

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE ALLOWED TO MEET WIFE

Former Presidential candidate, Andrei Sannikau, was granted an hour-long meeting with his wife, Iryna Khalip, on 20 May at the remand prison on Valadarsky Street in Minsk. This followed the Urgent Action issued on 18 May. This was the first time he was allowed to meet with her in five months.

Iryna Khalip reported that **Andrei Sannikau** appeared well and was in good spirits during the hour-long meeting which took place through a glass screen. He asked her to thank all those who had supported him and his family, and all the journalists and human rights activists who have continued to write about the events of 19 December in Minsk.

Despite being granted permission for a meeting by a court on 17 May, Andrei Sannikau's wife and mother-in-law were unable to locate him on 18 May, raising concerns that he was being held incommunicado. Iryna Khalip was given a two-year suspended sentence on 16 May for her participation in the demonstrations in Minsk on 19 December 2010.

On 14 May, Andrei Sannikau was sentenced to five years in prison for taking part in the post-election demonstration on 19 December 2010 in Minsk. Amnesty International believes that the former Presidential candidate has been sentenced solely for the peaceful exercise of this right to freedom of assembly and expression and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

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

- Call on the Belarusian authorities to ensure that Andrei Sannikau is not tortured or ill-treated;
- Remind the Belarusian authorities that Andrei Sannikau is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful expression of his human rights and that he should be released immediately and unconditionally.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 JULY 2011 TO:

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

Salutation: Dear General Prosecutor

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 ninth update of UA 264/10 Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR49/013/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Andrei Sannikau is one of 11 prisoners of conscience who are currently imprisoned or detained in Belarus in connection with a largely peaceful demonstration that took place on 19 December 2010.

On the ninth day of his trial, Andrei Sannikau made a statement saying that the evidence being used against him was obtained under torture. He elaborated on the methods used to subject him to both physical and psychological pressure and the authorities' demands that he confess, according to their requirements. 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.

The 11 prisoners of conscience are:

Presidential candidates:

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

Opposition activists:

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

Further Information on UA: 264/10 Index: EUR 49/014/2011 Issue Date: 23 May 2011

