



## Newsletter #24 (April 2-19)

### Quote of the Day

*"We are calling upon Russia to use its significant influence on Belarus in order to persuade Belarus to take a decent place in the democratic world".*

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission  
April 11, 2006, Strasbourg

### **In Focus**

A **Day of Solidarity** with political prisoners, families of assassinated opposition leaders, journalists of liquidated independent newspapers and with all fighters for freedom and democracy was held on April 16 in Belarus and in countries all over the world. Belarusians gathered by the Russian Embassy in Minsk. The participants were protesting against Russia's support for Alyaksandr Lukashenka's dictatorship. Belarusians lit candles by the fence of the Embassy. The protesters said that the G-8 summit planned for July 2006 should not be held in Russia unless terrorist methods against civil society are stopped in Belarus, unless investigations are launched into the cases of the disappeared opponents of the regime and unless all Belarusian political prisoners are released. Candles of Freedom were lit all over the country on April 16. Solidarity actions with Belarus also took place in Poland, Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Russia, Canada, the USA, France, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, Sweden and other countries.

On April 6, the European Parliament passed a resolution on Belarus. It concluded that the presidential elections were not free and did not meet international standards. The presidential elections, therefore, must be held again. The European Parliament called upon Minsk to release people arrested during peaceful protest rallies. The European Parliament urged the UN, the Council of Europe and EU member countries to set up an international commission to investigate the disappearances of Yury Zakharenka, Viktor Hanchar, Anatol Krasouski and Dzmitry Zavadski.  
(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/06/elections>)

On April 8 in Minsk Alyaksandr Lukashenka was formally sworn in **for a 3<sup>rd</sup> term**. No foreign leaders attended. Russia was only represented by the state secretary of the "union state of Belarus and Russia" Pavel Borodin. CIS executive secretary Vladimir Rushajlo, a former chairman of the parliamentary assembly of the "union" of Belarus and Russia Gennady Seleznyov, and the secretary general of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Nikolai Bordyuzha were also present. Lukashenka received congratulations only from leaders of Russia, Iran, Cuba, China and Myanmar.  
(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/10/luka>)

On the day of the **swearing-in ceremony** the center of the city was cordoned off by the security services. Only those having special passes could enter October Square where the ceremony was held. The passes were issued by the Security service of the president. **Several protest actions** were held on that day by young people. In Minsk black balloons were sent up into the sky, and candles of solidarity with political prisoners were lit. (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/10/narod>) In Brest youth activists went into the streets of the city with national white-red-white flags (<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/society/2006/4/041A06CD-E259-4DCF->

[A61B-5A5444C0448E.html](http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/4/C1655A9B-6B4C-487C-9400-AE1698EBA205.html)). In Mahilyou more than 100 pieces of graffiti with the words "Fed Up!" were written. (<http://zubr-belarus.com/index.php?id=2262&lang=1>). In Navapolatsk an opposition activist went on hunger strike in protest against the fraudulent election results (<http://elections.belapan.com/president2006/rus/show.php?show=93099>). Protest rallies were also held in Kyiv (<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/4/C1655A9B-6B4C-487C-9400-AE1698EBA205.html>), Poland, the Czech Republic, Russia and Lithuania (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/10/poland>).

On April 10, the EU officially introduced **sanctions** against Alyaksandr Lukashenka and 30 more high-ranking Belarusian officials. All of them have become *persona non grata* in all EU countries. Poland (<http://www.svobodanews.ru/News/137561.html>), Lithuania and the Czech Republic said the sanctions were not strong enough. (<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/4/EBFD44BA-D3C4-4ACE-B78E-08133284948C.html>). (<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/4/446163E9-BC5D-421C-BC6B-2298E0B48CBB.html>) Representatives of the Belarusian opposition (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/10/sannikov>), including the leader of the democratic forces Alyaksandr Milinkevich ([http://by.milinkevich.org/data/ic\\_1/91215/](http://by.milinkevich.org/data/ic_1/91215/)), took the same view.

On March 9, the headquarters of the united democratic forces filed an application to Minsk city executive committee for holding "**Charnobylski Shlyakh**" rally on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Chernobyl catastrophe. The demonstration will be held under the slogan "Freedom. Truth. Justice". (<http://pbnf.org/index.php?index=2&id=1020>)

Russia's Gazprom recently announced that it will seek to **triple the rate** Belarus pays for its gas imports as a new contract for 2007 is negotiated. (<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/economics/2006/4/B127A377-3774-43F7-AE27-538B80E73339.html>)

On April 13, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe passed a **strongly worded resolution** on the situation in Belarus. The PACE strongly condemned the undemocratic conduct of the presidential election of 19 March 2006, views its results as fraudulent and calls upon the Belarusian authorities to hold fresh elections. It also called for changes to the electoral code to bring it in line with European standards. The PACE welcomed the EU's decision to impose visa ban on high-ranking Belarusian officials. It said, however, that visa bans were not enough, and additional sanctions against Belarusian officials, including freezing their bank accounts abroad should be considered. It was a great disappointment for the PACE that the Russian Federation had recognised the legitimacy of the fraudulent elections in Belarus. The Assembly noted that Russia's support for the Belarusian regime contradicts its commitments as a member of the Council of Europe. (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/13/perevybory>)

On April 14, Alyaksandr Lukashenka said that he would not let into the country **those who "are working against Belarus"**. "Those who intentionally misrepresent reality in Belarus and in fact work against Belarus, would be prevented from entering the territory of our country naturally, without any "blacklists", Alyaksandr Lukashenka said. (<http://belta.by/News.nsf/LastNews/27A147A1FC13665D4225715000490C7E>)

