

URGENT ACTION

'TEDDY BEAR' CASE IS CLOSED IN BELARUS

The criminal case in connection with the 'teddy bear stunt' on 4 July 2012, calling for freedom of expression in Belarus, has been dropped by the Belarusian authorities. Anton Suryapin and Syarhei Basharimau are no longer facing jail-sentences.

On 28 June 2013 the State Security Committee of the Republic of Belarus made a public announcement that the criminal case in connection with the 'teddy bear stunt' by a Swedish advertising company was closed. As such the charges against journalism student, **Anton Suryapin**, and estate agent, **Syarhei Basharimau**, were dropped. They are no longer under threat of criminal prosecution in connection to the events of 4 July 2012. Bail conditions were lifted and they are allowed to leave the country. All the equipment that was confiscated during a search has been returned to Anton Suryapin, and he has been notified of the case closure.

Anton Suryapin and Syarhei Basharimau were criminally charged after two representatives of the Swedish advertising company, Studio Total, to cross the Belarusian border in a single-engine aircraft. Approximately 900 teddy bears on parachutes were dropped from the plane and each bear held a placard calling for freedom of expression in Belarus. Both men were accused under Article 16 ("participation in a crime") and Article 371 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus ("illegal crossing of the state border of the Republic of Belarus"), and faced up to seven years in prison.

Anton Suryapin, a student at Belarus State University's journalism school, was charged with uploading photographs of the teddy bears on the Belarusian News Photos website. He was arrested on 13 July 2012, and spent more than a month in detention - he was declared a prisoner of conscience. Anton Suryapin was later released on condition that he could not leave his home city of Slutsk, south of Minsk, without permission from the KGB, and must not disclose any information in relation to the investigation.

Syarhei Basharimau, who manages rental apartments in Minsk, was detained on 6 July under suspicion of helping the Swedish individuals cross the border illegally. He had arranged an apartment for two of the pilots' associates, who travelled to Minsk before the stunt and left immediately afterwards. Studio Total denounced the arrests and said that neither of the men had any connection or knowledge of the proposed stunt.

Anton Suryapin has expressed his gratitude for Amnesty International's support and campaign on his behalf.

No further action is requested at this time from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the second update of UA 222/12. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR49/015/2012/en>

Name: Anton Suryapin and Syarhei Basharimau

Gender m/f: both m

Further information on UA: 222/12 Index: EUR 49/011/2013 Issue Date: 11 July 2013

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

