegal arrest. Mikalai Kazlou was denied an examination by an ophthalmologist. From the morning to night, the radio in the cell works at maximum volume, it is impossible to turn it off. This amounts to torture with sound.

- a number of leaders and representatives of EPP affiliates are political prisoners.

Pavel Seviarynets (organizing committee of the Belarusian Christian Democracy) was sentenced to seven years in a strict regime prison. He is serving an unlawful sentence in a colony in the town of Shklov, where Vitold Ashurak (a member of the Council of the Movement "For Freedom") died under unclear circumstances. For two years now, Pavel Seviarynets' little son has been growing up without a father. His wife has to provide for the family and help her imprisoned husband.

Aliaksandr Kabanau, deputy chairman of the United Civil Party, was sentenced to three years in prison. He was also punished with a transfer to a stricter detention regime. He is unable to receive money transfers, as all incoming money is confiscated against unpaid fines for civic engagement.

Leanid Sudalenka, a member of the Political Council of the UCP, a well-known human rights activist, was sentenced to three years in prison.

In January 2022, Tatsiana Kaneuskaya (organizing committee of the BCD) was transferred from the Gomel women's colony to the prison in Mahileu. Transfer to prison means that the regime of detention will be more stringent. This is usually done because of "systematic violations of the internal regulations.", as in a previous case of a Swiss citizen, political prisoner Natalia Hershe.

Also in January 2022, Dzmitry Kaneuski, Tatsiana Kaneuskaya's son, was recognized as a political prisoner. He was sentenced for "inciting social discord against police officers" in comments on a social network to 3 years in prison in a correctional colony.

The punishment of the political prisoner Ihar Salavei (Movement For Freedom) was also made stricter by the transfer from the colony to the prison in Mahileu in January 2022.

Also Pavel Spiryn, Uladzimir Niapomniashchikh, Aliaksandr Agraïtovich, Pavel Belavus - supporters of the Movement “For Freedom”, as well as Andrei Kudzik, Mikalai Siarhienka, Ramuald Ulan, Aliaksandr Nahela - representatives of the UCP party are political prisoners.

Reminds that Andzelika Borys the leader of the Union of Poles in Belarus and Andrzej Poczobut are in prison since March 2021. Andzelika Borys is accused of “inciting to hatred” and “rehabilitation of nazism”. They both face potential long prison sentences. Furthermore recalls that Siarhiey Cichanouski, Belarussian blogger and husband of Svetlana Cichanouskaya, was sentenced to 18 years in prison.

Acknowledging that:

- freedom of speech and expression of will are inalienable human rights, which are honoured by democratic countries and are under the protection of international law and the care of the European Union and the European People’s Party;
- Belarusians who suffered for their convictions in 2020-2021 are not criminals and do not pose a threat to Belarusian citizens and statehood, on the contrary, they are fighting for basic human rights, promoting the values of democracy, freedom and dignity in the Belarusian society;

We demand:

- Cessation of repressions and violence against the Belarusian people by the illegitimate Lukashenka regime.
- Immediate release of all political prisoners, including the leader of the United Civil Party Mikalai Kazlou, the leader of the organizing committee of the BCD Pavel Seviarynets, Tatsiana and Dzmitry Kaneuski, Ihar Salavei, Pavel Spiryn, Uladzimir Niapomniashchykh, Aliaksandr Agraïtovich, Pavel Belavus, Andrei Kudzik, Mikolai Siarhienka, Ramuald Ulan, Aliaksandr Nahela, Andzelika Borys, Andrzej Poczobut and Siarhiey Cichanouski.
- Recognition of the persecution of Nikolai Kozlov in the framework of the criminal case as illegal.
- Bringing to justice all those responsible for the illegal repressions on behalf of the Lukashenka regime.
- Holding new fair elections under the auspicious OSCE ODiHR to resolve the root cause of the political crisis in Belarus.

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**If you have any question you
would like to ask please contact us.**