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Establishing the fate of Belarus' "disappeared"

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In the period 1999-2000 two opposition politicians and a television cameraman "disappeared" in Belarus. For almost five years there has been no information about the fate or whereabouts of the former Minister of the Interior, Yury Zakharenko, the Deputy Chairman of the Belarusian parliament, Viktor Gonchar, and his companion, Anatoly Krasovsky, and the *Russian Public Television* cameraman, Dmitry Zavadsky.

Today the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a resolution on the "disappearances" in Belarus. Amnesty International urges the Belarusian authorities to implement the main recommendations contained in the resolution. This resolution reinforces sustained criticism by the international community, which includes a recent resolution by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, on the Belarusian authorities' failure to ensure thorough and impartial investigations into the whereabouts and fate of the "disappeared" men.

The PACE resolution calls for an independent investigation into the "disappearances", and for the families to receive relevant information and to be informed about the progress of the investigation. It also calls for criminal investigations to be initiated into the alleged involvement of high-ranking officials in the "disappearances" and in the cover-up.

In this regard, Amnesty International calls on the Belarusian authorities to ensure that:

- the methods, scope and findings of the investigation are made public;
- during the investigation officials suspected of responsibility for the "disappearances" are suspended from active service;
- complainants, witnesses, lawyers and others involved in the investigation are protected from intimidation, harassment and reprisals;
- any criminal investigations are carried out in accordance with international standards of fair trial.

Amnesty International believes that the investigation should remain open until the fate and whereabouts of the four men are officially clarified and those responsible for the "disappearances" of these four men are brought to justice in accordance with international fair trial standards.

For further information on Belarus see:

Without Trace: Uncovering the Fate of Belarus' "Disappeared":

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur490132002>

Human Rights Defenders under Pressure: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur490042003>

Stifling the Promotion of Human Rights: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur490042004>

Belarus: And then there were none: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur490062003>

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