

Human Rights and Civil Society in Belarus



Accompanying booklet to the joint exhibition of:



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Involvement in civil society in Belarus often requires substantial courage. Those who are involved in civil society face intimidation, harassment and persecution.

What is happening in this country, dominated by Alexander Lukaschenko since 1994, and often called „the last dictatorship in Europe“? Under which conditions do the civil society and democratic opposition exist? What is the situation concerning human rights?

In this exhibition booklet we try to give answers to these questions and show the repression the Belarusian civil society is facing.

Belarus after the presidential elections on 19th December 2010 is a country in which peaceful demonstrators are brutally beaten by the police and tortured by the KGB. A country of show trials, where presidential candidates and opponents of the regime are sentenced to imprisonment and work camps for many years. It is also a country in which people are involved in civil movements and human rights groups, despite all difficulties and perils they face. The Belarusian civil society's response to the detention of around 700 people, after the violent breaking up of a demonstration on election night, demonstrated an impressive level of solidarity with the detained. Large heaps of clothes, food and toiletries were collected to help the prisoners. The initiators of this aid campaign were honoured with the name „heroes of the civil society“ by the independent Belarusian NGO federation in February 2011.

We should not be indifferent to what happens in Belarus, a country in the heart of Europe. Our response to these violations of human rights has to be clear: we support the victims of governmental repression and persecution, and campaign with all our strength for the release of the prisoners of conscience in Belarus. Those responsible for torture and human right violations should not be exempted from punishment.

Please support our work for the respect of human rights in Belarus by getting involved directly or through a donation. The people in Belarus hope that we will not look the other way but that we will act.



2010

© Our Home

A member of the grass-roots movement Our Home (Nascha Dom) spreaded flyers (Belarus, 2010)

A draft blows through a wide gap in the window, the light in the hallway stopped working long ago, and in front of the house is a mix of cracked asphalt and muddy footpath. Conditions such as these are common in houses in Belarusian cities despite the residents being regularly required to pay for their maintenance.

Because of this issue, in 2005 activists launched a civic campaign, which helps residents to enforce their right to the maintenance and cleaning of hallways by the municipal housing companies.

The campaign mainly uses leaflets which „Our Home“ distributes regularly to more than 150,000 households, provides legal assistance to citizens and initiatives such as collecting signatures for collective complaints and collective redresses against local authorities.

Furthermore „Our Home“ has a success rate of about 40% in court cases, thereby protecting fellow campaigners against penalties. Under pressure from „Our

Home“, several city administrations have resumed the maintenance of hallways, set up bus stops, and repaved streets.

In the meantime, „Our Home“ is now active in 15 cities and, in addition to local problems in the housing industry, advocates for individuals against police brutality and political repression.

(Author: Federation for Social Defence, Bund für Soziale Verteidigung (BSV))

The Belarus Free Theatre is the only free theatre group in Belarus. It was founded in 2005 by the human rights activist and journalist Natalia Koliada, her partner, the author Nikolai Khalezin and the producer Vladimir Shcherban. The artist group states that “only after the end of the ruling dictatorship” will they cease their work. The members of the Belarus Free Theatre experience heavy repression in their country, all its actors are officially banned from the profession and are not allowed to work in public theatres. They live and work underground, constantly in danger of arrest.

All productions are held in a run-down house near the Belarusian capital Minsk. After changing the performance locations constantly, from cafes to private flats or even in the open air in remote woods, all shows are now held in this house, where the omnipresent taboo of discussing social conflicts in Belarus is defied. Due to the repressive wave that has shaken the country since Dec 19th 2010, most members of the theatre stay outside Belarus for reasons of their own

security, or only travel to Belarus incognito.

There is broad international support from artists, including the British dramatist and screenplay writer Tom Stoppard, the Rolling Stone Mick Jagger, the actors Jude Law and Kevin Spacey as well as the former Czech president and dissident Vaclav Havel.

2007

© Andrei Liankevich

A secret performance of the Belarus Free Theatre, which is not permitted by the government (Minsk, 2007)



2010

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Activists in the campaign for the introduction of alternative civilian service in Belarus inform soldiers on their right to refuse military service (Minsk, May 2010).

As yet, in Belarus there is no alternative civilian service for young men who refuse military service on grounds of conscience. By obliging young men to do military service without providing any alternative, Belarus violates the human right of freedom of conscience. Article 57 of the Belarusian constitution provides for a civilian service since 2001 – however a specific law on civilian service has yet to be introduced.

After the conviction of Dzmitry Smyk in November 2009, and Ivan Mikhailau in February 2010 due to conscientious objection, Libereco and the Bund für Soziale Verteidigung (Federation for Social Defence, BSV), as well as other European NGOs, started the campaign "for an alternative civilian service in Belarus" (AGS), calling for the release of Mikhailau and the introduction of a civilian service in Belarus. The campaign has increased the political pressure for change, and on 18th February 2010 saw its first success when president Lukashenka finally ordered the creation of a law on civilian service.

