

SIDE-EVENT

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN UKRAINE AND BELARUS

October 23rd 2014 5 - 6:30 p.m.

Hotel ONE UN New York, 1 United Nations Plaza



**EXPRESS PUBLIC SUPPORT
TO HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS**



**DO NOT CRIMINALISE
WORK OF HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS**

MODERATOR

Stéphanie David, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

SPEAKERS

Michel Forst, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Miklós Haraszti, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus

Tatsiana Reviaka, Human Rights Centre "Viasna" and Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House

Oleksandra Matviychuk, Centre for Civil Liberties and EuroMaidan SOS

Vadym Pyvovarov, Association of Ukrainian Human Rights Monitors on Law-Enforcement

Organised by the Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF), in cooperation with the Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House, the Human Rights House Kiev, and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

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HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE
KYIV



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE
FOUNDATION

The Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, Michel Forst, is to present his first report to the General Assembly on October 23rd 2014. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, Miklós Harastzi, is to present a thematic report on human rights defenders in Belarus to the General Assembly.

This joint side-event aims at highlighting the role of human rights defenders in two neighbouring countries, Belarus and Ukraine.

Whilst Belarus and Ukraine are neighbours and share common history, the human rights situations in these countries are very different and they today face different challenges. At the same time, they are good illustrations of the challenges faced by human rights defenders in Eastern Europe. Both countries enjoy an active civil society, which is working mainly underground in Belarus and still not working with full recognition and acknowledgement in Ukraine. The role of human rights defenders is crucial to the development of the countries towards democracy and the rule of law.

Human rights defenders in Ukraine provided support to peaceful demonstrators and documented human rights violations during EuroMaidan, including the widespread use of torture and the killings by law enforcement agencies. Today, civil society is at the forefront of providing humanitarian assistance to those who have to flee Eastern and Southern Ukraine, especially Crimea, and pushing for democratic reforms in Ukraine, whilst documenting high-scale human rights violations in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea.

For years, **Belarusian human rights defenders** have been working on reforming the country, facing systemic and systematic violations of their core rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. There is no space in Belarus for human rights defenders to assess public policies independently from the State and defend the rights of victims of human rights violations. As highlighted by the Special Rapporteur on Belarus in his report to the General Assembly, human rights defenders face criminalisation by the country's legislation and face threats and harassment, arbitrary detention, including short-term detentions and long-term imprisonments, torture and ill treatment, and restrictions on movement. The situation of vulnerable groups, such as LGBT rights defenders is also worrying.

The side-event will be the public part of our advocacy at the General Assembly. In addition we will hold various bilateral meetings with diplomats covering the 3rd Committee of the General Assembly and the Security Council about Ukraine.

About the Human Rights House Network

The **Human Rights House Network (HRHN)** unites 90 human rights NGOs joining forces in 18 independent Human Rights Houses in 13 countries in Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, East and Horn of Africa, and Western Europe. HRHN's aim is to protect, empower and support human rights organisations locally and unite them in an international network of Human Rights Houses.

The **Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House** (Belarusian HRH) addresses the main challenges faced by human rights activists in Belarus - the right to assembly and freedom of expression. This is achieved through the provision of a safe training and meeting space and facilities for human rights defenders, NGOs, journalists, students and teachers, as well as for international meetings and cultural events.

The **Human Rights House Kyiv** and the **Education Human Rights House Chernihiv** are members of HRHN. 10 independent Ukrainian human rights NGOs are members of both Human Rights Houses.

The **Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF)**, based in Oslo (Norway) with an office in Geneva (Switzerland), is HRHN's secretariat. HRHF is international partner of the South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders and the Balkan Network of Human Rights Defenders.

HRHF has consultative status with the United Nations and HRHN has participatory status with the Council of Europe.

Visit us at www.humanrightshouse.org.

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