

URGENT ACTION

DEMAND RELEASE OF BELARUSIAN ACTIVISTS

Those accused of organizing or taking part in demonstrations on 19 December in Minsk are now on trial, and one of those recognized as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International has already been sentenced to four years in prison.

Alyksandr Atroshchankau, who was press secretary to presidential candidate **Andrei Sannikau**, was sentenced on 2 March to four years' imprisonment for taking part in the demonstration. His wife, Darya Korsak, told journalists that he had managed to tell her in the courtroom on 2 March that he had been tortured in the KGB pre-trial detention centre in Minsk. He said he had been handcuffed, forced to stand for hours in uncomfortable positions, and to perform physical exercises while naked. He said masked men had handcuffed him into painful positions. Darya Korsak has complained to the Prosecutor General's office about this torture and other ill-treatment of her husband, inflicted by KGB officers. His time in pre-trial detention began on 20 December 2010: he was never allowed to see his wife or his lawyer in private. His wife maintains this was an attempt to conceal evidence of torture.

Alyaksei Mihalevich was released on 19 February, and held a press conference on 28 February, where he spoke out about the torture and other ill-treatment that had been inflicted on him and other detainees. He said that all the detainees were taken out of the cells five or six times a day for body searches. They would be made to stand with their legs so far apart that it was difficult to walk afterwards because of the pain. They would be made to stand to naked for about 40 minutes in a room where the temperature did not exceed 10C. He also said that during the searches detainees would be made to perform physical exercises.

Amnesty International is concerned that those still detained, including Andrei Sannikau, whose lawyer has been debarred, are at risk of ill-treatment. On 4 March, when Andrei Sannikau's mother tried to deliver a food parcel to him, she was turned away by the prison authorities, who said he was too unwell to receive the parcel.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Russian or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to release Alyksandr Atroshchankau and the other 11 prisoners of conscience immediately and unconditionally (naming them);
- Calling on them to order prompt and impartial investigations into the allegations that KGB officers used torture and other ill-treatment against Alyksandr Atroshchankau, Alyaksei Mihalevich and other detainees;
- Calling on them to allow an independent medical expert to visit all detainees to ensure they are receiving adequate medical assistance;
- Reminding them that as a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Belarus is obliged to prevent torture and other ill-treatment and to ensure that any allegations are promptly, independently and effectively investigated;
- Reminding them that as a state party to the ICCPR Belarus has to ensure that people who have been tortured, or witnessed torture, do not suffer reprisals for complaining about it.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 APRIL 2011 TO:

President

Alyksandr 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

Salutation: Dear President Lukashenka

Prosecutor General

Grigory Alekseevich Vasilevich
Internatsionalnaya str. 22
220050 Minsk
BELARUS
Fax: +375 17 226 42 52

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the fourth update of UA264/10. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR49/001/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

There are now 12 prisoners of conscience:

Presidential candidates: Mykalau Statkevich, Uladzimir Nyaklyayeu and Andrei Sannikau

Journalists: Alyksandr Atroshchankau, the press secretary of Andrei Sannikau, Iryna Khalip correspondent for the Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta.

Political commentator: Alyksandr Fyaduta

Opposition activists: Pavel Sevyarynets an opposition activist and member of Vital Rymasheusky's campaign team, Anatol Lyabedka a member of the United Civic Party, Uladzimir Kobets, a member of Andrei Sannikau's campaign team, Zmitser Bandarenka, the coordinator of the opposition European Belarus campaign, Alyksandr Arastovych, and Syargei Martseleu, members of Mykalau Statkevich's campaign team

On 29 January, prisoner of conscience Syargei Vaznyak was released on bail. On 17 February, prisoner of conscience Anastasiya Palazhanka, the deputy leader of the Young Front movement was released on bail and on 19 February, prisoner of conscience Alyaksei Mihalevich, was also released on bail.

Further information on UA: 264/10 Index: EUR 49/007/2011 Issue Date: 7 March 2011

