



International observation mission of the Committee on International Control over the Situation with Human Rights in Belarus

Analytical Review №1-1b “Interference in the Work of Human Rights Organizations and Initiatives in Belarus from January 12th to March 8th, 2011”

In this document the International Observation Mission of the Committee on International Control over the Situation with Human Rights in Belarus presents an analysis of the situation and the systematic compilation of facts of interference in the activity of human rights organizations and initiatives in Belarus, based on 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 (“UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders”) and aligned with the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders - “Ensuring the protection”.¹

This analytical review is the result of monitoring the situation in this area during the period from January 12th to March 8th, 2011 and continues the work presented in the Analytical Review № 1-1 “Interference in the Work of Human Rights Organizations and Initiatives in Belarus, December 2010 – January 2011”². The review is based on inputs received from open public sources of information, messages of human rights defenders and human rights organizations in Belarus, as well as on data provided by the Centre for Legal Transformation.

I. Introduction

During this period, human rights organizations in Belarus continued to play a significant role in monitoring human rights violations during a peaceful opposition and public demonstrations, detentions, searches, interrogations and court trials.

Termination or weakening of the work of human rights defenders and organizations will create conditions for further government pressure on activists, opposition politicians, other civil society organizations and groups. And this work of defenders with monitoring the situation, collection of evidence, victim assistance and coverage of events connected with human rights violations creates the framework that allows to characterize the actions of the Belarusian authorities as the ones that violate international human rights standards and obligations undertaken by Belarus. Pressure on human rights defenders in Belarus does not allow them to perform their job - to monitor violations and provide assistance to the victims, which creates the possibility for further deterioration of the human rights situation.

The mission insists that Belarus, as well as any other member state of the UN and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), has obligations to respect the universally recognized norms and standards of human rights, particularly with regard to human rights defenders as a special group of social activists whose activities are aimed at protecting the rights of other people. As a member state of the OSCE Belarus has undertaken certain obligations in the sphere of human dimension, including those relating to the assistance to human rights defenders to protect and promote human rights. As a member of the UN, Belarus must also take into account the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized

¹ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/GuidelinesDefenders.pdf>

² <http://hrwatch-by.org/en/analytical-review-1-1>

Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of December 10th, 1998 ("UN Declaration of Human Rights Defenders").

Based on these considerations, we draw attention of the international community to the situation of human rights defenders and human rights organizations in Belarus.

II. List of the facts of persecution

2.1. Interrogations:

Andrew Poluda, human rights activist (Belynichi city)

On January 19th, 2011 human rights activist Andrew Poluda was questioned in the Shklov interdistrict department of the KGB. Prior to that, Andrew was being called in for questioning over the phone for several days but he refused to comply without summons. KGB agents were interested in his relations with the head of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna" Ales Bialiatski.³

Valentin Stefanovich, a human rights defender, lawyer, Deputy Chairman of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna", one of the participants of the campaign "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" (Minsk)

On January 27th, 2011 Valentin Stefanovich was called and summoned for questioning regarding the events of December 19th, despite the fact that the human rights activist did not participate in the events and was not on the square.⁴

Oleg Volchek, human rights defender, Chief of the Human Rights Center "Legal Assistance to the Population" (Minsk)

Human rights activist Oleg Volchek was questioned on January 29th, 2011. The interrogation was conducted by the Frunze police department with regard to the case of the riots on December 19th, 2010.⁵

Vladimir Telepun, human rights activist, coordinator of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna" in Mozyr (Mozyr)

On February 14th, 2011 Vladimir Telepun received summons for questioning by the local department of the KGB. At this time Vladimir was treated in hospital.⁶ On February 21st, 2011 commissioner of the city department of the KGB V. Prikhod'ko personally handed second summons for questioning to the human rights activist. The summons stated that Vladimir Telepun was being called on February 24th, 2011 to the KGB for questioning as a witness in a criminal case on the mass riots.⁷ A number of questions during the interrogation was about work of Vladimir and the Human Rights Centre "Viasna".

Anastasia Loiko, human rights activist, HRC "Viasna" lawyer, participant of the International Network – Youth Human Rights Movement (YHRM) (Minsk).

