

Freedom for political prisoners in Belarus

Joint petition of Viasna, Libereco and Freedom House

18.05.2015 The Belarusian Human Rights Center Viasna, the Swiss-German association Libereco – Partnership for Human Rights and the independent watchdog organization Freedom House have launched a joint online petition to demand the release of all political prisoners from Belarusian president Lukashenka.

Currently six people are held behind bars for political reasons in Belarus. Among them is Mikalai Statkevich, sentenced to 6 years in prison for exercising his human rights to freedom of expression and assembly. Since the December 2010 presidential elections, the then-candidate has been detained.

Exactly four years ago, on 18 May 2011, Yauhen Vaskovich and Artsiom Prakapenka were both sentenced to 7 years in prison. The actions of these two young men may show elements of an offence, but the charges are considered to be unfair and the imposed penalty excessive. We believe that their on-going imprisonment is politically motivated.

Since 2010 Mikalai Dziadok and Ihar Alinevich have been imprisoned for political reasons. They were sentenced to 5.5 years in prison and 8 years respectively. Both young men are activists in informal political groups and are under threat of harassment and intimidation in prison, similar to other political prisoners there. In February 2015 only a few days before the end of his original prison term of 4.5 years Mikalai Dziadok was tried for alleged violation of the prison regime, and sentenced to an additional year in prison.

Yury Rubtsou became the latest political prisoner in Belarus. In October 2014 he was sentenced to 1.5 years in prison in an unfair trial directly related to his arbitrary detention at the peaceful assembly „Chernobyl Way 2014“.

Holding political prisoners and the persecution of dissidents are serious human rights violations. Being a country that has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Belarus is obligated to guarantee the right to a fair and impartial trial to all citizens and must also guarantee this right while the six political prisoners mentioned above are on trial.

Addressing President Lukashenka, the petition urges him to ensure the human rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association to all people in Belarus and to release all political prisoners in Belarus immediately and unconditionally.

Please sign the online petition, which is published in several languages on:
<https://www.change.org/p/alexander-lukashenka-president-of-belarus-immediately-and-unconditionally-release-of-all-political-prisoners-in-belarus>

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