52nd session of the UN Human Rights Council
Interactive Dialogue with the OHCHR examination on Belarus

Mr. President,

Right Livelihood and Human Rights Center “Viasna” thank the OHCHR examination for its report. The systematic repression of fundamental freedoms in Belarus seems to know no limit.

Halfway through the next elections cycle, the authorities continue to spread fear, by arbitrarily detaining and torturing anyone exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. The laws used for persecuting activists have also multiplied: from the possibility to hold trials in absentia, to the deprivation of citizenships, as well as the use of the death penalty for “attempted acts of terrorism.”

Earlier this month, the trial against Viasna leaders: Ales Bialiatski, Valiantsin Stefanovic, Uladzimir Labkovic and Zmister Salauyou, came to an end, in what could be defined as the epitome of Belarusian lawlessness. The human rights defenders were treated like the worst criminals: handcuffed, in a cage, denied pens and paper, targeted by smear campaigns by the state media and ultimately given lengthy sentences and unpayable fines.

Mr. President,

As time passes, the repression only intensifies while possibilities for justice weaken. Since domestic remedies are non-existent, the international community must step up. We, therefore, call on the Council to (1) continue urging Belarus to release immediately and unconditionally all political prisoners; (2) consider the establishment of an independent investigative mechanism for Belarus and (3) encourage all concerned States to use their provisions on universal jurisdiction to hold the real perpetrators of crimes accountable and support Belarusians in their search for justice.

Thank you.