On February 14th, 2011 human rights activist Anastasia Loiko received a call from an investigating officer of the military counterintelligence, who declined to introduce himself.⁸ On February 15th, 2011 Loiko met with the captain of the military intelligence Denis Nowicki. Human rights activist received an offer to cooperate with the Counter-Intelligence Service.⁹

2.2. Searches:

³ <http://spring96.org/en/news/40801>

⁴ <http://spring96.org/en/news/40929>

⁵ <http://euroradio.fm/by/1474/news/60821/>

⁶ <http://hrwatch-by.org/14-fevralya-novyi-vitok-davleniya-na-pravozashchitnikov>

⁷ <http://spring96.org/ru/news/41450>

⁸ <http://spring96.org/ru/news/41269>

⁹ <http://spring96.org/en/news/41306>

Human Rights Centre "Viasna" (Minsk)

On January 17th, 2011 the KGB had made another search in the premises of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna", and later in the apartment and in the country house of his head Ales Bialiatski. The ground for the search was the consideration of Ales as a witness in a criminal case on the riots.¹⁰ On January 19th, 2011 the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders "Front Line" announced an urgent action of assistance to the Centre "Viasna" because of the series of searches.¹¹

Centre for Human Rights (Minsk)

On January 19th, 2011 a search was conducted in the Public Association "Centre for Human Rights", where three computer system blocks were seized.¹²

Raisa Mikhailovskaya, human rights defender, Head of the Centre for Human Rights (Minsk).

On January 19th, 2011 the apartment of the Head of the Centre for Human Rights Raisa Mikhailovskaya was searched.¹³ According to her, a mobile phone, 3 flash drives and memory cards were seized from her.

Elizaveta Efimova, coordinator of the Youth Union Group "Studentskaya Rada", participant of the International Network - Youth Human Rights Movement (YHRM) (Minsk).

On January 20th, 2011 the apartment of parents of Elizaveta Efimova (at her place of residence), was searched. At the moment, Elizaveta was forced to leave Belarus temporarily.¹⁴

Vladimir Telepun, human rights activist, coordinator of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna" in Mozyr (Mozyr city).

On January 21th, 2011 the apartment Mozyr defender Vladimir Telepun was searched, during which a computer and DVD-discs were seized. A search warrant was dated December 19, 2010.¹⁵ At the moment of compiling this analytical paper the technique was not returned to the defender.

Leonid Sudalenka, human rights defender, the NGO "Law Initiative", co-founder of the Center for Strategic Litigation (Gomel city).

On January 26th, 2011 the apartment of the human rights activist Leonid Sudalenka was searched again. A laptop, desktop computer, notebook and copying equipment were seized from Sudalenka.¹⁶

Mikhail Matusevich, Youth Union Group "Studentskaya Rada" activist, correspondent of the International Network – Youth Human Rights Movement (YHRM) (Minsk)

On February 2nd, 2011 KGB officers conducted a search in the apartment of Mikhail on the case of the organization of mass riots on December 19th. The search was conducted by 4 KGB officers (Head of the Task Force Dmitry Burak), one of the two witnesses arrived at the venue of the search 25 minutes after the start of the investigation. During the search laptop and computer hard disk were seized. Campaign materials, which, according to Mikhail, the KGB was looking for, were not found in the apartment.¹⁷

¹⁰ <http://hrwatch-by.org/ales-belyatskii-vlast-obyavila-voinu-grazhdanskomu-obshchestvu>

¹¹ <http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/14275>

¹² <http://spring96.org/en/news/40783>

¹³ <http://spring96.org/en/news/40783>

¹⁴ <http://hrwatch-by.org/obysk-v-kvartire-roditelei-elizavety-efimovoi>

¹⁵ <http://spring96.org/be/news/40841>

¹⁶ <http://news.tut.by/politics/art212900.html>

¹⁷ <http://hrwatch-by.org/obysk-na-kvartire-aktivista-studrada-mikhasya-matusevicha>

Mikhail Matskevich, Youth Union Group "Studentskaya Rada" activist, participant of the International Network – Youth Human Rights Movement (YHRM) (Minsk)

On February 2nd, 2011 in the apartment of Mikhail Matskevich was conducted a search. Michael, being away from home, were not present during the investigation. From the apartment computers and portable storage media were seized.¹⁸

Ales Krot, Youth Union Group "Studentskaya Rada" activist, correspondent of the International Network – Youth Human Rights Movement (YHRM) (Minsk)

On February 2nd, 2011 a search was conducted in the apartment of Ales Krot. According to Ales, he was not present during the search resulted in seizure of the office equipment and the informational materials of the YHRM.