Unfortunately, the debating of the draft law is restricted to a government working group, thus excluding the different Belarusian NGOs from the process. Therefore, the NGOs concerned drew up their own draft law on alternative civilian service. In March 2010, Ivan Mikhailau was released from prison a few days earlier than expected. Dzmitry Smyk's sentence was also lifted. Mikhailau and Smyk can still be called up for military service, however. In June 2010, Yauhien Yakavenka, who asked the administration for an alternative to military service, was condemned to one year of prison on probation, but received an amnesty on July 23rd, 2010. Nevertheless, he is still obliged to do military service..

Libereco and the BSV are calling upon the Belarusian government to quickly establish a law for civilian service, and to include Belarusian NGOs in the law-making process. Everyone should have the right to refuse military service as conscientious objectors and to do civilian service instead.



2009

© Mikola and Yulia Bianko, Assembly of Belarusian NGOs

Dressed up as Santa Claus, activists ask for the abolition of criminal law article 193.1 (Minsk, October 2009)

Because of article 193.1 of the Belarusian criminal code membership in, or activity connected to, an unregistered organization can be prosecuted with up to 2 years of imprisonment. Since its implementation in 2006, 17 people have been prosecuted on the grounds of article 193.1. For their involvement in unregistered organizations, dozens of members of Belarusian civil society have been officially summoned before the public prosecutor – the next step would be conviction.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) come under great pressure from Belarusian state officials. Many of them have been banned, or have attempted for many years in vain to receive official permission and registration. The registration of NGOs is often denied on flimsy grounds, obviously in order to keep civil society under direct control. Those in power do not want to see it threatened by the activities of critical citizens. As a result, many Belarusians live with the permanent threat of prosecution, because of their involvement in unregistered organizations.

The Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs of Belarus has initiated a campaign called "Stop 193.1". In this campaign, Belarusian, as well as international organizations, are demanding the abolition of article 193.1 – in one case in a street action, dressed as members of the unregistered organization of Santa Clauses...



2009

© Jura Sidun, Generation.by

Young people highlight the absence of freedom of assembly with a public pillow fight – some participants are arrested (Minsk, August 2009)

All over the world, people have been gathering in so-called “flash mobs”. These are short, seemingly spontaneous gatherings of people in public or semi-public places. The participants usually don’t know each other but do quite unusual things.

Flash mobs also occur now and then in Minsk, and pillow fights are especially popular with the teenagers taking part. But because of the police’s rigorous interventions these events commonly end in arrests. Flash mobs in Belarus are an indicator for the lack of any freedom of assembly all over the country, because they are necessarily spontaneous.

After a mass pillow fight in Minsk in July 2010, the organizer, a known member of the political opposition Andrej Kim, was prosecuted and had to pay a fine of about 4 euros 50 cents. Around 300 people had gathered near the national library and were involved in a pillow fight that had not been officially authorized. 70 of them, mostly teenagers, were arrested. According to Andrej Kim,

this action was supposed to commemorate and reenact the nationally famous historical battle at Grunwald 600 years before, when the Grandlithuanian forces beat the knights of the German Order.

18 people were detained on suspicion of the attack on the Russian embassy in Minsk, Belarus (August 30, 2010). These were anarchists and activists for social and environmental initiatives. In Belarus, holding people in detention without charge for more than three days is unlawful, so every 72 hours they were released and rearrested.

18 years old Barys Ashchepkau, a „Food not bombs“ movement activist, cooks vegetarian food and serves it to homeless people for free. During these series of arrests he was held for 6 days. Like all the other youths he was not charged. Human rights activists call such police actions „arbitrary detention“.

(Author: Maksim Sarychev)

More information about arbitrary detained activists in Belarus can be found on the internet: <http://sarychev.org/stories/arbitrary-detentions-2010/en.html>

2010

© Maksim Sarychau

In 2010, social activist Barys Ashchepkau was arbitrarily arrested for six days. He cooks vegetarian food and gives it to the poor for free. (Minsk, 2010)



2010

© Marco Fieber

Memorial reminding of the "disappearance" of Belarusian regime critics in 1999 and 2000 (Minsk, August 2010)

Still today, the cases of the regime critics who "disappeared" during the years 1999 and 2000 have not been officially solved. On May 7 1999 the former minister of the interior, Juri Sacharenko, disappeared. The former vice speaker of the last democratically elected parliament, Viktor Gontschar, and the entrepreneur Anatolij Krasowskij both disappeared on September 16 1999. On July 7 2000, the former camera man of Lukashenka, Dmitrij Sawadzki, disappeared.

In 2004 the Cypriot delegate of the Council of Europe, Christos Pourgourides, presented a substantial report concerning the "disappearances". He gathered evidence that proves they were murdered and claimed that the responsibility can be traced back to president Lukashenka himself. Consequently, the Council of Europe demanded in 2004 that an international fact-finding commission be set up to further investigate the cases. In 2006, the German association "Human Rights in Belarus" published extensive documentation, containing facsimiles of official Belarusian docu-

ments and a photograph of the pistol, that was allegedly used for the murders, thus supporting Pourgourides' report. Dissidents regularly commemorate the fate of the "disappeared" in pickets as seen here.

