



## Newsletter #26 (May 2 - 16)

### Quote of the day

*"Our attitude to the events in Belarus is quite clear. It is the same as in Brussels. And no additional comments are necessary in this regard."*

Victor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine, in an interview with *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Poland May 15 2006

### **In Focus**

On May 11-12, leaders of the Belarusian opposition Alyaksandr Milinkevich, Vintsuk Vyachorka, Alyaksandr Bukhvostau, Syarhei Kalyakin and Zmitser Dashkevich were **released from jail**. They had been sentenced to 14-15 days for organizing a protest rally connected with the Chernobyl disaster on April 26 in Minsk. Amnesty International described the leaders of the opposition as Prisoners of Conscience.

(<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/5/286FDCC6-DA68-4857-8342-B50C9BF164C6.html>)

The initiators of the "**Days of Belarusian Solidarity**" have called upon Belarusians to come to the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Minsk on May 16 at 8 p.m. They are urging people to bring candles and portraits of the disappeared, and are demanding an end to Russia's support for the Belarusian regime. "Russia cannot host and preside over the summit of the G-8 and at the same time help the last dictator in Europe," the initiators of the Day of Solidarity said. (<http://www.solidarity16.org/>)

On May 5, the **youth movement Zubr** said that it could no longer continue the struggle under the Zubr banner and that it would continue its struggle against the regime within the wider national resistance movement. Zubr said that the dictatorship can only be defeated via unification of all democratic forces.

(<http://www.charter97.org/eng/news/2006/05/05/zubr>)

### **Civil Society in Action**

In May, **daily protests** continued in Minsk and in the provinces. Young people lit candles as a sign of solidarity with freedom fighters

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/05/10/day>); they put up banners demanding the release of political prisoners

([http://www.mfront.net/sal\\_sv.html](http://www.mfront.net/sal_sv.html)); they distributed leaflets

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/05/10/borba>) and carried out political flash-mobs

(<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/05/d166edc9-4453-47fd-aca9-81dc99bea939.html>). Peaceful rallies have been cracked down on. Hundreds of people have been detained by riot policemen just for wearing badges saying: "For Freedom!", and for wearing jeans and white-red-white ribbons.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/05/13/mob>)

Several thousand Belarusians took part in a **solidarity protest** for political prisoners held on May 1 in Minsk. Participants at the rally demanded the release from prison of Alyaksandr Milinkevich and dozens of opposition activists detained for their political views.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/05/01/may>)

In May, the "Free Theatre" returned from a short **tour around Finland** and Poland. The tour to Helsinki was organized by the steering committee of the Baltic Circle festival, and in Warsaw the theatre took part in a Polish-German festival of political plays.

([http://dramaturg.org/domenu.php?menu=expand\\_article&article\\_id=717730301](http://dramaturg.org/domenu.php?menu=expand_article&article_id=717730301))

#### **...despite the repressions**

It was reported on May 3 that the investigation into the criminal case relating to the disappearance of journalist Dzmitry Zavadski had been **suspended again**.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/05/03/snova>)

On May 4, the deputy chairman of the Belarusian Popular Front Party Viktor Ivashkevich was **sentenced to 15 days** for organizing a rally in connection with the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster on April 26 in Minsk.

(<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/5/067471A7-8B9F-4A2C-9991-F8D857F2AFF7.html>)

On May 4, youth activists Alyaksei Kazulin, Yury Talstoy, Alyaksandr reznikau, Andrei Ihnatchyk and Nadzeja Batura were sentenced to 5 days in jail for holding a gathering next to the Pershamajski district court in Minsk. They were **protesting against the trial** of the youth activist Artur Finkevich. (<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/5/3BFD7E10-51C6-48CD-BF11-92D2B34321C9.html>)

On May 3, at a special exhibition called **"Mass Media in Belarus"** no independent political newspapers were represented. People who came to the exhibition and defiantly read independent newspapers were detained by riot policemen.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/05/04/arest>)

On May 10, the Pershamajski district court in Minsk sentenced youth leader Artur Finkevich to **two years restricted liberty** for writing the following political graffiti: "We want a new one!"

