

# URGENT ACTION

## MEN RELEASED ON BAIL STILL FACE PRISON

**After spending more than a month in detention, Anton Suryapin and Syarhei Basharimau were released on bail on 17 August. They still face a prison sentence of up to seven years on charges in connection to the ‘teddy bear stunt’ by Swedish advertising company calling for freedom of expression in Belarus.**

On 17 August, the KGB (State Security Agency) of the Republic of Belarus distributed a statement that **Anton Suryapin** and **Syarhei Basharimau** had been released on bail. They were charged in connection with an incident on 4 July 2012 after two representatives of the Swedish advertising company, Studio Total, crossed the Belarusian border in a single-engine aircraft dropping approximately 900 teddy bears on parachutes carrying placards calling for freedom of expression in Belarus. Both men are 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 could face up to seven years in prison.

Anton Suryapin, 20, a student at Belarus State University's journalism school, was released around 6.30 pm on 17 August under bail conditions stating that he cannot 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. He was arrested on 13 July. His arrest is the result of his uploading on the Belarusian News Photos website photographs of the teddy bears dropped from the plane. Anton Suryapin maintains that he received the photographs from an anonymous source.

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.

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

- Calling on the authorities to drop the charges against Anton Suryapin and Syarhei Basharimau immediately;
- Urging them to guarantee the right to freedom of expression in line with their international human rights obligations, including Article 19 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 OCTOBER 2012 TO:**

#### President

Alyaksandr Lukashenka  
Administratsia Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus  
ul. Karla Marksa 38  
220016 Minsk, Belarus  
Fax: +375 17 226 06 10/ +375 17 222 38 72  
Email: [contact@president.gov.by](mailto:contact@president.gov.by)  
Salutation: Dear President Lukashenka

#### General Prosecutor

Alyaksandr Koniuk  
ul. Internatsionalnaya 22  
220050 Minsk, Belarus  
Fax: +375 17 226 42 52 (Please say "fax" clearly if someone answers)  
Email: [info@prokuratura.gov.by](mailto:info@prokuratura.gov.by)  
Salutation: Dear General Prosecutor

### **Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 222/12. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR49/012/2012/en>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 4 July a Swedish advertising company arranged a stunt to draw attention to violations of freedom of expression in Belarus. Video footage released by Studio Total the following day shows two people in animal masks, one of whom is throwing teddy bears out of the plane. The Belarusian Ministry of Defence immediately denied that Belarusian airspace had been violated and said the video footage of the event was clearly a fabrication. Police in Ivyanets collected up the teddy bears, but eyewitnesses interviewed by Radio Free Europe and Belarusian independent media said they had seen the teddy bears and the aircraft.

On 26 July, President Lukashenka has publicly acknowledged the fact of illegal crossing of the Belarusian border, and within a week he fired two high-ranking military officials and two others received a reprimand.

Studio Total say that their campaign was inspired by an action in Minsk in February when Pavel Vinogradov set up a group of stuffed animals carrying placards calling for freedom of expression and complaining of police brutality. He was later sentenced to 10 days' administrative detention for his action. Tomas Mazetti, who piloted the plane, and his colleague Hannah Frey, were supported by two further people including the cofounder of Studio Total, Per Cromwell, who travelled to Minsk to provide support on the ground if necessary.

The Belarusian authorities have detained a number of people in connection with the events of 4 July. Syarhei Basharimau, who runs an apartment rental agency in Minsk, was detained on suspicion of having assisted the Swedes to cross the border illegally because he was said to have rented a flat in Minsk to Per Cromwell and his colleague. A sixteen-year-old girl from Ivyanets was also detained briefly and questioned on suspicion of having taken the photographs that were posted by Anton Suryapin.

Names: Anton Suryapin, Syarhei Basharimau  
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 222/12 Index: EUR 49/015/2012 Issue Date: 20/08/2012