On 22 February 2011, the "Civil Society Champions 2010" Award Ceremony was held. It was organized by the Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs for the second time (the first Ceremony took place in December 2009). The main idea of the "Civil Society Champions" Ceremony is to reward the greatest achievements of the civil sector activists, initiatives and organizations. The list of nominees was compiled by the Assembly's Working Group members together with the independent experts' group. The "Heroes of Civil Society 2010" are:

1. Civil Campaign of the Year 2010: "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" launched by the Belarusian Helsinki Committee together with the human rights organization "Viasna"
2. Civil Leader of the Year 2010: Zhanna Litvina, Head of the Belarusian Association of Journalists BAJ
3. Regional Event of the Year 2010: Young Journalists Festival "Your Style" organized in Grodna in summer 2010
4. Action of the Year 2010: Solidarity Action with the Repressed on 19-20 December whose main aim was to help political prisoners
5. Registration of the Year 2010: the Association of Complementary Education, whose denial of registration was appealed against in court, after which the association was allowed to be registered
6. Registration Denial of the Year 2010: Brest regional Executive Committee which denied the organization "Brest Viasna" registration almost 10 times
7. Most Popular Place for Civil Activists' Gatherings 2010: bookstore "Ÿ" in Minsk
8. New Initiative of the Year 2010: initiative group "Guardian Angels" which emerged right after the "elections" and organized help for all those imprisoned on 19-20 December
9. Special Prize for the Use of Internet in the Civil Activities 2010: blogger Zmagarka (Tatsiana Yelavaya) who launched an on-line investigation of the December 2010 events in her blog (Author: Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs of Belarus)

2011

© Maria Khrustaliova, Assembly of Belarusian NGOs

Award for the "Heroes of Civil Society" who organized solidarity actions for the people arrested on Dec 19th, 2010 (Minsk, February 2011)



2011

© Jura Sidun, Generation.by

Street art performance
"Freedom on Paper": since real demonstrations are prohibited, cardboard Belarusians demonstrate at October Square (Minsk, 2011)

The photo of cardboard protesters is part of a series of pictures on a street-art project from Minsk. It was created to commemorate March 25th, which is a date when annual mass street actions are organized to celebrate the pronouncement of independence of the Belarusian People's Republic in 1918. The Belarusian society has been dominated by fear since December 19th, 2010. It is incredibly sad that tiny people drawn on a piece of paper have more freedom to gather and wear white-red-white symbols than actual Belarusians. This project demonstrates how, despite the arrests and house searches and trials, the protest is still present in people's minds. But it also transmits the hope that one day the paper figures will be us – real Belarusians in a free and democratic state celebrating its independence from the authoritarian rule.

(Author: generation.by)

Belarus was the country that suffered the most from the radioactive contamination caused by the explosion of reactor no. 4 of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant on April 26 1986. The country received almost 70 percent of the radioactive fallout. Almost a quarter of all Belarusian soil was contaminated. 338.000 people had to move from their homes and settle elsewhere.

Annually on April 26, the day of the catastrophe, a Chernobyl memorial march is held in Minsk. Already in previous years this event witnessed arbitrary arrests. The Chernobyl march 25 years after the nuclear disaster on April 26 2011 was forbidden by the authorities in Minsk, and the police broke up the peaceful demonstration. The participants were only allowed to gather in a closed off park far away from the city center.

2011

© Uladzimir Hrydzin

A demonstration commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster was forbidden and broken up by the police (Minsk, April 2011)



2010

© Uladzimir Hrydzin

Violent dispersal of peaceful protests on the election night December 19th, 2010. More than 700 people are arrested. (Minsk, December 2010)

December 19th 2010 - A sad day for Europe

Protests against the falsification of the results of the presidential election in Belarus were brutally disbanded in December 2010. More than 700 people, including seven of the nine presidential candidates were arrested. According to the Belarusian human rights organization Viasna, the prisoners were brought to court in large groups where they were mostly sentenced to 5 to 15 days imprisonment. The proceedings usually took place without legal representation of the accused and sometimes lasted only 5 minutes. The defendants had no opportunity to claim their innocence or call witnesses. In reaction, relatives, friends and supporters organized silent vigils and a large collection of clothing, food and toiletries for the imprisoned. Hundreds of people had to spend Christmas and New Year in a prison cell.

