47th session of the UN Human Rights Council
Oral Statement
Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Belarus

Madam President,

Human Right Center “Viasna” and Right Livelihood welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur, which is yet another account of the increasing human rights violations committed by Belarus in recent months, seeing a record number of arbitrary arrests and criminal prosecutions of peaceful protesters. As of June 30, Belarus counted 526 political prisoners, a number which continues to increase.

We are alarmed by the latest legislative developments, in particular the proposed amendments to the Law on Countering Extremism, which would be a new tool for the persecution of civil society and could lead to the forced closure of human rights organisations. Several NGOs, including Human Rights Center “Viasna”, are already under criminal investigation.

We remain particularly concerned about the situations of Marfa Rabkova, Andrei Chapiuk, Tatiana Lasitsa and Leonid Sudalenka, who have now been in pre-trial detention for months. The hijacking of Ryanair flight 4978 to arrest journalist Raman Protasevich shows the length to which the authorities are ready to go in order to suppress civil society.

We call upon the Council to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and to ensure continued scrutiny on Belarus. We urge the authorities to implement all the recommendations of the report and initiate a serious and credible process for constitutional reform, as well as immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners.

Thank you