

48th session of the UN Human Rights Council

Oral statement

Item 4: Interactive Dialogue on the interim oral update of OHCHR on the situation of human rights in Belarus

Madam President,

As of September 22, 2021, Belarus counted 672 political prisoners. That is 146 more since we last addressed the Council. Such numbers are not only likely to continue to increase, but might become unavailable to us, as the Lukashenka regime persists in its attempt to wipe out Belarusian civil society.

Right Livelihood Laureate Human Rights Center “Viasna” has been playing a leading role in advocating for democracy and the rule of law in Belarus, documenting human rights abuses for the past 25 years. To date, seven of its members, a, **Ales Bialiatski, Valiantsin Stefanovic, Uladzimir Labkovic, Marfa Rabkova, Tatsiana Lasitsa, Andrei Chapiuk and Leanid Sudalenka**, are arbitrarily detained. Seven others are suspects in the same case, and several were forced to leave the country.

While activists and protesters are being given unfair sentences, real perpetrators of human rights abuses are enjoying complete impunity, as the investigative committee decided not to open any criminal cases despite having received almost 700 allegations of ill-treatment and torture on post-election protesters.

We urge all Member States to ensure that the OHCHR examination mechanism on the human rights situation in Belarus has the necessary resources to carry out its mandate. Continued scrutiny is crucial in ensuring accountability.

We also urge the authorities to abide by their international human rights obligations and respect the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

Lastly, we call for the immediate and unconditional release of the “Viasna Seven” and for their and all other members’ charges to be dropped.

Thank you