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## **Belarus: Amnesty International condemns detention of human rights defender**

Amnesty International was appalled to learn about the detention of Tatyana Protko, head of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, by the police in Belarus earlier today, and is calling on the authorities to immediately release her.

“Tatyana Protko was detained solely for researching a case of an alleged victim of human rights violations. We also believe she was detained to prevent her from participating in the Belarusian non-governmental delegation to Geneva next week,” Amnesty International said today. “We consider her to be a prisoner of conscience and call for her immediate release.”

Tatyana Protko was planning to travel to Geneva together with two other human rights defenders from Belarus to attend the review of the Fourth Periodic Report of the Government of Belarus at the United Nations Human Rights Committee. She was to brief the members of the Committee on human rights concerns in Belarus and to present to them the independent submission of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee.

From the information available to Amnesty International, Tatyana Protko was researching a case of a director of a cooperative farm, who has been recently laid off on the orders of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka. Reportedly, this afternoon on the premises of the collective farm, in a village not far from the capital Minsk, she was approached by a person in plain clothing who introduced himself as a law enforcement official from the Ministry of the Interior. The exact charges against her are not yet known, but she was allegedly detained for “*obstructing the performance of official duties by law enforcement officials*”. She reportedly faces 15 days of imprisonment.

Amnesty International is calling on the Government of Belarus to allow free and unimpeded travel for the Belarusian non-governmental delegation to Geneva next week.  
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