

7 May 1997

Further information (2) on UA 266/96 (EUR 49/05/96, 18 November 1996) and follow-up EUR 49/02/97, 14 March 1997 - Ill-treatment/ Possible prisoners of conscience

BELARUS Gregory Kishko, 45 years old
Nikolai Statkevich

Amnesty International is concerned at reports of continuing arrests of peaceful demonstrators in Belarus. According to reports, between 70 and 150 demonstrators were arrested following a rally against President Lukashenka on 23 March 1997. Some of those arrested are still in detention.

On 1 May 1997 Nikolay Statkevich, the leader of the opposition Belorussian Social Democratic Party, was arrested following his participation in a rally protesting against President Lukashenka's policies aimed at forging closer ties with the Russian Federation. He was detained for violating a decree by President Lukashenka forbidding unsanctioned rallies involving more than 40 people. Nikolay Statkevich served 10 days in prison after being convicted of holding unsanctioned meetings following the 23 March demonstration.

Gregory Kiyako, an artist, was arrested on 23 March following a demonstration and reportedly beaten by police officers. Although he was released after his initial arrest, he was rearrested on 1 April and is at present in pre-trial detention. Reportedly, between 70 and 150 people were arrested during the demonstration of 23 March. Gennady Karpenko, a deputy Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Belarus and former Minister of Internal Affairs Yury Zakharenko were detained following the demonstration and were also accused of holding an unsanctioned demonstration.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International is concerned at the apparent pattern of ill-treatment and imprisonment of members of the opposition during peaceful strikes and demonstrations in Belarus, and has repeatedly raised this with the Belorussian authorities.

Other such incidents include the arrest of Aleksandr Bondarev, arrested following his participation in the demonstration of 23 March, and accused of "violence against the state"; there is reportedly a photograph of Aleksandr Bondarev threatening a police officer with a stick. Human rights organizations in Belarus maintain that he was defending himself against an attack by police officers.

Human rights organizations also report that widespread demonstrations throughout Belarus on 23 March resulted in numerous arrests, detentions and fines. Police officers reportedly arrested 30 people following a protest organized against the plans to send certain students for their community service to areas of Belarus which had been affected by the Chernobyl nuclear accident. Those arrested reportedly included the elderly, and young boys and girls. Reports also state that a 10 year old boy was detained by police for wearing a red and white bandage around his head which resembled the prohibited former national flag.

In the city of Kobrin, eight school boys were arrested and charged with organizing an unsanctioned meeting on 23 March. Police officials broke up the march of 100 peaceful pupils who were protesting about a planned reduction of spring vacations.

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

- calling for the immediate release of any demonstrators held in police custody solely for exercising their right to freedom of assembly;
- seeking assurances that no-one in future will be subjected to ill-treatment or imprisonment by the police solely on the grounds of their political beliefs or for peacefully expressing their right to freedom of assembly;
- urging the authorities to initiate prompt and impartial investigations into all allegations of ill-treatment of demonstrators by the police and to bring to justice anyone found responsible;
- urging the authorities to provide compensation to the victims of police abuse and to make all law enforcement officials aware that torture and ill-treatment are prohibited in any circumstances under the provisions of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Belarus is a party as a successor state of the USSR.

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

Faxes: + 375 172 23-58-25

Telegrams: Prezidentu Lukashenko, Minsk, Belarus

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

Faxes: +375 172 26-41-66

Telegrams: Generalnomu prokuroru, Minsk, Belarus

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, Minister Agolets
 Respublika Belarus
 g. Minsk
 Ul. Urytskaha, 5
 Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del Respubliki Belarus
 Ministru Agoletsu
 BELARUS

Faxes: +375 172 26-12-47

Telegrams: Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, Minsk, Belarus

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
Fax: + 375 172 27-45-21

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 17 June 1997.