



FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights

Sport for Sport

Appeal by Human Rights Organizations to the Governments of the Countries Participating in the 2014 World Ice Hockey Championship to be held in Minsk

The World Ice Hockey Championship will be held from 9 to 25 May, 2014, in Minsk (Belarus).

We, as representatives of both international and national human rights organizations (see list of signatories below), welcome this unique possibility for Belarusian people to enjoy the sportive competition hosted by their country and the universal values of sport.

Going far beyond these values, the country's top administration, including President A. Lukashenko, has repeatedly underscored that the World Ice Hockey Championship is an important political event. The comments made leave no doubt that by issuing the invitations to the governments of the countries to participate in the Championship, the country's leadership is trying to use all means possible to turn an international sportive event into an ideological and politicized show of the Belarusian -authoritarian- regime.

Taking into account the systematic and grave human rights violations taking place in the Republic of Belarus, our organisations launch an appeal to the countries whose national teams will take part in this World competition to prevent the Belarusian government from using this sport event as a political platform. Sport for sport! Let universal sport values dominate this important event but without giving credit to the Lukashenko regime which has been condemned by the whole international community.

Consequently, our organisations call the concerned States to refrain from sending official government delegations to participate in the events related to the Championship.

Alexander Lukashenko has been ruling the country for 20 years now. Today, politically motivated persecution of civil society representatives and of the opposition is a general trend, and the limitations on political and civil rights of Belarusian citizens are pervading, both in national legislation and in practice.

9 political prisoners are still detained despite the constant mobilisation for their release by Belarusian and international human rights organizations, and intergovernmental bodies: human rights defender, director of the Human Rights Center "Viasna" and Vice-President of FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights) Ales Bialiatski, presidential candidate in the 2010 election Nikolai Statkevich, activists Andrei Haidukov, Vasilii Parfenkov, Nikolai Dedok, Igor Olinevich, Eduard Lobov, Evgenii Vaskovich, and Artem Prokopenko. The conditions of their detention and the state of their health are a cause for serious concern.

Belarus remains the only country in Europe and in the post Soviet sphere which continues to implement the death penalty. Three persons are currently on death row in Belarus¹. Human rights activists have repeatedly called on the leadership of Belarus to implement a moratorium

1 In April 2014, a fourth one, 23-year-old Pavel Selyun, was executed. It was the first execution since 2012.

on the use of the death penalty in the country but sentences continue to be delivered and executions are carried out.

Besides the violations of the core political and civil rights, social and economic rights are just as widely violated, including the use of forced labor. No sphere of life is exempted from grave labor rights violations, nor were the World Ice Hockey Championship preparations. For instance, students from various institutions were forced to work on the construction of the Chizhovka Arena in the city of Minsk, which will host games during the Championship.

Furthermore, the Minsk Municipal Executive Committee has officially declared that in provision of the Championship, the city will be “cleansed” of so called “antisocial elements” - i.e. homeless, alcoholics and prostitutes. Recent reports illustrated the regime's «cleansing» methods. It should be noted that Belarus actively promotes the detention of people suffering from alcoholism and drug addiction, and their conscription into special forced labor camps. Thousands of people are concerned by these measures every year.

By refraining from participating in the World Ice Hockey Championship's politicised agenda, the governments of the concerned countries will allow the athletes and fans to enjoy the upcoming sports events without cautioning the violations repeatedly qualified as grave, systemic and systematic by the United Nations and other international bodies.

Signed (alphabetical):

Civil Rights Defenders (Sweden)

FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights)

Finnish League for Human Rights (Finland)

Human Rights Center “Viasna” (Belarus)

Human Rights House Foundation

Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights & Rule of Law (KIBHR) (Kazakhstan)

LDH, Ligue française des droits de l'homme (France)

LIDU, Lega italiana dei diritti dell'uomo (Italie)

Ligue des droits et libertés (Canada)

Norwegian Helsinki Committee (Norway)

Östgruppen (Sweden)

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