Since December 19th, 2010, the opposition, journalists and human rights

activists have lived in constant danger of being arrested, having their house searched and being interrogated by the KGB. The entire civil society is exposed to an unprecedented wave of governmental repression. Dozens of dissidents have fled the country and received political asylum abroad. Since February 2011, show trials have seen some opponents of the regime sentenced to several years of labor camps or prison. Several of them reported that they were tortured and mistreated during their detention. In May 2011, about 30 to 40 political prisoners were said to be still detained in Belarus. A regularly updated list of prisoners is published on the website www.lphr.org. Libereco is calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners in Belarus. We must not forget these people in Belarus, for these serious violations of human rights are not happening far abroad, but in Europe.

Zmitser Dashkevich

Zmitser Dashkevich, leader of the Belarusian oppositional youth movement Malady Front (Young Front), and fellow Young Front member Eduard Lobau, were sentenced to two and to four years in a labor camp on 25 March 2011 for allegedly assaulting passers-by the day before the presidential election. Another Young Front activist present at the time claims that the group had in fact been attacked, and that the two had been detained to prevent them taking part in the demonstration against the election fraud the day after.

The activist said four men had asked them for directions and then punched Zmitser Dashkevich and Eduard Lobau. Police arrived within minutes and detained the three activists and two of the attackers without asking any questions. Zmitser Dashkevich and Eduard Lobau were convicted on the basis of testimony of the two attackers detained with them.

Zmitser Dashkevich had previously been

imprisoned from 2006 to 2008 for "activities on behalf of a non-registered organization". As of today Malady Front has applied for registration six times. Each time, the regime has refused.

Belarusian and international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International und Libereco – Partnership for Human Rights, consider Zmitser Dashkevich and Eduard Lobau to be prisoners of conscience and demand their immediate and unconditional release.

Philipp Mißfelder, Foreign Policy Spokesman of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group and Federal Chairman of the Junge Union, has taken on prisoner's godparenthood for Zmitser Dashkevich and is working for his release.

The Prisoner's Godparenthood campaign for political prisoners in Belarus was initiated by the human rights organisation Libereco – Partnership for Human Rights to support the prisoners and their families.

2011

© bymedia.net

A prisoner of conscience, Zmitser Dashkevich, is arrested before election day and is sentenced to 2 years of prison (Minsk, March 2011)



2011

© Siarhei Hudzilin

Presidential candidate Andrej Sannikov has been subjected to torture and was sentenced to 5 years in prison (Minsk, May 2011)

Andrej Sannikov

The former Belarusian deputy minister of foreign affairs and 2010 presidential candidate, Andrej Sannikov, was brutally beaten up during the violent dispersal of peaceful protests against the rigged presidential election on 19th December 2010, the evening of election day. On 14 May 2011 he was sentenced to five years in prison by a court in Minsk.

On 12 May Andrej Sannikov made a statement during his trial about the physical and psychological ill-treatment that he has suffered during his detention. He is also being denied medical assistance for a painful condition. He said that the evidence being used against him was obtained under torture. He said that when first detained on 19 December, he was beaten and denied access to the toilet for hours. He said that every day he was made to carry all his personal belongings to a cold cellar where he was forced to stand naked by the

wall, with arms and legs outstretched for long periods and made to squat. Despite complaining of a painful leg, which was injured during his detention, he was not allowed to change position. People in masks, who were also in the room, hit the walls with batons, shouted and kicked him. Andrej Sannikov added that he has been kept constantly in handcuffs during his detention and made to walk in stress-positions.

Andrej Sannikov also stated that when he refused to confess, during a conversation with the head of the KGB, he was told 'in this case we will apply more brutal measures to your wife and child.' Aware that his wife was also in detention and that efforts were being made to take his son into care, he took the threats seriously and tried to cooperate. He was refused access to a lawyer, and was only able to meet with a lawyer in private on 22 March, over three months after his detention. For a whole month, he was not able to send or receive letters and says that

throughout his detention he has been isolated from outside information.

Andrej Sannikov's health has deteriorated in detention. He suffers from acute gout and is experiencing considerable pain, but his repeated requests for pain relief during the hearing have been refused. On several occasions, Andrej Sannikov has requested a break in proceedings because he has felt unwell, but has been refused. He has only been seen by an official medical representative, who said his health was not serious enough to need further assistance. His lawyers also requested that his petitions for medical assistance be added to his case file, but the judge has also refused this request. Additionally, Andrej Sannikov has been denied adequate food and water during the trial.

Belarusian and international human rights organisations recognize Andrej Sannikov as a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights of freedom

of expression and assembly, and are calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Marieluise Beck, Spokeswoman for Eastern Europe of the German Green parliamentary group has taken over a prisoner's godparenthood for Andrej Sannikov and is working for his release.

2010

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Silent vigil at the Akrestina prison, calling for the release of prisoners detained after Dec 19th (Minsk, December 2010)



2010

© Anastasia Kazhopenka

Collection of clothing, food and hygiene items for the imprisoned protesters
(Minsk, December 2010)



JEF Free Belarus Action – Silence for more democracy

In December 2010, 3 days prior to the Belarusian presidential elections, young people in more than 100 cities around the world called for democracy in Belarus. Organised by the Young European Federalists (JEF), it started during the 2006 Belarusian presidential elections and has grown to a worldwide action that has taken place for the 6th time. From Zagreb to Buenos Aires, Zürich to Helsinki, famous statues were gagged, while banners spoke out with the slogans; “Free Belarus”, “Give a Voice to the Citizens of Belarus” or simply “Give a Voice to Democracy”.

