

Belarus: Four years of arbitrary detention - crackdown on Viasna members must end

Monday 14 July 2025

Four years after the detention of Viasna members Ales Bialiatski, Valiantsin Stefanovic and Uladzimir Labkovich, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, along with the undersigned organisations and individuals, urge the Belarusian authorities to uphold the rule of law and to immediately and unconditionally release all members of Human Rights Center “Viasna”, as well as all other human rights defenders arbitrarily detained in Belarus.

Paris-Geneva, 14 July 2025 - Four years have now passed since the [arbitrary detention](#) of Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Viasna Chairperson **Ales Bialiatski**, FIDH Vice-President **Valiantsin Stefanovic**, and Viasna lawyer **Uladzimir Labkovich** on 14 July 2021 in an unprecedented raid against Belarusian civil society. Convicted on fabricated and politically motivated charges, they were respectively [sentenced](#) to ten, nine and seven years of imprisonment on 3 March 2023. They remain arbitrarily imprisoned at the time of this publication and are consistently subjected to harsh conditions and ill-treatment. In particular, Ales Bialiatski's situation is deeply alarming: correspondence with his family is unstable—his wife last received a letter from him in December 2024, and it is likely that her letters have not reached him. There is also no evidence that he is receiving adequate or timely medical care for his chronic diseases, raising serious concerns that his health is worsening due to the conditions of his imprisonment.

The severe repression against Human Rights Center Viasna -one of the leading Belarusian human rights organisations that has long been at the forefront of the Belarusian human rights movement - which [currently](#) has four of its members behind bars, remains deeply concerning. The reprisals against the organisation and its members are part of a broader crackdown on civil society in Belarus, especially following the mass protests against the falsified 2020 Presidential elections. In the aftermath of the protests, the authorities shut down all human rights and other independent organisations, leaving not one legally operating human rights NGO in the country. As of 2 July 2025, at least, 1,164 individuals [remain arbitrarily detained](#) in Belarus for political reasons, among them Ales Bialiatski, Valiantsin Stefanovic, Uladzimir Labkovich, as well as **Marfa Rabkova**, [sentenced](#) to almost 15 years in prison, and **Nasta Loika**, co-founder of Human Constanta, who is serving a seven years sentence. All of them were subjected to acts of harassment, ill-treatment and/or torture, and denied access to legal counsel. According to the [SOS-Defenders](#) platform, at least 38 media workers, 6 lawyers and 27 trade unionists are also currently arbitrarily detained. The undersigned organisations urge the Belarusian authorities to guarantee in all circumstances the physical integrity and psychological well-being of Ales Bialiatski, Valiantsin Stefanovic, Uladzimir Labkovich and Marfa Rabkova, as well as all other arbitrarily detained human rights defenders, and to immediately and unconditionally release them.

The signatories denounce the ongoing repression in Belarus, stressing that the politically motivated, arbitrary harassment and ill-treatment of human rights defenders in Belarus must end. They further call for international accountability and an immediate cessation of all forms of politically motivated persecution—including escalating transnational repression—targeting Belarusian human rights defenders and civil society as a whole, whether in Belarus or abroad.

The signatories finally call on the authorities in Belarus to ensure that human rights defenders can carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions or being forced to exile.

P.S.

ADC Memorial

Anaïs Marin, former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus (2018–2024)

ARTICLE 19

Belarusian Association of Journalists

Belarusian Helsinki Committee

Center for Civil Liberties, Ukraine

Citizens' Watch

Civil Society Institute, Armenia

Europäischer Austausch gGmbH

European Platform for Democratic Elections

Expert Forum

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Front Line Defenders

Helsinki Citizens Assembly- Vanadzor

Human Rights Center, Georgia

Human Rights Center Viasna

Human Rights House Foundation

Human Rights Movement Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan

Human Rights Watch

ILI Foundation, Kazakhstan

Institute for Public Environment Development

International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)

Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of law (KIBHR)

Lawtrend

Legal Initiative

LIBERECO - Partnership for Human Rights

Memorial Human Rights Defense Center

Memo98

Netherlands Helsinki Committee

Norwegian Helsinki Committee

Östgruppen

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

PEN Belarus

People In Need

Political Accountability Foundation

Promo-LEX

REDRESS

Respect-Protect-Fulfill

Right Livelihood

Transparency International Anticorruption Center Armenia

Unhack Democracy