¹⁸ <http://hrwatch-by.org/obysk-u-mikhasya-matskevicha-0>

2.3. Warnings

Belarusian Helsinki Committee (Minsk)

According to representatives of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee (BHC) on January, 12th 2011 the orders of the Ministry of Justice had been sent to the organization. This document was sent to the organization because of the fact that on January 12, 2011 BHC sent a letter to the Special Reporter on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers of the UN Human Rights Council Gabriela Knaul after several cases of pressure on the lawyers from the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus. Ministry of Justice considered information of the BHC as unproven, untrue and that deliberately distorts the real situation in the country, discrediting the Republic of Belarus in the eyes of the world community, as well as found in the organization's actions violation of Articles 4 and 33 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Information, Informatisation and Information Protection". Due to this fact, the Ministry of Justice issued a written warning to the human rights organization, which in accordance with Articles 28 and 29 of the Law "On Public Associations" gives the Ministry of Justice right to apply to the court with petition to declare the suspension, and then abolition of the organization. Decision of the Ministry of Justice to issue a written warning to the organization is going to be appealed on the Supreme Court, the case is scheduled for March 9th, 2011. The International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders "Front Line" on January 19th, 2011 announced an urgent action of assistance to BHC in connection with the issuing of warning¹⁹. On January 27th, 2011 the Conference of international NGOs of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution concerning civil society in Belarus, where they ask to draw the attention of the Council of Europe to the situation and requests relevant Council of Europe bodies to bear this situation in mind when examining their relations with Belarus²⁰.

Ales Bialiatski, human rights defender, Head of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna", Vice-President of the International Federation for Human Rights (Minsk).

On February 14th, 2011 in the afternoon Bialiatski received a phone call from Pavel Eliseev, Deputy Head of Department for Supervision over the observance of the citizens' rights and freedoms of the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Belarus. The General Prosecutor's Officer wanted to talk to the human rights activist Bialiatski about "Human Rights Center "Viasna" activity"²¹.

After receiving the relevant official notice Ales Bialiatski visited the General Prosecutor's Office on February 16th, 2011. Ales Bialiatski refused to talk about the activities of the Human Rights Center "Viasna", citing a constitutional right not to incriminate himself. As a result of the meeting, an official warning was issued to the human rights defender about non-violation of the law, namely Article 193-1 of the Criminal Code, which prohibits participation in unregistered public association. Human rights defender was warned that further violations of the law may be used to bring him to justice under the legislation of the Republic of Belarus²². On February 16th, 2011 several human rights organizations and civil society activists in Belarus appealed to the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders about pressure on Ales. The appeal was signed by Elena Tonkacheva (Foundation for Legal Technologies), Olga Smolyanka (Center for Legal Transformation), Raisa Mikhaylovskaya (Centre for Human Rights), Tatiana Revyaka (Belarusian Human Rights House), Inna Kuley (Committee for the Protection of the Repressed "Solidarity"), Oleg Gulak (Belarusian Helsinki Committee), Boris Zvozkov (human rights defender, alumni of the First International Higher Course on Human Rights of the Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights). Also on February, 16th the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders released an urgent statement about the fact of the issuing the warning to Ales Bialiatski²³. On March 1st, 2011 the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech

¹⁹ <http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/14263>

²⁰ http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/Articles/CONF_PLE_2011_RES2_Belarus_en.asp

²¹ <http://hrwatch-by.org/14-fevralya-novyi-vitok-davleniya-na-pravozashchitnikov>

²² <http://spring96.org/en/news/41330>

²³ <http://www.fidh.org/Warning-against-Mr-Ales-Bialatski-President-of>

Republic Karel Schwarzenberg sent to Ales Bialiatski a letter in which he expressed his outrage by the fact of issuing him the warning²⁴. Also on March 1st, 2011 the monitoring group of the Centre for Legal Transformation sent to the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders the analytical report on the persecution of human rights defenders in Belarus in February 2011, as well as duplicated its report about pressure on Ales Bialiatski.

