

PUBLIC

AI Index: EUR 49/002/2009

16 January 2009

Further Information on UA 121/08 (EUR 49/006/2008 7 May 2008) and follow-up (EUR 47/007/2008, 16 June 2008; and EUR 49/009/2008, 31 July 2008) - Torture and other ill-treatment/health concern

BELARUS

Emanuel Zeltser (m), US national

US national Emanuel Zeltser was sentenced on 11 August 2008 to three years in prison for “using false official documents” and “economic espionage” following a closed trial. An appeal to the Belarusian Supreme Court was denied on 31 October 2008, also in a closed hearing. He is being held at a penal colony near Mogilev in eastern Belarus. His health has deteriorated further, and the Belarusian authorities are continuing to deprive him of essential medication for various ailments, including diabetes, heart problems and severe arthritis.

At the time of his trial in August, Emanuel Zeltser’s arthritis was so severe police officers had to carry him to the courtroom. His state-appointed lawyer described his health as “catastrophic” following a visit on 21 November 2008. Since his conviction, Emanuel Zeltser has been visited by US Embassy officials, most recently on 17 December 2008, during which he reiterated complaints about suffering chronic pain in the back and legs, acute gout and very high blood pressure.

The Belarusian authorities allowed Emanuel Zeltser to be visited by an independent doctor on 6 January 2009, who referred to his health as “a time bomb.” Following the visit the doctor confirmed that Emanuel Zeltser is suffering from increased high blood pressure and additionally from poor circulation in his legs and feet, bouts of depression and, furthermore, that he requires heart surgery. He is receiving some medication, but does not have access to all the treatment he needs.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Russian, Belarusian, English or your own language:

- expressing concern about the health and well-being of Emanuel Zeltser and reports that the authorities have failed to provide him with the treatment he requires;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Emanuel Zeltser is granted immediate and continuing access to full medical treatment;
- AI has received reports that Emanuel Zeltser suffers from diabetes, severe arthritis, high blood pressure, poor circulation, depression and heart problems and urges the authorities to ensure that appropriate treatment for these conditions is provided;
- seeking assurances that if he needs specialist treatment, he will be transferred to an external medical facility to receive treatment;
- calling on the authorities to immediately order a prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigation into reports that Emanuel Zeltser has been tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and to bring those responsible to justice;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Emanuel Zeltser is protected from further torture and other ill-treatment, and given regular access to US consular representatives and lawyers of his choice.

APPEALS TO:

Alyaksandr Lukashenka
President
Administratsia Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus
ul. Karla Marksa, 38
220016 Minsk
BELARUS

Fax: +375 17 226 06 10
+375 17 222 38 72

Salutation: Dear President Lukashenka

Grigorii Vasilevich
Prosecutor General
Internatsionalnaya str., 22
220050 Minsk
BELARUS

Fax: +375 17 226 42 52

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

COPIES TO:

Vladimir Naumov
Minister of Internal Affairs
Gorodskoi Val str., 2
220050 Minsk
BELARUS

Fax: +375 17 203 99 18

Salutation: Dear Minister

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 27 February 2009.