(<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/5/CF2E4754-6165-4B9A-B30A-FEDC81377EF0.html>)

On May 10 in Minsk, a **peaceful rally** in memory of disappeared former Minister of Internal affairs Yury Zakharanka was **disbanded** in Minsk. People gathered in October Square in Minsk holding portraits of Yury Zakharanka and of political prisoners. Riot policemen brutally beat up youth activist Lubou Kuchynskaya. She was diagnosed as being in a serious condition by emergency doctors. (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/05/10/sadizm>) The leader of the United Civil Party Anatol Lyabedzka and 12 youth activists were detained forcibly. (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/05/10/photos>)

On May 6 in Homel youth activists Andrei Douzhyk and Yury Prapachou were **sentenced to 7 days in jail**, and Aksana Serhienka was sentenced to 15 days for distributing leaflets.

(<http://belngo.info/cgi-bin/i.pl?id=1904>)

Youth activists Lubou Kuchynskaya, Katsyaryna Dzyatkouskaya and Nastasya Korshun were **fined** 62,000 Belarusian roubles each for distributing leaflets calling for the release of youth leader Mikita Sasim.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/05/04/za>)

On May 11, Sasim was sentenced to **3 months in jail**.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/05/12/sasim>)

## **Belarus and the International Community**

On May 3, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) listed 10 countries which have the **worst record on censorship**. North Korea was first. The list

also included Burma, Turkmenistan, Equatorial Guinea, Libya, Eritrea, Cuba, Uzbekistan, Syria and Belarus.

(<http://baj.ru/2006/May/0305nav2.asp>)

On May 3, Reporters Without Borders published the report on **freedom of speech on the internet**. The list of countries where censorship on the Internet is implemented includes former countries of the Soviet Union: Belarus, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/05/04/spisok>)

On May 4-5 in Vilnius, Lithuania, a conference entitled "**A Common Vision for a Common Neighborhood**" was held with the participation of presidents of European countries, the EU leadership and US Vice President Dick Cheney. Prominent people who participated included: the wife of the leader of the Belarusian opposition Inna Kulej, the wife of former presidential candidate Alyaksandr Kazulin, Iryna Kazulina, a leader of the civic initiative "We Remember", Iryna Krasouskaya, and the leader of the United Civil Party Anatol Lyabedzka. At the conference much prominence was given to Belarus.

(<http://www.vilniusconference2006.lt/en/>)

On May 3 in Vilnius in the framework of the conference "A Common Vision for a Common Neighborhood Joint Communique" a **forum of non-governmental organizations** was held. Participants at the NGO forum passed a declaration noting the necessity of isolating and pressuring Lukashenka's regime through the EU and NATO.

(<http://www.vilniusconference2006.lt/sen/news.full/46>)

On May 4, human rights organization Amnesty International recognized five more Belarusian citizens as **prisoners of conscience**. They are: opposition leaders Alyaksandr Milinkevich, Alyaksandr Bukhvostau, Vintsuk Vyachorka, Zmitser Dashkevich and Syarhei Kalyakin.

### Dates



On May 7 1999, former Minister of Internal Affairs, General Yury Zakharenka was abducted in Minsk. A few years before the abduction Zakharenka was relieved of his duty as a person not sharing the opinions of president Lukashenka and his entourage. The former Interior Minister was highly esteemed among his colleagues. He created, among other things, the Union of Officers. His opposition activities were considered extremely dangerous by the authorities. The international community suspects the leadership of Belarus was implicated in the abduction of Zakharenka.



On May 14 1995 a referendum was held in Belarus. As a result of this referendum the status of the Belarusian language was diminished, and the historic Belarusian white-red-white flag and the Pahonya coat-of-arms were replaced by Soviet-era symbols. Since that time, the historic flag and the coat of arms have been forbidden in Belarus, and the native Belarusian language has been openly ignored by high officials and the state mass

media.

### Must read

#### **Prospects for Democracy in Belarus**

A book edited by Joerg Forbrig, David R. Marples and Pavol Demes

[http://www.boell.de/downloads/europa/belarus\\_book.pdf](http://www.boell.de/downloads/europa/belarus_book.pdf)

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