Åsa GUNVÉN (JEF) told us about the action:

“It is us, the young people, who are determined that we can change the world we live in if we work together across borders – young people who refuse to close their eyes to the violations of human rights, the oppression of activists, the prevention of free media and right

to assembly as well as the harassment of civil society inside Belarus.”

The JEF Free Belarus action shows the level of solidarity among youth across Europe and across the world and their willingness to take action. Above all, it shows that there is nothing that can stop this movement, and that, despite disastrous EU visa regimes preventing young Belarusians from travelling, and despite oppression from the Belarusian state, young people in Belarus and in the rest of Europe will always have a common project for freedom, democracy and European integration.

I was chatting some days ago on Skype with an activist in Belarus who has supported us in every Belarusian action in the past 6 years. He summed up that his entire “life looks like one big Belarus action!” And the point is that, whereas we could safely go home yesterday night (after the Free Belarus Action), possibly told off by the police and surely cold and frozen, our friends in Belarus who have just e-mailed their pictures have to go home in fear. Fear of being caught,

2010

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Pan-European “Free Belarus” campaign of the Young European Federalists
(Zagreb, December 2010)



2011

© Alexander Čajčyc

Demonstration for the release of political prisoners in Belarus with Jude Law and Kevin Spacey (London, March 2011)

fear of being recognised in the pictures, fear of being expelled from universities or fired from jobs, of being arrested or even tortured. It is in solidarity with them that we took to the streets tonight in over 100 cities worldwide. It is in order to never forget their work that we have continued to do this over the past 6 years and will continue for the years to come – until the day Belarus is truly democratic.

Free Belarus Now

Relatives and friends of detained Belarusian opposition members founded the initiative “Free Belarus Now” in London, calling for the release of all political prisoners, and the end of to the persecution of Belarusian civil society. The initiative asks governments and businesses worldwide to call the last dictatorship in Europe to account for its deeds, and to impose strict economic sanctions against the Belarusian regime. The initiative is also asking the international community to put the Belarusian government under pressure to

organize free and fair elections according to international standards which are recognized by international observers. Together with the Belarus Free Theatre and British NGOs, Free Belarus Now has organized several protest actions in London calling for a release of all political prisoners.

More about the further activities of Free Belarus Now can be found on www.freebelarusnow.org

Death penalty in Belarus

In 2010, government representatives from Belarus agreed to collaborate with the international community in order to deal with the death penalty issue in Belarus. In February 2010, the Belarusian government formed an official parliamentary board to deal with the issue. In September 2010, this same board went before the United Nations Human Rights Council, and publicly acknowledged that the abolishment of the death penalty in their country was necessary. As such, it openly pledged to work towards ending capital punishment in Belarus, and to collaborate with the international community to reach this goal. However, despite pledges from the government, executions have continued in Belarus. Furthermore, in December 2010, Belarus abstained from the vote of the UN General Assembly on the question of whether or not to have a moratorium on executions.

In Belarus, prisoners on death row are informed about their execution only

moments before it is carried out. Prisoners are lead into a room by the prison warden, the prosecutor, and another member of the Ministry of the Interior. Prisoners are informed that their petition for mercy has been declined, and are quickly led to an adjoining room where they are forced to kneel down & are shot in the back of the head. After the execution, the bodies of prisoners are kept instead being handed over to the family. In most cases, relatives are informed about the execution only shortly after it has already been carried out. Furthermore, they are not informed as to where the grave of their loved one is located.

Vasily Yuzepchuk and Andrei Zhuk were sentenced to death in June and July 2009 respectively, and both were subsequently executed in March 2010. As is common practice in Belarus, neither the prisoners nor their families were informed in advance of the execution dates. Zhuk’s mother was informed about her son’s execution when she came to leave a food parcel at the prison on March 19, 2010. Both men had appealed to the

2009

© Amnesty International

Amnesty International campaign at the Southside festival for the abolition of the death penalty in Belarus (Neuhausen, June 2009)

UN Human Rights Committee, which had asked the Belarusian government on October 12, 2009 to not execute the men as long as the committee was still investigating their cases.

Oleg Grishkovtov and Andrei Burdyko were convicted of murder, armed robbery, arson, kidnapping of a minor, theft, and robbery. They were sentenced to death on May 14, 2010, and on September 17, 2010 the Belarusian Supreme Court declined the two men's appeals. As of May 2011, no decision regarding their mercy petitions (which their families filed earlier with President Lukashenko) had been made.

