

URGENT ACTION

BELARUSIAN PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE AT RISK

Belarusian prisoners of conscience, Andrei Sannikau and Zmitser Dashkevich, are being subjected to psychological pressure through constant transportation from one prison facility to another. Both men may be at risk of physical attacks.

On 14 May 2011, opposition presidential candidate, Andrei Sannikau, was sentenced to five years in prison for taking part in the post-election demonstrations in Minsk on 19 December 2010. Zmitser Dashkevich, leader of the youth opposition movement, Young Front, was sentenced to two years in a labour colony on 25 March for alleged assault the day before the election. Amnesty International believes the charges against both men are unfounded and that they have been targeted for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of assembly and expression.

Andrei Sannikau has already spent 10 days being transported from one prison colony to another. At a press conference on 28 September, Iryna Khalip, Andrei Sannikau's wife, said that she believed her husband and Zmitser Dashkevich were in serious danger. Iryna Khalip reported that she and her husband's lawyer had not been informed of Andrei's whereabouts between 20 and 26 September. On 20 September she was told that he was being moved from Novopolatsk prison colony in the north of the country, where he was serving his sentence, to Bobryuisk prison colony about 250 km to the south. The reasons for this were not explained, but according to legislation, prisoners can only be moved in exceptional circumstances. On 23 September when the lawyer tried to contact Andrei Sannikau in Bobryuisk he was told that he had not arrived. On 26 September Iryna was informed that her husband was in Mahiliow remand prison (SIZO) and later learnt that he had also spent some time in Vitebsk remand prison before being moved on 24 September, where he was put in the same cell as Zmitser Dashkevich. Iryna Khalip reported that Andrei Sannikau had been threatened by cell mates in Vitebsk who stated "We don't intend to kill you, but.....you may be transferred to another cell, where you may be beaten or even killed. Prisoners kill each other. It happens."

Andrei Sannikau reported that Zmitser Dashkevich's health has deteriorated seriously. Zmitser Dashkevich started a hungerstrike on 12 September to protest against his treatment in prison. He has been placed in a punishment cell eight times since the start of his imprisonment, and was about to be tried in the colony for breaking prison rules. He is no longer on hunger strike. Other prisoners also said that Zmitser Dashkevich would face serious problems in the prison colony in Glubokoe where he was being transported.

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

- Remind the Belarusian authorities that both men are prisoners of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful expression of their human rights and that they should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- Remind the Belarusian authorities that they have duty to protect the physical and psychological wellbeing of those in custody, this includes a duty to protect prisoners from attacks by third parties as well as state agents;
- Call on the Belarusian authorities to ensure that neither of the men are tortured or ill-treated by state officials or third parties.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 NOVEMBER 2011 TO:

General Prosecutor

Grigory Vasilevich

Internatsionalnaya str. 22

220050 Minsk, BELARUS

Fax: +375 17 226 42 52

Salutation: Dear General Prosecutor

Minister of Internal Affairs

Anatoly Kuleshov

Ul. Gorodskoi Val 2.

220050 Minsk, Belarus

Fax: +375 17 203 99 18

Salutation: Dear Minister

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International is continuing to ask for the release of the remaining prisoners of conscience who were sentenced in connection with the demonstration in December 2010. The other remaining prisoners are:

Zmitser Bandarenka, sentenced to 2 years on 26 March

Eduard Lobau, sentenced to 4 years on 24 March

Pavel Sevyarynets, sentenced to 3 years on 16 May

Mykalau Statkevich, sentenced to 6 years on 26 May

Dzmitry Uss, sentenced to 5.5 years on 26 May.

Name: Andrei Sannikau

Gender: m

Name: Zmitser Dashkevich

Gender: m

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