2.4. Other forms of pressure:

Centre for Human Rights (Minsk)

On February 21st, 2011, Head and bookkeeper of the Centre were brought to administrative responsibility by the Tax Inspectorate under the Article 13 of the I. 6 b of the Administrative Code. During complex inspection, organized by the supervisory bodies of Belarus, which took place in the organization in autumn 2010, were identified errors in the calculation of tax coefficients. The Centre was proposed to voluntarily repay a debt (56 thousand Belarusian rubles), and CHR did repay during period defined by the tax body. However, one week before expiration of the terms for bringing to administrative responsibility for violations of this article, Raisa Mikhailovskaya was called to the Tax Inspectorate and fined under this Article on 5 basic units, and bookkeeper - to 10 basic units. This fact is considered by human rights defenders as indirect pressure on organization because at the time of the voluntary repayment the Tax Inspectorate didn't have additional claims.

III. International community response (selected facts)

On January 21st, 2011 **the European Parliament** adopted a resolution on Belarus.²⁵ During the discussion, the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission Catherine Ashton, in particular, noted that the European External Action Service and the European Commission need to prepare proposals on measures to be taken with regard to NGOs, media and students.²⁶

On January 21st, 2011 **the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights** expressed her "deep concern" in connection with the "the use of force against demonstrators who were not participating in hostilities, violence against and abduction of opposition candidates and their supporters, detention of opposition activists and human rights defenders, and searches and harassment of independent non-governmental organizations". She highlighted, that the authorities "must fully respect and ensure their political opponents' rights to peaceful demonstrations and freedom of speech", the High Commissioner called upon the Government of Belarus "to immediately release opposition candidates and their supporters who did not call for and were not involved in any violence", and also "to ensure that human rights defenders, journalists and civil society organizations are free from any harassment"²⁷.

On January 21st, 2011 **20 public associations of Belarus, Europe and North America** (participants of international meetings upon discussion the situation in Belarus, held in Vilnius) expressed their solidarity with Belarusian civil society and human rights activists, they also demanded to apply diplomatic, political, financial mechanisms and measures by the OSCE, EU, Council of Europe regarding the ongoing unprecedented repressions in Belarus.²⁸

²⁴ <http://spring96.org/ru/news/41593>

²⁵ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2011-0022+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

²⁶ <http://hrwatch-by.org/evrodeputaty-opredelili-sanktsii-kotorye-es-dolzhen-primenit-po-otnosheniyu-k-vlastyam-belarusi>

²⁷ <http://www.ohchr.org/ru/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=10608&LangID=E>

²⁸ <http://ampby.org/2011/02/02/3276/>

On January 27th, 2011 the Conference of International NGOs of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution concerning civil society in Belarus, in which it strongly deplored that civil society representatives are still in custody, many of them being active partners of the Conference, and also draw attention of the Council of Europe to the warning received by the Belarusian Helsinki Committee. The Conference expressed its support to international civil society initiatives by human rights defenders such as the International Observation Mission formed by the Committee on International Control over the Human Rights Situation in Belarus and its readiness to co-operate with all such initiatives. Before June 2011 it will also initiate proposals for enhanced support for civil society, independent media, human rights defenders, educational institutions, youth and women's organisations in Belarus to be presented to the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe²⁹.

On January 31st, 2011 the EU Council on Foreign Affairs adopted conclusions on Belarus, in which it "called on the Belarusian authorities to end the persecution of democratic forces, independent media and representatives of civil society, and students, and to end any penalisation or discrimination against those exercising their right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, including the leaders of the opposition parties. The European Union remains strongly committed to strengthening its engagement with the Belarusian people and civil society. The EU is therefore working on measures to provide urgent support to those repressed and detained on political grounds and their families, as well as support to civil society. It will also review its assistance to Belarus which is aimed at addressing the needs of the population, in order to further strengthen support to civil society, targeting in particular NGOs and students, including through the International Donors' Conference in Warsaw on 2 February." ³⁰.

On February 1st, 2011 the President's Council of the Russian Federation for the Promotion of Civil Society and Human Rights made a statement about the situation in Belarus. In the statement the Council called upon the authorities of the Republic of Belarus for the urgent reconstruction of an equal dialogue with non-political civil society sector, stressed that the necessary conditions for such dialogue could be noninterference in the legitimate activities of NGOs, the return of confiscated office equipment; transparent investigation of abuse of power by those who detained people; cancellation of criminal liability for participation in unregistered NGO and simplification of the NGOs registration; development of a national action plan on human rights protection and effective measures to protect human rights defenders and support their activities³¹.