On September 14, 2010 the regional court of Mahilyou sentenced Ihar Myalik to death because of several holdup murders he had committed with two others on the highway between Mahilyou and Homet. The second accomplice was given a life sentence, and the third person died in prison before the trial had ended.

Crimes have to be punished, but punishments should never touch the life and dignity of people. The death penalty goes against basic human rights. It is the deliberate killing of people by the

state. For this reason, Amnesty International fights for the abolition of the death penalty in all nations.

Amnesty International has been fighting against the death penalty for over 30 years, and its efforts have become increasingly successful. More and more states have abolished the death penalty. In Europe, Belarus is the only country which still practices capital punishment. As a result, groups and members of Amnesty International have been working tirelessly to end the death penalty in Belarus.

For example, members of Amnesty International's group „Albstadt 1918“ collected pictures of young prisoners currently awaiting the death penalty in Belarus. These pictures were shown to visitors at the Southside-Festival in June 2009 in order to raise public awareness of this issue. The pictures of the adolescents were then sent to President Lukashenko as well as to the Belarusian embassy in Berlin.

(Author: Amnesty International)

More info on Belarus and opportunities for getting involved can be found online:

Libereco – Partnership for Human Rights: www.lphr.org
 Amnesty International Belarus coordination group (Germany): www.amnesty-berlin1310.de
 Amnesty International Belarus country group (Switzerland): www.belarus-actions.org
 Kultur Aktiv: www.kulturaktiv.org and www.showbelarus.eu
 Bund für Soziale Verteidigung: www.soziale-verteidigung.de
 German-Belarusian Society: www.dbg-online.org

Further information on the situation in Belarus can be found on the following websites:

Belarusian organisations

Human Rights Centre Viasna 96: www.spring96.org
 Civil Rights Organisation Charter 97: www.charter97.org
 Committee for the Defence of the Repressed "Salidarnasc": www.salidarnasc.org
 Belarusian Helsinki Committee: www.belhelcom.org
 Belarussian Union of Journalists: www.baj.by
 Assembly of NGOs of Belarus: www.facebook.com/Assembly.Belarus
 Belarusian Legal Portal: www.prava-by.info
 Movement "For Freedom": www.pyx.by
 Malady Front: www.mfront.net

News

Euroradio: www.euroradio.fm
 Belarus News: www.naviny.by
 Belarus Digest: www.belarusdigest.com

International Organisations

Initiative Free Belarus Now: www.freebelarusnow.org
 Office for a Democratic Belarus: www.democraticbelarus.eu
 Human Rights House: www.humanrightshouse.org
 BYwatch: www.belaruswatch.org
 Civic Belarus: www.civibelarus.eu
 Civil Rights Defenders: www.civilrightsdefenders.org
 Forum 18: www.forum18.org
 Reporters without Borders: www.rsf.org
 Human Rights in Belarus: www.human-rights-belarus.org
 European Exchange: www.european-exchange.org



Libereco

Partnership for Human Rights

Libereco was founded in Germany in 2009 and in Switzerland in 2010, and campaigns for political and civil human rights. These include; freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of the press, as well as freedom of conscience and religion. In our work, we refer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966.

We are campaign on behalf of the politically persecuted, and of people facing governmental repression because they are engaged in politics or in civil society. We get involved if people are persecuted because they want to express their opinion, demonstrate peacefully or found a NGO. Our focus is on countries with authoritarian governments or dictatorships, where we seek to support individuals who are suffering persecution or repression. Our first focus country is Belarus. In the long term, we would like to build up partnerships in other countries.

Using a close dialogue with Belarusian and international civil society organisations, we develop partnerships in order to become active against human rights violations in Belarus. We specifically aim to help the 30-40 political prisoners in Belarus (Status: May 2011). In order to call for the release of prisoners of conscience, several members of the German and

European parliament have agreed to become "godparents" to the political prisoners.

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www.lphr.org/de/unterstuetzen/newsletter

Amnesty International is a world-wide organization that works independently of governments, political parties, ideologies, economic interests and religions. By working to ensure the observance of the universal declaration of human rights, Amnesty International is striving towards building a world in which the rights of all people are respected. The organization, which celebrated its 50th birthday in 2011, has now established a global presence because of the voluntary work of more than 3 million members and supporters worldwide in ca. 100 countries.

Amnesty International works towards:

- uncovering all human rights violations
- abolishing torture, the death penalty, and the disappearance of people
- the release of all prisoners of conscience
- the protection of human rights activists
- the protection of refugees as well as against racism & discrimination
- the special protection of women's and girls' rights
- the support of economic, social, and cultural rights

The right to free speech, the right to freedom of assembly, and the abolition of the death penalty are the main focuses of Amnesty International's work in Belarus.

