

Right Livelihood

55th session of the UN Human Rights Council

Oral Statement

Interactive Dialogue with the OHCHR examination on Belarus

Mr. President

Right Livelihood and Human Rights Center “Viasna” thank the OHCHR for their update on the situation of Human Rights in Belarus.

Four and a half years have passed since the 2020 elections. Since then, there were close to 6000 political – criminal cases in the country. Since then, the number of repressive laws has only increased. Over 4200 Belarusians were arbitrarily detained, simply for exercising their fundamental freedoms in 2023 only. As the country wires towards its next election cycle, the authorities continue in their relentless attempt to silence citizens, journalists and lawyers.

In this context, we are particularly alarmed by the systematic ill-treatment and inhumane conditions of detention of political prisoners and the lack of medical care. Since November 2023, the chairman of the Human Rights Center “Viasna”, Ales Bialiatski, has been placed in a punishment cell; he is experiencing difficulties in contacting his family and obtaining medicine. His colleague Valentin Stefanovich and other political prisoners face restrictions on outdoor time and meals, while being assigned to hard manual work. We are extremely concerned about the current state of their mental and physical health and call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners.

Mr. President,

Belarusians citizens deserve to see their fundamental freedoms upheld and justice for the violations suffered. As such, we call on the Council to fully renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and establish a fully independent, investigative mechanism, with a view of advancing accountability.