

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 49/12/97

21 August 1997

Further information on 245/97 (EUR 49/09/97, 30 July 1997) and follow-up (EUR 49/11/97, 8 August 1997) - Prisoners of Conscience and new concern: Fear of ill-treatment

BELARUS Pavel Sheremet, journalist
Dmitry Zavadsky, journalist
Yaroslav Ovchinnikov, driver, (released)

New names: Anatoly Adamchuk, aged 22, journalist
Aleksandr Oganov, journalist
Valery Astashkin, journalist
Uladzimir Kostsin, journalist

On 15 August 1997 four more journalists, all employees of ORT, Russia's public television station, were detained on the Belorussian-Lithuanian border. Anatoly Adamchuk, Aleksandr Oganov, Valery Astashkin and Uladzimir Kostsin are being kept in solitary confinement in Lida, Grodno region. It is not known whether they have been charged with any criminal offence. Pavel Sheremet and Dmitry Zavadsky have remained in detention since their arrest on 26 July.

The State Committee for Border Troops of Belarus has issued a press statement saying that the detention of the four journalists was due to "the need for further investigation into the circumstances of their unsanctioned stay in the border zone".

Anatoly Adamchuk has subsequently made a televised statement, on 18 August, claiming the trip made by the ORT journalists to the Belorussian-Lithuanian border was part of a wider conspiracy. Anatoly Adamchuk reportedly appeared to be delivering a pre-prepared statement and spoke "like a robot". Sources have implied that he was coerced, possibly physically, into making the statement. There is now some concern that the other five ORT journalists in detention may also be physically coerced into making similar admissions of guilt.

On 20 August Belorussian authorities announced their intention to expel another ORT correspondent, Vladimir Foshenko, from the country. According to a deputy head of the Belorussian Presidential administration, Ivan Pashkevich, Foshenko is regarded by the law-enforcement bodies as a participant in the above alleged violations. Foshenko was sent to Belarus by ORT to cover the story of the detention of Pavel Sheremet and his colleagues.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Russian, English or in your own language:

- calling for the charges against Anatoly Adamchuk, Aleksandr Oganov, Valery Astashkin and Uladzimir Kostsin to be made known, and that if they are detained solely on the grounds of seeking to peacefully exercise their right to freedom of expression, they should be immediately released;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Pavel Sheremet, Dmitry Zavadsky, and for the charges against them and Yaroslav Ovchinnikov to be dropped;
- seeking assurances of the security and well-being of the detained journalists and urging that they be allowed to see a lawyer of their choice.

APPEALS TO:

The President of Belarus, Alyaksandr Lukashenka

Respublika Belarus

220010 g. Minsk

pl. Nezavisimosti

Apparat Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus

Prezidentu Respubliki Belarus Lukashenka A.H

BELARUS

Telegrams: Prezidentu Lukashenka, Minsk, Belarus

Faxes: + 375 172 23-58-25

Salutation: Dear President

The Procurator General of Belarus, Aleh Bozhelko

Respublika Belarus

220050 g. Minsk

Ul. Internatsionalnaya, 22

Prokuratura Respubliki Belarus

Generalnomu prokuroru BOZHELKU A.

BELARUS

Telegrams: Generalnomu prokuroru, Minsk, Belarus

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, Agolets, (first name not known)

Respublika Belarus

g. Minsk

Ul. Urytskaha, 5

Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del Respubliki Belarus

Ministru Agoletsu

BELARUS

Telegrams: Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, Minsk, Belarus

Faxes: +375 172 26-12-47

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Ivan Antonovich

Respublika Belarus

220030 g.Minsk

Ul. Lenina, 19

Ministerstvo inostrannykh del Respubliki Belarus

Ministru Antonovich I.

BELARUS

Faxes: + 375 172 27-45-21

Fax numbers provided may also be telephone lines, therefore please request "fax" if answered by a person.

and to diplomatic representatives of Belarus accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 October 1997.