

URGENT ACTION

BELARUSIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ARRESTED

Prominent Belarusian human rights defender Ales Bialatski was arrested in central Minsk, Belarus, on 4 August. Amnesty International is concerned he is being targeted for his legitimate work.

Ales Bialatski, Chairperson of Human Rights Centre Viasna and Vice-President of the International Federation for Human Rights was detained on 4 August at approximately 16.45 near Victory Square in central Minsk and was held overnight at the Department of Financial Investigations. At 14:00 the same day, the offices of Viasna were surrounded by men in plain clothes. When staff at Viasna left the building they allegedly overheard one of the men on the phone saying that Ales Bialatski was not there.

Ales Bialatski was detained by men in plain clothes claiming to be police representatives of the Department of Financial Investigations. Following his detention, Ales Bialatski was reportedly taken to his apartment, which was searched. He was then taken to the Viasna office which was also searched from 19:55 to 20:50. Documents and office equipment were confiscated from the office, as well as a computer from his apartment. His wife and child, who were also in the apartment, were taken to their summer home outside of Minsk, which was also searched.

Amnesty International believes that Ales Bialatski's detention is part of a pattern of the ongoing and longstanding harassment of civil society activists and human rights defenders by the Belarusian authorities. Given the unprecedented crackdown on civil society following the Presidential elections in December 2010, Amnesty International believes his detention is politically motivated and intended to obstruct his legitimate work as a human rights defender. Human Rights Centre Viasna has been providing assistance to individuals and families affected by the crackdown.

Ales Bialatski could be held for up to 10 days, during which time he will be investigated under Article 243.2 of the Belarusian Criminal Code ("concealment of profits on an especially large scale"). This carries a sentence of up to seven years' imprisonment with confiscation of property. If charged, he will be taken to a detention centre.

Please write immediately in Belarusian, Russian or your own language:

- Call on the Belarusian authorities to ensure that Ales Bialatski has full access to all legal safeguards in detention, in accordance with Belarus' obligations under international human rights law, including access to a lawyer of his choice;
- Call on the Belarusian authorities to ensure that any investigations are conducted promptly and impartially;
- Urge the Belarusian authorities to stop the harassment and intimidation of civil society and remind them of their responsibility to protect human rights defenders, as set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 SEPTEMBER 2011 TO:

President

Alyaksandr Lukashenka
ul. Karla Marxa 38
220016 Minsk, BELARUS
Fax: +375 17 226 06 10/+375 17
222 38 72
Email: contact@president.gov.by
Salutation: Dear President

Prosecutor General

Grigory Vasilevich
Internatsionalnaya str. 22
220050 Minsk
BELARUS
Fax: +375 (17) 226 42 52
**Salutation: Dear General
Prosecutor**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

BELARUSIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ARRESTED

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The last six months have seen an unprecedented deterioration in the human rights situation in Belarus. Key opposition figures have been detained, ill-treated and convicted in unfair trials. Critical NGOs, civil society activists and journalists face continuing harassment.

Human Rights Centre Viasna has been active in Belarus since 1998 and registered as a non-governmental organization in 1999. In 2003 its official status was withdrawn following its work on election monitoring and the authorities have repeatedly obstructed the organization's official registration. Following the Presidential elections in December 2010, the organization and its staff have come under increasing pressure from the authorities, within a context of widespread harassment of civil society throughout the country.

Name: Ales Bialatski

Gender: m

UA: 240/11 Index: EUR 49/016/2011 Issue Date: 5 August 2011