

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ILL-TREATED

On 12 May, prisoner of conscience Andrei Sannikau, a former Belarusian presidential candidate, made a statement during his trial about the physical and psychological ill-treatment that he has suffered in detention. He is also being denied medical assistance for a painful condition.

In **Andrei Sannikau's** statement, made on the ninth day of his trial, he said that the evidence being used against him was obtained under torture. He said that when first detained on 19 December, he was beaten and denied access to the toilet for hours. He said that every day he was made to carry all his personal belongings to a cold cellar where he was forced to stand naked by the wall, with arms and legs outstretched for long periods and made to squat. Despite complaining of a painful leg, which was injured during his detention, he was not allowed to change position. People in masks, who were also in the room, hit the walls with batons, shouted and kicked him. Andrei Sannikau added that he has been kept in handcuffs constantly in detention and made to walk in stress-positions.

Andrei Sannikau also stated that when he refused to confess, during a conversation with the head of the KGB, he was told 'in this case we will apply more brutal measures to your wife and child.' Aware that his wife was also in detention and that efforts were being made to take his son into care, he took the threats seriously and tried to cooperate. He was refused access to a lawyer and only able to meet with a lawyer in private on 22 March, over three months after his detention. For a whole month, he was not able to send or receive letters and says that throughout his detention he has been isolated from outside information.

Andrei Sannikau's health has deteriorated in detention. He suffers from acute gout and is experiencing considerable pain, but his repeated requests for pain relief during the hearing have been refused. On several occasions, Andrei Sannikau has requested a break in proceedings because he felt unwell, but has been refused. He has only been seen by an official medical representative, who said his health was not serious enough to need further assistance. His lawyers also requested that his petitions for medical assistance be added to his casefile, but the judge has also refused this request. Additionally, Andrei Sannikau has been denied adequate food and water during the trial.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Belarusian, Russian or your own language:

- Reminding the Belarusian authorities that Andrei Sannikau is a prisoner of conscience; that the charges against him should be dropped and that he should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- Calling on the Belarusian authorities to give Andrei Sannikau immediate access to an independent medical expert and to ensure that he is given adequate medical treatment, including transference to a hospital, if necessary;
- Expressing your concern that Andrei Sannikau has been subjected to torture or ill-treatment while in detention;
- Urging the Belarusian authorities to ensure the safety of all detainees and to conduct an immediate investigation into allegations of torture and ill-treatment;
- Remind the Belarusian authorities that any statement made as a result of torture is inadmissible as evidence, except in proceedings against the alleged perpetrator of the torture.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 JUNE 2011 TO:

President

Alyaksandr Lukashenka
ul. Karla Marxa 38
220016 Minsk, BELARUS
Fax: +375 17 226 06 10/+375 17
222 38 72

Email: contact@president.gov.by

Salutation: Dear President

Prosecutor General

Grigory Alekseevich Vasilevich
Internatsionalnaya str. 22
220050 Minsk
BELARUS

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 sixth update of UA 264/10. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR49/009/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Andrei Sannikau is one of 13 prisoners of conscience who are currently detained in Belarus in connection with a largely peaceful demonstration that took place on 19 December 2010. Tens of thousands of Belarusians had gathered in central Minsk to protest against unfair elections. The demonstration was mostly peaceful, but when a violent incident broke out at the doors of Government House, riot police moved in to disperse the crowds. Over 700 people were detained, the overwhelming majority of whom had been peaceful participants and bystanders.

Most of the detained were charged with administrative offences and sentenced to 10 – 15 days' imprisonment. However, a considerable number, including six of the seven opposition presidential candidates, other opposition activists and leading independent journalists, have been charged with 'organizing mass disorder' and risk being sentenced to up to 15 years imprisonment. Since the demonstration, the authorities have conducted country-wide searches of opposition and media offices, and human rights defenders, lawyers and other civil society activists have witnessed an unprecedented clampdown on their activities. Many have been detained in the months following the demonstration.

Of the 13 prisoners of conscience to date, five have been sentenced to between two and four years' imprisonment. Individuals named in previous updates to UA 264/10 who are not named below have now been released on bail. Individuals named in the list below but not named in previous updates have not recently been detained, but Amnesty International has only recently been informed about their situation.

The 13 prisoners of conscience are:

Presidential candidates:

1. Mykalau Statkevich, 2. Uladzimir Nyaklyayeu, 3. Andrei Sannikau

Journalists:

4. Iryna Khalip, correspondent of the Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*,

Opposition activists:

5. Alyaksandr Atroshchankau, press secretary to Andrei Sannikau, 6. Zmitser Bandarenka, activist for Andrei Sannikau, 7. Zmitser Dashkevich, leader of the youth movement *Young Front*, 8. Eduard Lobau, member of the youth movement *Young Front*, 9. Mikita Likhavid, Student, 10. Ales Kirkevich, member of the youth movement *Young Front*, 11. Pavel Sevarnyets, activist for opposition presidential candidate Vital Rymasheusky, 12. Syargei Martseleu, activist for Mykalau Statkevich, 13. Dmitry Bulanov, nurse.

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