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Press Release

Appeal to respect freedom of association in Belarus: Register Belarusian Christian-Democratic Party

*Joint Appeal to the Belarusian Government from
Libereco – Partnership for Human Rights, Bonn
People in Need, Prague
European Exchange, Berlin
Human Rights in Belarus, Berlin
Young European Movement Berlin-Brandenburg, Berlin
Belarusian Human Rights House, Vilnius*

Bonn/Prague/Berlin/Vilnius 22.12.2009 On 9 December 2009 the Belarusian Ministry of Justice denied state registration of the Belarusian Christian-Democratic Party (BCD) for the second consecutive time this year. A first Founding Congress has taken place in February 2009, but subsequently the Ministry of Justice denied the registration of the oppositional party in April 2009. Two Months later the Supreme Court of Belarus ruled to dismiss BCD's appeal against the denied registration.

Thereupon a second BCD Founding Congress was held in Minsk on 31 October 2009 and all required documents to become registered as a party were again submitted to the Belarusian Ministry of Justice. But the Ministry ruled once more against the registration on grounds of alleged irregularities in line with the party's foundation.

In compliance with legal requirements more than 1000 party members have signed the founding documents. Numerous of those founding members complying with their alleged legal rights are facing state repression for months now. An massive intimidation campaign has been unleashed by the Belarusian authorities as well as the KGB secret service, threatening the founding members with dismissal or expulsion from university. Thereby some BCD members gave in under the continuous pressure and withdrew their signatures from BCD's founding documents. Overall BCD documented in 2009 82 cases of repressions against it's founding members, among them 5 dismissals and one expulsion from university.

We urge the Belarusian government to register the Belarusian Christian-Democratic Party and to stop the intimidation, harassment and persecution campaigns against it's members immediately.

Furthermore, we urge the Belarusian government to respect the human right to freedom of association and to register numerous other parties and organisations. Up to date they have been closed or denied registration in the past similar to the BCD case, like: the human rights center Viasna, the youth organisation Malady Front, the Party of Working People, the cultural-educational association Golden Lion and the Belarusian Student's Association (BSA).



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Under article 193.1 of the Belarusian criminal code activities on behalf of an unregistered organisation can be sentenced with up to 2 years imprisonment. We therefore urge the Belarusian government to abolish criminal code article 193.1 immediately, to lift the ban on the activities of unregistered organizations and to end the persecutions of Belarusian civil society and opposition activists.

We express our solidarity and support for all people and organisations in Belarus which are peacefully engaged for the recognition of human rights in the country.

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