**PPF concerned over detainment of Belarusian Journalists**

August 9, 2018

Alexander Lukashenko

President of Belarus

Excellency,

Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF), an independent non-governmental institution committed to promoting and defending freedom of expression is concerned over the raid on media outlets and detainment of journalists on Tuesday, August 7, in Minsk.

According to Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), on the morning of August 7 police officers raided the newsrooms of news portal Tut.by, news agency BelaPAN and Navuka (Science) newspaper located in the building of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences.

The arrested journalists are Tatsiana Karavenkova and Andrei Serada from BelaPAN and Maryna Zolatava, Hanna Kaltyhina, Ulyana Babayed, Halina Ulasik, Dzmitry Bobryk, Hanna Yermachonak, Yauheniya Beraziuk, Ludmila Chekina from Tut.by. After interrogation five journalists were released in the evening while others are still under custody.

The police lodged a criminal case for illegal access to computer information under Article 349 Part 2 of the Criminal Code "Unauthorized access to computer information".

A report by BelTA unitary enterprise is the main reason behind starting a criminal case against journalists. BelTA faced malfunctions while accessing a paid subscription to the services provided by them to one of its customers.

The investigative team also searched the apartments of some of the journalists including Pauliuk Bykouski, Ulyana Babayed, Hanna Yermachonak, Halina Ulasik, and Maryna Zolatava. The summer house of BelaPAN journalist Tatsiana Karavenkova in Zhodzishki village of Hrodna region was also raided by the team and her Minsk apartment was searched on August 8.

Journalist Aliaksei Zhukau was also detained in his house in Barauliany along with his wife. Zhukau who is a former editor of Selskaya Haspadarka an agricultural magazine and also worked with Belarusy i Rynak Belarusians newspaper. The police also seized cameras and laptops of the journalists.

PPF urges the Belarusian authorities to immediately release the detained journalists and stop harassing independent media organizations and journalists.

I thank you for your attention and will welcome your comments.

Yours sincerely,

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Secretary General

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