Contact to the German coordination group for Belarus:

Amnesty International
Sekretariat der deutschen Sektion e. V.
Gruppe 2349
Büro Berlin
Greifswalder Str. 4
10405 Berlin

www.amnesty-berlin1310.de
info@amnesty-berlin1310.de

Tel. +49 (0) 228 983 730
Fax +49 (0) 228 630 036

Contact to the Swiss country coordination for Belarus:

Amnesty International
Schweizer Sektion
Belarus-Länderkoordination
Postfach
3001 Bern

www.belarus-actions.org
info@belarus-actions.org

Tel. +41 (0) 31 307 2222
Fax +41 (0) 31 307 2233

Account for donations in Germany:

Recipient: Amnesty International
Reason for payment: 1310 / Donation Work on Belarus
Bank: Bank für Sozialwirtschaft
Account Number: 80 90 100
BLZ: 370 205 00
IBAN: DE23 3702 0500 0008 0901 00
BIC or SWIFT: BFSWDE33

Account for donations in Switzerland:

Recipient: Amnesty International
Bank: Schweizerische Post, Postfinance
Post Account: 30-3417-8
IBAN: CH52 0900 0000 3000 3417 8
BIC or SWIFT: POFICHBE

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**





Kultur Aktiv from Dresden, Germany aims to encourage collaboration between German and foreign artists in all fields of art. With our projects and activities we push for the collaboration between German and Non-German artists and provide sustainable support for the cultural exchange in Europe. For us, art is a means for understanding between peoples, for non-formal education and for socio-cultural participation.

Geographically, we focus on Central and Eastern Europe, as well as well as topically on contemporary arts and culture. Our association is engaged in Belarus with our own projects for supporting artists and civic activists. Since 2005 we have been organizing concerts, exhibitions and seminars in order to give young people especially, the possibility to look beyond the Belarusian reality today. By inviting Belarusian artists to Germany we've been able to raise public awareness of the situation in their home country.

Our current project is called "Show Europe – Show Belarus" and is taking a group of Belarusian artists through Germany in Autumn 2011. The guests will present contemporary arts with music, photography and action art. They will perform together with German artists thus demonstrating a creative contrast

of differences and similarities between both countries and their people. Next year in April 2012, the German group will visit Belarus. These activities are part of the Europe-wide project "Show Europe – Show Belarus" with further partners from Sweden, Estonia, Lithuania and Portugal. This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

Contact:

Mail address:

Der Kultur Aktiv e.V.
Louisenstraße 29
01099 Dresden

Office address:

Bautzner Straße 49
01099 Dresden

www.kulturaktiv.org

www.showbelarus.eu

Tel. +49 (0) 351 811 37 55

Fax +49 (0) 351 811 37 54

The office is open Monday-Friday

9.00 - 19.00

Donation account:

Recipient: Kultur Aktiv e.V.

Bank: Dresdner Volks- und Raiffeisenbank eG

Account Number: 350 947 1001

Bank Code: 850 900 00

IBAN: DE54 8509 0000 3509 4710 01

BIC or SWIFT: GENODEF1DRS

The Federation for Social Defence (BSV) is a German peace movement association whose goals are the development of non-violent methods and alternatives to military. Founded in 1989, it is active in these three areas:

- International nonviolence
- Education in Germany
- Pacifism and military criticism

In addition to the office in Minden, 450 individual members and 40 member organizations are involved in the BSV board and in five nationwide working groups. Approximately 1000-1500 people support us with donations.

Since 2005, the BSV has supported legal protection initiatives and educational work against violence in Belarus. This is not about "exporting democracy", but about strengthening voluntary working groups in their non-violent self-organization. This „democratization from below“ makes the development of an emancipated and violence-free society become possible..

Read more about the Belarus-projects of the BSV:

<http://www.soziale-verteidigung.de/international-gewaltfrei/belarus/>



Contact:

Bund für Soziale Verteidigung
Schwarzer Weg 8
32423 Minden

www.soziale-verteidigung.de

belarus@soziale-verteidigung.de

Tel. +49 - (0) 571 294 56

Fax +49 - (0) 571 230 19

Office hours Monday to Thursday 9.00

- 15.00 clock and Friday 9.00 - 13.00 clock

Donation account:

Recipient: Bund für soziale Verteidigung

Bank: Sparkasse Minden-Lübbecke

Account number: 89,420,814 Bank code:

490 501 01

IBAN: DE73 4905 0101 0089 4208 14

BIC or SWIFT: WELADED1MIN

Subscription of the Belarus-Newsletters:

belarus@soziale-verteidigung.de



The German-Belarusian Society (deutsch-belarussische gesellschaft e.V. - dbg) was founded in 1999 in Berlin. It aims at promoting international understanding, science, economic cooperation and the integration of German-Belarusian activities. The Society organizes expert and background discussions, lectures and conferences. The working groups, politics/society, culture, environment, economy and science are used to exchange information about and experiences in German-Belarusian relations.

Since its foundation, the dbg has organized the „Minsk Forum“, an annual (since 1997) international conference on politics, economy and society in Belarus. There, representatives from neighboring states, Western Europe and the U.S. regularly meet for an open dialogue with representatives from Belarus.

