



**HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE
FOUNDATION**

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Re: Call for the immediate release and dropping of the charges against human rights defender Ales Bialiatski and discontinuation of harassment and degrading treatment against him whilst in prison

Mr. President,
Mr. Prosecutor General,

We, the undersigned members and partners of the Human Rights House Network, are deeply concerned about the continued detention of Ales Blaliatski and the significant deterioration of his detention conditions. Ales Bialiatski is the head of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna" in Belarus, Vice-president of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and is one of the founders of the Belarusian Human Rights House in Vilnius (Lithuania).

According to the information received from our partners, Ales Bialiatski's rights to receive visitors and food parcels have been severely restricted.

The consequence of these and other measures taken against him during his imprisonment is a serious deterioration in Ales Bialiatski's health.

We would like to note that this latest deterioration of detention conditions of Ales Biliatski took place just after he turned 50 years old. He received greetings and congratulations from human rights defenders all over the world, as well as from the international community, including European Union Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle, all calling for his immediate release.

We consider the aforementioned confinement measures as additional retribution against Ales Bialiatski due to his legitimate human rights work. We also see a link between the international attention he received for his birthday and these measures.

The authorities of Belarus have the responsibility, in accordance with international law, including articles 6 and 10 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to ensure that nobody in custody is subject to deterioration of his or her health. We hold the authorities of Belarus responsible for the deterioration of the health situation of Ales Bialiatski whilst he is in detention.

We call upon the Belarusian authorities to:

- **Immediately release Ales Bialiatski, drop all charges against him and fully rehabilitate him;**

- **Pending the release provide Ales Bialiatski access to all medical support he needs and secure that the prison conditions do not impact his health;**
- **Ensure that Ales Bialiatski has full rights to receive visits and private correspondence.**

The detention of Ales Bialiatski is the consequence of the restrictions to the rights of freedom of association and expression imposed in Belarus. As many NGOs in Belarus, "Viasna" was repeatedly denied its registration, a refusal qualified as unfounded by the United Nations Human Rights Committee. Therefore, Ales Bialiastki was forced to develop his human rights activities underground. He was not allowed to associate with others and express his opinions freely.

We believe that Belarusian authorities have to take all necessary measures to allow human rights defenders to work freely and with no abusive restrictions, including by providing registration to human rights organisations and to stop using the registration of NGOs as a tool to repress critical voices, as stated in the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.¹

- Belarusian Human Rights House in Vilnius
- Azerbaijan Human Rights House
 - Human Rights Center of Azerbaijan
 - Women's Association for Rational Development (WARD)
- Human Rights House Sarajevo
 - Association of Female Citizens "Renaissance"
 - Foundation CURE
 - Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina
 - Regional Co-ordinator for Youth Groups
 - Serb Civic Council
 - Woman and Society Centre
- Human Rights House Zagreb
 - APEO/UPIM Association for Promotion of Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities
 - Be Active Be Emancipated B.a.B.e.
 - CMS - Centre for Peace Studies
 - Documenta - Centre for Dealing with the Past
 - Svitanje - Association for Protection and Promotion of Mental Health
 - GOLJP - Civic Committee for Human Rights
- Human Rights House Tbilisi
 - Article 42 of the Constitution
 - The Caucasian Centre for Human Rights and Conflict Studies (CAUCASIA)
 - The Georgian Center for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims – GCRT
- Human Rights House Oslo
 - Health and Human Rights Info
 - Human Rights House Foundation

¹ Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, A/RES/53/144, 8 March 1999.

- Norwegian Burma Committee
 - FIAN Norway
 - Norwegian Helsinki Committee
- Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights in Poland
 - Russian Research Center for Human Rights
 - Human Rights Network Group
 - Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia
 - Moscow Centre for Prison Reform
 - Moscow Helsinki Group
 - Mother's Right Foundation
 - Non-violence International
 - Right of the Child
 - Right to Live and have Civil Dignity
 - Union of the Committees of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia
 - Social Partnership Foundation
 - Voronezh Human Rights House
 - Armenian Helsinki Association
 - Shahkhatun, Armenia
 - Belgrade Centre for Human Rights
 - Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia
 - Human Rights Club, Azerbaijan
 - Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union
 - Article 19, UK
 - Index on Censorship, UK
 - Rafto Foundation for Human Rights, Norway
 - Human Rights Club, Azerbaijan

Copies have been sent to:

- The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg
- The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Geneva
- The UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus, Geneva
- The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE ODIHR), Warsaw
- The Delegation of the European Union in Belarus
- The Subcommittee on Human Rights of the European Parliament, Brussels
- The Mission of Belarus to the UN in Geneva
- Representatives of various countries in Belarus and ministries of foreign affairs of various countries

About the Human Rights House Network (www.humanrightshouse.org)

The Human Rights House Network is a forum of cooperation between established and emerging Human Rights Houses, uniting 70 NGOs in 15 countries in Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, East and Horn of Africa, and Western Europe. HRHN's aim is to protect, strengthen and support human rights defenders and their organizations. The Human Rights House Foundation, based in Oslo (Norway) and Geneva (Switzerland), is the secretariat of the Human Rights House Network.