

Belarus: Zmitser Dashkevich (m)

Problem: Prisoner of Conscience

Amnesty International is calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Zmitser Dashkevich, a leader of the youth opposition movement *Малады фронт* (Young Front). Amnesty International considers Zmitser Dashkevich 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 2006 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 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.

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.

Zmitser Dashkevich has already been a prisoner of conscience following his arrest in April 2006 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.

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.

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

Zmitser Dashkevich
SIZO MVD
Valadarskogo str., 2
220030 Minsk
Belarus

Please also write to the Belarusian authorities:

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience, of Zmitser Dashkevich;
- 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 send appeals to:

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