On February 1st, 2011 the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon expressed concern about "reports of oppression and the ongoing detention of journalists, civic activists and opposition candidates", calling for their release³². This is the second such statement of the UN Secretary General, the previous was made on January 10th, 2011.³³

On February 2nd, 2011 the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Füle at the International Donors' Conference "Solidarity with Belarus" in Warsaw announced the EU plans to increase financial support to Belarusian civil society for 2011-2013 from 4 million to 15.6 million Euros. They are talking about financial assistance to Belarusian non-governmental organizations, independent media, and students who were repressed by the authorities after the presidential elections on December 19, 2010. In addition, the EU has developed a number of urgent measures to support the "victims of

²⁹ <http://www.hrwatch-by.org/en/conference-international-ngos-council-europe-adopted-resolution>

³⁰ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/119038.pdf

³¹ <http://hrwatch-by.org/en/statement-council-under-president-russian-federation-promotion-civil-society-and-human-rights>

³² <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37440&Cr=Belarus&Cr1=>

³³ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37237&Cr=Belarus&Cr1=>

repression and increased support to civil society".³⁴ Also Germany intends to support civil society of Belarus. According to the press service of **the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, these funds will also finance scholarships, educational projects for journalists and projects to develop democracy and legal state.³⁵

On February 3rd, 2011 a number of thematic mechanisms of **the UN Council on Human Rights** expressed concerns about the situation in Belarus in a joint statement about the suppression of public appearances in a number of countries, noting that the right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association "are among the most fundamental rights underpinning a democratic society"³⁶.

On February 7th, 2011 **the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania Audronius Ažubalis** at an international conference on Belarus in Vilnius said that Lithuania has consistently supported civil society in Belarus, and will continue to do the same.³⁷

On February 21st, 2011 **the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay** said that acts of harassment and political and administrative pressure against human rights defenders and NGOs in Belarus continue, including arrests, interrogation, office raids, confiscation of material, and intimidation designed to prevent contact with international and intergovernmental organizations. The High Commissioner stressed: "Human rights defenders should be able to do their work in a safe environment without putting themselves at risk and without fear of reprisals, intimidation, threats or stigmatization... States have a duty to protect human rights defenders, journalists and civil society from threats, retaliation or pressure stemming from the legitimate exercise of their work in defence of human rights"³⁸.

³⁴ <http://news.tut.by/politics/213715.html>

³⁵ <http://news.tut.by/politics/213715.html>

³⁶ <http://www.ohchr.org/RU/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=10703&LangID=E>

³⁷ <http://www.belaruspartisan.org/bp-forte/?page=100&backPage=19&news=76432&newsPage=0>

³⁸ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=10740&LangID=E>

IV. Conclusions:

Despite the fact that number of pressure acts on human rights organizations has decreased in comparison with the first observation period, we still have situation in which actions of the authorities against human rights defenders still have the character of the threat to personal safety of human rights defenders and interfere in the work of human rights organizations. Significant part of the human rights community in the country were affected by the searches and calls for questioning, primarily it were the representatives of major organizations, including those who were not directly related to the election process. In some cases, searches were repeated, the practice of seizure of office machinery and computers from the offices of human rights organizations and the private apartments of individual defenders continued.

It is important to note the trend of calls for questioning of defenders as well as calls for questioning after a legitimate refusal to communicate by telephone with the staff of the prosecutor's office and the KGB, the proposals to defenders for cooperation with intelligence agencies. Issuing warnings to human rights organizations and their leaders can be considered as new threats to civil society in Belarus, which can lead both to the closure of registered organizations (the case of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee), and to the prosecution of their leaders (the case of Ales Bialiatski).

One might say that such actions of the Belarusian authorities show their unwillingness to follow the numerous recommendations to bring national legislation in line with international standards on freedom of association.

Law enforcement and security agencies while carrying out searches and interrogations still do not always indicate criminal case they are operating within. In some documented cases, procedural status of the person against whom these actions were carried out was not specified, even in the presence of a search warrant or a summons for questioning.