In addition the dbg organizes events in Berlin, at which politicians, businessmen, NGO representatives from Belarus and from Germany enter into a dialogue. These events are carried out in cooperation with the Foreign Office, political foundations and other organizations. The society also organizes concerts of Belarusian artists and readings of literature.

Contact:
deutsch-belarussische gesellschaft e.V.
Schillerstraße 59 (Raum 317)
10627 Berlin

www.dbg-online.org
info@dbg-online.org

Tel. +49 - (0)30 206 134 644
Fax +49 - (0)30 206 134 649

Donation account:
Recipient: dbg
Bank: Postbank Berlin
Account Number: 499 585 106
Bank Code: 100 100 10
IBAN: DE85 1001 0010 0499 5851 06
BIC or SWIFT: PBNKDEFF

The NGO Civic Belarus, based in the Czech Republic, is asking for donations to support the victims of political repression in Belarus.

The donations will help the following persons and organisations:

- Political prisoners and their families (legal expenses, medicines, financial help for families who have lost their main income source)
- Persons who have been made redundant because of their political opinion and activities, or have been expelled from university
- NGOs and independent media who are persecuted by the Belarusian government

Decisions on the allocation of donations are taken by the members of Civic Belarus (Vaclav Havel, Jan Ruml, Petruska Sustrava, Petr Bratsky, Marek Svoboda, Jaromir Stetina and Martin Vidlak), together with Belarusian human rights organisations and the Association of Families of the political prisoners.

Civic Belarus informs on the use of donations on their website www.civicbelarus.eu. If you want to be informed by email, you can send your contact address to info@civicbelarus.eu

Libereco supports the action of Civic Belarus. Supporters from Germany and Switzerland can make a donation by bank transfer, tagged with „Civic Belarus“, to Libereco and receive a confirmation receipt for their tax declarations. Libereco redirects all donations fully to Civic Belarus.



Account for donations in Germany:
Recipient: Libereco
Purpose: "Civic Belarus"
Bank: GLS Bank
Account no.: 4027536700
BLZ: 43060967
IBAN: DE 1943 0609 6740 2753 6700
BIC / SWIFT: GENODEM1GLS

Account for donations in Switzerland:
Recipient: Libereco
Purpose: "Civic Belarus"
Bank: Swiss Post, Postfinance
Account No. 85-792427-8
IBAN: CH61 0900 0000 8579 2427 8
BIC / SWIFT: POFICHBE

Donators outside Switzerland and Germany can make donations by bank transfer directly to Civic Belarus:
Recipient: Civic Belarus
IBAN: SK1283300000002900120912
BIC / SWIFT: FIOZSKBAXXX

Civic Belarus will use maximum 5% of the donation volume for the administration of the campaign.

At the end of this booklet some suggestions and requests:

Keep up to date on events in Belarus → see list of links on page 23

Send appeals to the Belarusian authorities; call for the respect of human rights and the release of prisoners of conscience. → Current campaigns can be found on the websites of Amnesty International und Libereco

Demonstrate for human rights in Belarus → Amnesty International regularly organises protest vigils in Berlin, and a Belarus campaign of the Young European Federalists takes place once a year.

Help the victims of political repression in Belarus by supporting the donation campaign of Civic Belarus → see page 30

Support Amnesty International, Libereco, Kultur Aktiv, the Federation for Social Defence or the German-Belarusian Society → you can become an active or passive member, give a donation, or post links to the websites of these organisations.

Sign up for the Belarus newsletter of BSV or Libereco → see pages 24 and 27

Visit events on Belarus → previews on events and an agenda can be found on www.dbg-online.org

Like us on Facebook → become a supporter on our Facebook sites

Put on this exhibition in your city or village → if you are interested, please send an email to info@lphr.org

Organise a Belarus project week at your school, university, church or your youth group → we, the organisations mentioned above, will support you and are open to collaboration.

Editor:
Libereco – Partnership for Human Rights 8000 Zurich (Switzerland)

Text: Lars Büniger

Layout: Marco Fieber (booklet) and Stephan Hayoz (exhibition)

Contact: info@lphr.org

This booklet contains background information on the photo exhibition “Civil Society and Human Rights in Belarus”, a project of Libereco, Amnesty International, Kultur Aktiv, the Federation for Social Defence or the German-Belarusian Society.

We would like to express our thanks to the German Marshall Fund of the United States for financial support for the exhibition.

Many thanks also to the photographers and organisations who made pictures

available to us for free. These photographers and organisations have copyrights for all pictures.

Texts in this booklet, if not otherwise indicated, have been written by Libereco, and do not represent the views of the other organisations. Texts which have not been written by Libereco are indicated as such and represent the opinion of the author's organisation. The summary of the organisations have been written by the different organisations themselves.

Further information on the exhibition and opportunities to organise such an exhibition at different locations can be found on Libereco's website www.lphr.org.

Accompanying booklet to the joint exhibition of:



Kindly supported by:



STRENGTHENING TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION