

URGENT ACTION

YOUTH LEADER FACES LONGER PRISON SENTENCE

Zmitser Dashkevich, a prisoner of conscience in Belarus, is facing another year in prison for allegedly violating prison rules. He has spent almost his entire sentence in punishment cells.

Zmitser Dashkevich, leader of the youth opposition movement Young Front, is serving his original sentence in the prison colony Glubokoe, northwestern Belarus, where he was transferred on 27 September 2011. This week Amnesty International learned that the administration of the prison colony has forwarded his case to the Investigation Committee of the Republic of Belarus. The Investigation Committee will now decide whether there is enough evidence in order to open a new criminal case against Zmitser Dashkevich under Article 411 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus ("deliberate disobedience to the correctional institution administration"). In response, Zmitser Dashkevich wrote a letter to the head of the colony saying that he knowingly refuses to comply with certain requirements of the prison administration, as he considers them to be illegal.

Zmitser Dashkevich was sentenced to two years in a labour colony on 24 March 2011 for alleged assault under article 339 ("hooliganism") on 18 December 2010, the day before the election. Amnesty International believes the charges against him are unfounded and that the charges were fabricated in order to prevent him taking part in the demonstration on 19 December 2010. Since his conviction in March 2011, Zmitser Dashkevich has repeatedly been exposed to a pressure from the prison administration. By September 2011, he had been placed in a punishment cell eight times, and he has spent most of his time since then in the punishment cell. Conditions are particularly harsh in such cells: prisoners are allowed no bedding, the temperature during the winter often falls to 15 degrees Celsius, and they are allowed no visitors or correspondence. In September Zmitser Dashkevich was offered the chance to apply for a Presidential pardon if he admitted his guilt, but he rejected the offer. Zmitser Dashkevich is considered to be a "malignant violator" of the prison rules and he is not allowed to have family visits. The continuing harassment of Zmitser Dashkevich for allegedly violating prison rules appears to be intended to put physical and psychological pressure on him.

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

- Remind the Belarusian authorities that Zmitser Dashkevich is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful expression of his human rights and that he should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- Remind the Belarusian authorities that they have a duty to protect the physical and psychological wellbeing of those in custody;
- Call on the Belarusian authorities to stop the harassment of Zmitser Dashkevich.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 AUGUST 2012 TO:

General Prosecutor

Alexander Koniuk
Ul. Internatsionalnaya 22
220030 Minsk,
Belarus
Fax: +375 17 226 42 52
(call during office hours, GMT +3)

Salutation: Dear General Prosecutor

Minister of Internal Affairs

Igor Shunevich
Ul. Gorodskoi Val 4
220030 Minsk,
Belarus
Fax: +375 17 203 99 18
(call during office hours, GMT +3)

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Chief of the Department of Penitentiary
Institutions at the MIA
Sergei Doroshko
Ul. Vokzalnaya 42
220007 Minsk, Belarus
Fax: +375 17 226 18 06 (say "fax", and
call during office hours, GMT +3)

Salutation: Dear Sergei Doroshko

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

YOUTH LEADER FACES LONGER PRISON SENTENCE

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Zmitser Dashkevich is one of four prisoners of conscience who are currently imprisoned in Belarus in connection with a largely peaceful demonstration that took place on 19 December 2010. Tens of thousands of Belarusians gathered in central Minsk to protest against unfair elections. The demonstration was mostly peaceful, but when a violent incident broke out at the doors of Government House, riot police moved in to disperse the crowds.

Over 700 people were detained, the overwhelming majority of whom had been peaceful participants and bystanders. Most of the detained were charged with administrative offences and sentenced to 10 – 15 days' imprisonment. However, a considerable number, including six of the seven opposition presidential candidates, other opposition activists and leading independent journalists, were charged with criminal offences including with 'organizing mass disorder'. Since the demonstration, the authorities have conducted country-wide searches of opposition and media offices, and human rights defenders, lawyers and other civil society activists have witnessed an unprecedented clampdown on their activities. Many have been detained in the months following the demonstration.

Many who were sentenced for participating in the demonstrations in December 2010 have been released after they agreed to sign a confession for organizing or taking part in "mass disorder".

Those four prisoners of conscience are:

Mykalau Statkevich was sentenced to six years on 26 May 2011.

Pavel Sevyarynets was sentenced to three years on 16 May 2011.

Zmitser Dashkevich was sentenced to two years on 24 March 2011.

Eduard Lobau was sentenced to four years on 24 March 2011.

Name: Zmitser Dashkevich

Gender m/f: M

UA: 217/12 Index: EUR 49/011/2012 Issue Date: 17 July 2012