



Беларуская нацыянальная платформа

Форум грамадзянскай супольнасці
УСХОДНЯГА ПАРТНЁРСТВА

Government of the Republic of Belarus

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Belarus

Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus

Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus

Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus

Copies:

Delegation of the EU to the Republic of Belarus

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Bureau of the International Labor Organization

March 14, 2017

Appeal of the Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

In connection with repressive actions against participants of peaceful protest actions in various cities of Belarus

We, the representatives of the civil society organizations of the Republic of Belarus, united within the framework of the Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, express our deep indignation and rejection of the repressive actions of the officials and law enforcement agencies of the Republic of Belarus related to the detentions and punishments of participants in numerous peaceful protest actions in various cities our country.

In recent weeks, mass peaceful protests of citizens have been going on around our country, connected with the notorious Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 3 (hereinafter - Decree No. 3) "On the Prevention of Social Dependence", which among people was soundly called "decree on parasitism". All passing protests are exclusively peaceful, do not violate the rule of law, do not pose a threat to the national security, morality, rights and health of other citizens. The roots of these protest actions of citizens of our country, representing the most diverse social strata and groups, are evidently a significant deterioration in the economic situation of people, as well as in the discriminatory and humiliating nature of Decree No. 3 itself.

In the Republic of Belarus, in accordance with article 41 of the Constitution, "forced labor is prohibited, except for work or service determined by a court verdict or in accordance with the law on emergency and

martial law". According to Article 33 of the Constitution "everyone is guaranteed freedom of opinion, belief and expression. No one can be forced to express or deny one's beliefs. Monopolization of mass media by the state, public associations or individual citizens, as well as censorship is not allowed." Article 35 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus says that "freedom of assembly, meetings, street processions, demonstrations and picketing that do not violate the rule of law and the rights of other citizens of the Republic Belarus, is guaranteed by the state".

Despite the provisions of the Constitution, which are the norms for direct action, mass arbitrary detentions of protesting citizens, public activists, politicians, human rights activists, and journalists covering socially significant events took place in a number of cities of the Republic of Belarus in the last week. These detentions took place illegally: without introducing the detaining persons, with unreasonably rude use of physical force. The law enforcement agencies regularly provide an unacceptable practice of preventive detention and "house arrest" of public activists in various cities. The facts of searches in private premises and offices of political forces and non-governmental organizations were recorded. Many of the protesters, by decision of the local judiciary, received penalties in the form of fines and imprisonment, in fact for exercising their constitutional rights to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and professional activity.

These actions of the Belarusian authorities escalate social tension, are repressive and significantly alienate Belarusian society from the possibility of a constructive public dialogue on issues of socio-economic policy. Instead of paying attention to the initial causes of the protests, to establish communication with various interest groups in Belarusian society with an aim to find mutually beneficial solutions, the authorities of the country chose the way to suppress complaints of citizens. Such an approach does not contribute to strengthening the atmosphere of stability, security, trust and respect in our society.

We pay special attention to the fact that the repressive actions described above are causing serious damage to the recently revived process of normalization of the Belarusian-European relations. The values of freedom of speech, freedom of expression, human rights, constructive public dialogue, taking into account opinions and interests of citizens are unconditional for European countries. Respect for these values for many years is an indispensable guarantee of possible mutually beneficial relations between the Republic of Belarus and the European Union.

We call upon the competent state bodies in the Republic of Belarus:

- 1. Immediately abandon the practice of repressive measures against citizens, including public activists, politicians, human rights defenders, other representatives of civil society, peacefully expressing their protest.*
- 2. Identify those responsible for violations of the constitutional rights of citizens and bring them to justice in accordance with law. Take measures to prevent future violations of the constitutional rights of citizens and international obligations of the Republic of Belarus in the field of freedom of expression, assembly, speech.*
- 3. Stop detention and other measures aimed at hindering professional activities of journalists and independent media.*
- 4. As soon as possible, release all those arrested and detained in connection with peaceful actions in connection with Decree No. 3, and also appeal against judicial decisions to bring to administrative responsibility against these people.*
- 5. To abolish Decree No. 3 as inconsistent with the constitutional rights of Belarusian citizens and Belarusian legislation.*
- 6. Establish a place and format for a dialogue between government officials, employers, trade unions and civil society to address unemployment problems and ensure basic constitutional, including social and economic rights. To initiate responsibly such a dialogue, ensuring the full participation of all stakeholders.*

Only together, through peaceful constructive dialogue, we will be able to overcome complicated social, economic, political and legal crisis for the benefit of the Belarusian people, for the sake of the European future of the Republic of Belarus!

Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum unites more than 70 Belarusian civil society organizations

To respond to the Appeal - the e-mail address:

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