CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

49th session of the UN Human Rights Council

Oral statement

Item 4: Interactive Dialogue on the OHCHR written report on the situation of human rights in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and in its aftermath

Thank you Mr President,

Right Livelihood and Viasna welcome the report of the OHCHR and deplore the continuing escalation of the human rights crisis in the country since the fraudulent 2020 elections.

Zero. This is in fact the number of legally operating human rights organisations left in the country, after the government liquidated more than 275 of them in 2021 only. The authorities have also continued to prosecute people on political charges with Belarus now counting over 1000 political prisoners.

Belarus recently reintroduced Article 193-1 of the criminal code, which allows for the criminalisation of individuals working in unregistered NGOs. This poses a new risk for threatened and imprisoned activists, including Ales Bialiatski, Valiantsin Stefanovic, Uladzimir Labkociv, Marfa Rabkova, Tatsiana Lasitsa, Andrei Chapiuk and Leanid Sudalenka. They all played a crucial role in advocating for democracy and collecting evidence of abuses through their work at “Human Rights Center” Viasna. Yet, in a new attempt to further criminalise the organisation’s work, some of its resources have been recently recognised as “extremist material.”

Mr. President,

International mechanisms are now essential for justice and accountability in Belarus. We thus call on all States to support the Belarusian civil society, inside and outside the country, and on the Council to renew the mandate of the OHCHR examination.

Lastly, we continue to urge the authorities to abide by their international human rights obligations and to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners, including the “Viasna Seven” and for theirs and all other members’ charges to be dropped.

Thank you.