As well as before, attention of authorities to human rights defenders carried surplus character and was related to public activity and notorious fame of human rights defenders, but not with concrete grounds to suspect them in committing crimes or offenses.

Impeding the work of human rights organizations had a negative impact on the ability to provide legal assistance to the population, the implementation of human rights advocacy and monitoring the situation on human rights in the country.

It is important to mark the intent attention of international community to the situation with pressure on human rights defenders and interference in their activities in the Republic of Belarus.

Almost all the largest intergovernmental institutes made public statements on this occasion with appeal to the authorities of Belarus, it was declared about a necessity to provide a comprehensive support, including funding, to Belarusian civil society, human rights organizations and civil society activists from various international structures, foundations and governments of a number of countries.

It is obvious that the intergovernmental institutions should reconsider their approach to policy of building relationships with civil society in Belarus and to develop new strategy to partner with them. There is no doubt that the increase in funding to Belarusian civil society itself is not a sufficient guarantee of its protection, strengthening and development.

We should also pay a special attention to manifestations of solidarity with the Belarusian human rights community by civil society organizations and human rights activists from different countries.

V. Recommendations:

Due to the fact that the situation, in fact, has slightly changed since January 2010, the general recommendations of the International Observation Mission, aimed at improving and stabilizing the situation to guarantee the freedom of human rights organizations in Belarus still remain relevant.

To the human rights community in other countries:

- to provide support to human rights organizations in Belarus by sending letters of support to the organizations and individual human rights defenders as well as by addressing the Government of Belarus, explaining the role and importance of human rights organizations for the country and insisting that they should refrain from pressure and persecution against them;
- to join the Committee on International Control over the human rights situation in the Republic of Belarus, to support the work of the Special Rapporteur on investigation the events in the Republic of Belarus - opposition protests on December 19th, 2010 and the International Observation Mission, including direct presence in Minsk, or other support to human rights organizations in the Republic of Belarus in the current situation.

To the authorities of the Republic of Belarus:

- to take measures to stop the interference into the legitimate work of human rights organizations and initiatives in the Republic of Belarus;
- to guarantee the freedom of operation for civil society organizations, including decriminalization of participation in the activities of unregistered organizations, simplification procedures of NGO registration, etc.;
- to adopt national action plans on human rights, developing the strategy and measures to protect human rights defenders and support their activities

To the law enforcement bodies of the Republic of Belarus:

- to refrain from obstructing the work of human rights organizations and initiatives during conducting investigations related to the events of December 19th, 2010;
- to stop using investigation activities as a means of pressure and intimidation of human rights defenders and organizations;
- to conduct an open and transparent investigation in all cases of abuse of power or negligent performance of official duties by government officials; to bring all the offenders to administrative and criminal responsibility;
- to take measures to return all the equipment seized from human rights organizations and initiatives immediately upon completion of the investigation.

To the UN Special Reporter on the situation of human rights defenders:

- to address the public authorities of the Republic of Belarus by urgent appeals and allegations on specific cases of persecution of human rights defenders in the country;
- to request official permission for country visits to Belarus to monitor situation in the country after the elections on December 19th, 2010.

To OSCE Focal Point for human rights defenders and national human rights institutions:

- to initiate public statements and appeals to the authorities of Belarus by the OSCE structures and institutions in relation to the systematic persecution of human rights defenders in the country;
- to monitor the situation of human rights defenders, to respond to incidents of persecution by urgent statements, and to organize the presence of the OSCE representatives at the trials against human rights defenders on a permanent basis;

- to appeal to the OSCE member states with a proposal to pay special attention to the protection of human rights defenders in Belarus at the meetings of the OSCE Permanent Council.

To the EU missions in Belarus:

- to intensify efforts to observe the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders;
- to strengthen public contacts with human rights defenders, by arranging public meetings and visits to the offices of human rights organizations of the senior EU officials, as well as other political figures from the EU bodies and the EU missions;
- to review the local implementation strategy of protection of human rights defenders according to the changed context in Belarus, taking into account proposals of national and international human rights organizations working in Belarus;
- to send representatives to attend and observe the trials of human rights defenders;
- to make demarches and public statements in cases of imminent and serious danger to human rights defenders.

March 9, 2011