



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE  
FOUNDATION

18<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Human Rights Council  
Geneva (Switzerland)

20 September 2011

**Interactive dialogue on the oral report of the  
United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights  
on the human rights situation in the Republic of Belarus**

**Human Rights House Foundation statement**

*Check against delivery*

**Thank you Madam Chairperson.**

**The Human Rights House Foundation (HRRF) would like to thank the High Commissioner for her report.**

**Since the presidential elections on 19 December 2010 repression has escalated in the Republic of Belarus; against human rights defenders and their organisations, against lawyers, against journalists, against political activists, and against any person who raises a critical voice or shows concern about the human rights situation in Belarus, such as students or other citizens protesting.**

**Exercising their right to freedom of assembly, in July 2011 solely, about 400 people who were applauding as a sign of protest were arrested, which underlines that massive detentions still take place in Belarus. The 19 December 2010 arrests are not isolated. Many of the protesters were found guilty of disorderly conduct during secretive trials and were fined or sentenced to administrative detentions for 5 to 15 days.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the country, it is close to impossible to receive an authorisation to organise a demonstration and protestors face harsh retaliation if they organise unauthorised demonstrations.**

**The authorities exercise pressure on lawyers and threaten those who speak about human rights violations. Seven Belarusian lawyers, who provided legal counsel in the politically motivated cases following the 19 December 2010 events, have been disbarred since last**

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/16677.html>



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December.<sup>2</sup> **We are particularly worried that lawyers are unable to speak about detention conditions of their clients and to denounce cases of ill treatment without fear of repercussions.** In addition, it is close to impossible for most lawyers to access to their clients -- although the right to access to their clients is not denied, it is in practice made impossible to meet clients. **We call upon Belarus to allow all lawyers disbarred in connection with 19 December 2010 events to become members of the Bar again and ensure the independence of lawyers and judges, especially by stopping any kind of control on the Bar associations.**

**We are also concerned by the continued use of death penalty in Belarus. In April 2010<sup>3</sup> and in July 2011<sup>4</sup>, Belarus executed four people who had cases pending at the United Nations Human Rights Committee. The Committee had even issued interim measures of protection in both cases, ignored by the Belarusian authorities. We call upon Belarus to immediately abolish the death penalty.**

This raises the issue of cooperation by Belarusian authorities with United Nations mechanisms. We urge Belarusian authorities to fully cooperate with the High Commissioner and her office, as well as with UN Special Rapporteurs, and issue standing invitations to all Rapporteurs.

**Human Rights House Foundation joins calls to the Belarusian government:**

- **To immediately and unconditionally release and rehabilitate all political prisoners and all prisoners of conscience, including Ales Bialiatski and those sentenced to personal restraint, probation or suspended sentences, in addition to the 11 political prisoners pardoned on 14 September 2011;**
- **To investigate all cases of ill-treatment in prisons and detention facilities, including the facilities of the KGB;**
- **To re-register the Human Rights Centre Viasna, as ordered by the United Nations Human Rights Committee, and further let human rights and other civil society organisations fulfil their work without fearing retaliation and to abolish legislation criminalising human rights activities, including article 193.1 of the Criminal Code.**

**Thank you.**

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<sup>2</sup> See: <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/16794.html>

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/14003.html>.

<sup>4</sup> See: <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/16761.html>.