

EXTERNAL

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Fear for safety

14 October 1997

BELARUSNadezhda Zhukova (f), aged 21, human rights defender

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Young human rights defender Nadezhda Zhukova was assaulted and threatened in Minsk on 13 October 1997. Amnesty International fears for her safety.

Nadezhda Zhukova works as an observer for the human rights organization, the Belarusian Helsinki Committee (BHC). She was assaulted as she left the building of the Leninsky District Court where she had attempted to obtain information about the trial of Pavel Sivirinets and Yevgeny Skochka - two demonstrators arrested during a peaceful protest "against hunger and cold" held on 12 October in Minsk (see below). Nadezhda Zhukova was reportedly approached by two men in plain clothes, who told her that the two arrested demonstrators were in police cars in a nearby street. Two white Opel cars, one bearing police numberplates, were parked in Lenin street. According to reports, two men got out of one of the cars, grabbed Nadezhda, hit her in the stomach, held a knife at her throat and took her to a nearby courtyard.

Once there, they reportedly searched her bag, took her BHC identity card and threatened to come after her if she continued dealing in "unwomanly affairs". They also allegedly told her, in reference to the other people working for the BHC that "everyone in your office has got it coming to them". They also reportedly told her that her face was on all the militia videotapes of demonstrations and that they could easily track her down in the future. Officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs recently told a representative of Amnesty International that all demonstrations were recorded on video by law enforcement officers.

Nadezhda Zhukova's attackers introduced themselves as "young Belarusian patriots" and it is believed by some unofficial sources that they may be members of the organization "Belarus Patriotic Youth Union" (see below).

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Belarus Patriotic Youth Union claims to be an independent organization, although there are allegations that it was established by, and is financed by, President Lukashenka. It is also alleged that members of the Belarus Patriotic Youth Union participate in demonstrations by groups opposing President Lukashenka, and act violently or provocatively.

Pavel Sivirinets and Yevgeny Skochka are leading members of the youth organization of the Belarus Popular Front (BNF), known as the "Young Front".

They were among 20 people reportedly arrested during the authorized demonstration on 12 October, which was held to protest about economic difficulties in Belarus. Most were released after a short time, but Pavel Sivirinets and Yevgeny Skochka were fined for breaking sanitation and fire rules. A third leader of the movement, Vadim Kabanchyuk, is also believed to have been detained, but his present whereabouts are not known.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Nadezhda Zhukova and other members of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee;
- calling for Nadezhda Zhukova to be given all necessary protection while the assault and threats against her are fully and impartially investigated;

- calling for anyone to be found guilty of assaulting Nadezhda Zhukova to be brought to justice in accordance with the law.

**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 Lukashenka, 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

**Telegrams: Generalomu prokuroru, Minsk, Belarus**

**Salutation: Dear Procurator General**

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

**Telegrams: Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, Minsk, Belarus**

**Faxes: +375 172 26-12-47**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**Obtaining a fax tone to Belarus can be difficult. Sometimes there is a message saying number not recognized. If so try later. Numbers provided may also be telephone lines, therefore please request "fax" if answered by a person.**

**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

**Faxes: + 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 29 November 1997.