



Amnesty International Belarus: Public Appeal

13 November 2006, AI Index: EUR 49/018/2006

[This document replaces EUR 49/017/2006 previously issued for same appeal]

Prisoner of Conscience: Zmitser Dashkevich

Amnesty International is calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Zmitser Dashkevich, a leader of the youth opposition movement *Малады фронт* (Young Front), whom the organization believes to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression.

Zmitser Dashkevich was summoned to the Prosecutor's office on 15 September and charged according to Article 193, Part 1 of the Belarusian Criminal Code, for 'organizing or participating in an activity of an unregistered non-governmental organization'. The Article was added to the Criminal Code in December 2005 as part of a series of amendments that



Following a trial, which lasted just two days and was held behind closed doors, Zmitser Dashkevich was sentenced on 1 November to one and a half years' imprisonment in a minimum security prison. Hundreds of people, including opposition politicians, writers, diplomats and civil society activists held a demonstration on 1 November outside the court in Minsk, calling for the immediate release of Zmitser Dashkevich.

©ByMedia.net

introduced penalties for civil society organizations and other outspoken critics of the government, in the lead up to the presidential elections in March of this year.

Zmitser Dashkevich has already been a prisoner of conscience following his arrest in April this year during a demonstration to mark the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. At that time he was sentenced, under the Belarusian Administrative Code, to 14 days' imprisonment for "organizing an unsanctioned meeting" (see AI Index: EUR 49/007/2006 and EUR 49/010/2006). He was released having served his full sentence.

Background

Amnesty International regards the continuing harassment and detention of opposition figures, and those involved in civil society activity as a deliberate attempt by the authorities to intimidate and deter people from exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression. The result is the continued stifling of open, public debate and activity within Belarus.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Please send cards or letters of support and solidarity to Zmitser Dashkevich in prison. You can write in Belarusian, Russian, English or your own language. Your good wishes

will be an invaluable source of support at this difficult time. If you would like to, you can send these messages in Belarusian:

I am thinking of you:	Я думаю пра цябе
We are thinking of you:	Мы думаем пра цябе
I am wishing you well:	Я жадаю табе добра
We are wishing you well:	Мы жадаем табе добра

Please send your greetings to:

**Zmitser Daskevich
SIZO MVD
Valadarskogo str., 2
220030 Minsk
Belarus**

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

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release prisoner of conscience, of Zmitser Dashkevich;
- reminding the Belarusian authorities of their obligations under Articles 19, 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Belarus is a state party, which guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association;
- calling on the Belarusian authorities to immediately review laws, regulations and practices relating to the registration and activities of non-governmental organizations, particularly the Law on Public Associations adopted in August 2005, to ensure that they comply with international law;
- urging the Belarusian authorities to stop the obstruction, harassment and intimidation of civil society activists engaged directly or indirectly in the promotion and defence of human rights in Belarus.

Please fax or send your appeals to:

President

Alyaksandr G. LUKASHENKA
ul. Karla Marxa 38
220016 Minsk
BELARUS

Fax: +375 172 26 06 10, +375 172 22 38 72

Salutation: Dear President Lukashenka

Procurator General

Petr P. MIKLASHEVICH
ul. Internatsionalnaia 22
220050 Minsk
BELARUS

Fax: +375 172 26 41 66

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

Minister of Internal Affairs

Vladimir V. NAUMOV
ul. Gorodskoi Val 4
220615 Minsk
BELARUS

Fax: +375 172 26 12 47

Salutation: Dear Minister