



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE NETWORK

President of the Republic of Belarus
Aliaksandr Lukashenka
Belarus, 220016, Minsk, K.Marks Str., 38
Fax + 375 17 226 06 10
E-mail: contact@president.gov.by

Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus
Ihar Shunevich
Belarus, 220030, Minsk, Gorodskoy Val Str., 4
Fax + 375-17-218-76-02
E-mail: pismo_mvd@mia.by

Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs
Main Internal Affairs Directorate of Minsk Municipal Executive Committee
Belarus, Minsk, Nezavisimost Ave, 48B
Fax +375-17 331-81-68
E-mail: pismo_guvd_minsk@mia.by

Department of Citizenship and Migration
Pervomajski District Office of Internal Affairs of Minsk
Belarus, Minsk, Belinski Str., 10
Fax+375-17-280-01-62
E-mail: uvd_pervomayski@guvd.by

4 November 2014

APPEAL

We, the undersigned human rights organizations, are alarmed by the news that a well-known human rights defender, Elena Tonkacheva, has had her permit to reside in Belarus canceled and may be deported from the country.

Elena Tonkacheva, Chairperson of the Board of the Legal Transformation Center, although being a citizen of the Russian Federation has permanently resided in Belarus since 1985, and for years has been engaged in educational, analytical and research work in the field of human rights. Ms Tonkacheva is a highly qualified expert in law and human rights; the organization headed by her is one of the leading human rights NGOs in Belarus.

On 30 October 2014, Ms Tonkacheva was notified about the cancelation of her residence permit and on 5 November 2014 a decision will be made as to whether she is to be deported from Belarus. The formal reason for that are administrative breaches (insignificantly exceeding speed limit when driving).

However, the disproportionate measures used by the Belarusian authorities in this case give grounds to believe that these minor breaches are used solely as a pretext to punish Ms Tonkacheva for her principled position and long-term human rights work and either to stop or create considerable obstacles in her human rights activities.

In this connection, we appeal to the Belarusian authorities to:

- **Repeal the decision to cancel Ms Tonkacheva's residence permit and not to deport her from Belarus;**
- **Take effective measures to protect human rights defenders and provide them with a possibility to carry out their human rights activities without any obstacles, as stipulated in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms from 9 December 1998;**
- **Be guided by the recommendation of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus to "recognize the important role of human rights defenders, whether individuals or members of civil society organizations, and guarantee the independence of civil society organizations and human rights defenders, enabling them to operate without the fear of reprisal."¹**

Sincerely,

Azerbaijan Human Rights House (on behalf of the following NGOs):

- Azerbaijan Human Rights Center
- Society for Humanitarian Research

Human Rights House Kyiv (on behalf of the following NGOs):

- Centre for Civil Liberties
- Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group
- Social Action Center
- Ukrainian Legal Aid Foundation

Human Rights House Tbilisi (on behalf of the following NGOs):

- The Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture

Human Rights House Oslo (on behalf of the following NGOs):

- Health and Human Rights Info
- Human Rights House Foundation

Human Rights House Voronezh

Human Rights House Yerevan (on behalf of the following NGOs):

- The Helsinki Association for Human Rights

Human Rights House Zagreb

Public Association for Assistance to Free Economy, Azerbaijan
Public Union of Democracy and Human Rights Resource Centre, Azerbaijan
Rafto Foundation for Human Rights, Norway

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

The Human Rights House Network (HRHN) unites 87 human rights NGOs joining forces in 18 independent Human Rights Houses in 13 countries in Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, East and

1 A/69/307 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus

Horn of Africa, and Western Europe. HRHN's mandate is to protect, empower and support human rights organisations locally and unite them in an international network of Human Rights Houses.

The Human Rights House Kyiv is one of the members of HRHN. 10 independent Ukrainian human rights NGOs are members of the Human Rights House Kyiv.

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 emerging Balkan Network of Human Rights Defenders.

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