On April 14, a political prisoner, former Minister of Foreign Economic Relations and Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Belarus Mikhail Marynich was **released after two years in detention**. (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/14/mihail>)

On April 16 in Minsk an officially sanctioned rally was held in which participants held up **racist and xenophobic slogans**: "Today a black immigrant, tomorrow a black occupant", "White might. In honour of ancestors, to the good of the next generation", "Belarus will be white", "Slavonic woman, honour is higher than Jewish money". (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/17/provok>)

## Civil Society in Action

In April, the headquarters of both democratic presidential candidates, Alyaksandr Milinkevich and Alyaksandr Kazulin, continued to render **help to people arrested** and detained during mass protest actions against the rigged results of the presidential elections. At Milinkevich's headquarters a Committee of Support for such people was set up. Help has centered on humanitarian, medical and after-care assistance to people subjected to the crackdown, and help for students expelled from universities for political motives to continue their education aboard.

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

The human rights group "Viasna" is also engaged in **rendering assistance** to the arrested and their families, in drafting appeals to the courts demanding reinstatement at work and in universities for the protesters expelled on political grounds. The organization is also challenging illegal arrests during peaceful demonstrations in the courts and in the prosecutor's office.

(<http://www.spring96.org/>)

Every day, peaceful actions of solidarity with political prisoners and those who are fighting for freedom and democracy in Belarus are held in Minsk. The protests are held in the form of **flash mobs**. Every day young people gather in the center of the city and light candles, (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/10/photo>), lay flowers. On March 12, on the "Day of Cosmonautics", people in Minsk sent up balloons with portraits of Alyaksandr Lukashenka (<http://www.ucpb.org/?lang=rus&open=9418>). On April 16, citizens gathered not far from the building of the State Security Committee with copies of the Constitution in their hands. But even during these peaceful protests its participants were detained on the pretext of "verification of their identity".

(<http://www.ucpb.org/?lang=rus&open=9395>)

On April 7, about a hundred of activists of the Conservative Christian party Belarusian Popular Front and of youth movements gathered on October Square. **Protesting against the swearing-in** of Alyaksandr Lukashenka, they unfurled slogans saying "No to fascism!" and waved national flags. Five activists were arrested. All of them were sentenced to 10 or 15 days in jail.

(<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/4/55A223DA-B53D-49BD-A5AB-4F10FF5D996C.html>)

On April 7, Belarusians mothers sent a **letter to Russian president** Vladimir Putin, demanding that he cease supporting the Belarusian dictator.

([http://by.milinkevich.org/data/ic\\_1/91199/rowselect-10-10/](http://by.milinkevich.org/data/ic_1/91199/rowselect-10-10/))

At the beginning of April, Belarusian intellectuals, artists, writers and journalists called on their colleagues as well as all citizens of Belarus **not to support actions of the regime** aimed against its own citizens, against democratic values, Belarusian culture and language. The address was published in the independent newspapers "Narodnaya Volya" and "Nasha Niva".

([www.nn.by](http://www.nn.by))

On April 9, the Belarusian "Free Theatre" finished a **tour in Vilnius**. A photo exhibition "One Step to Freedom", created by the Free Theatre together with the press center of Charter'97, was also held. Pictures of events in Minsk between March 19 and 25 were exhibited.

([http://www.dramaturg.org/domenu.php?menu=expand\\_article&article\\_id=251403068](http://www.dramaturg.org/domenu.php?menu=expand_article&article_id=251403068))

From April 15 to April 28 in Minsk demonstrators gathered to demand the release of former presidential candidate Alyaksandr Kazulin. The Minsk city executive committee sanctioned the gatherings in only two remote parts of the city.

(<http://www.kozylin.com/node/1225>)

In April, the Belarusian Popular Front Party together with the VoliaMusic record label is going to release an album called "**Charnobyl Wind**". ([http://by.milinkevich.org/data/ic\\_1/91223/](http://by.milinkevich.org/data/ic_1/91223/))

**...despite the repressions**

The 2006 electoral campaign was characterized by a **dramatic growth in the number of criminal cases** initiated against opposition activists. Since December last year politically motivated criminal cases have been initiated against 27 civil society activists and party members. One of them was sentenced to 5 months. 10 people are being held on remand. Oppositionists have been charged with "activities on behalf of unregistered organizations", "discrediting the Republic of Belarus", "libelling the president of Belarus". Writing political graffiti has been classified as "malicious hooliganism". Several youth leaders have been charged with draft evasion. According to human rights watchdogs, the authorities are not only classifying opposition activities according to harsher articles of the Criminal Code, but are also trying to present them not as political prisoners, but as common criminals.

(<http://www.spring96.org/by/news/3947/>  
<http://www.spring96.org/by/news/4207/>  
<http://www.spring96.org/by/news/4206/>  
<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/12/mf>)

According to human rights watchdogs, during and shortly after the election campaign **more than 1,000 people were arrested** in Belarus. 236 activists of the electoral headquarters of Alyaksandr Milinkevich were interned in the run-up to the elections (<http://www.spring96.org/by/news/3997/>), 692 were arrested during the crackdown on peaceful demonstrations on March 19-25. (<http://spring96.org/by/news/4154/>)

Dozens of Belarusian **students were expelled** from Belarusian universities for participation in protest rallies against rigged presidential elections results (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/12/kraina>). Active participants in the election campaign have been dismissed from their jobs (<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/4/1E426C15-FAF3-4038-8AD6-0C881B7F8469.html>).

On April 5, the Supreme Court of Belarus **refused to consider appeals** lodged by Alyaksandr Milinkevich and Alyaksandr Kazulin to invalidate the presidential elections. Earlier, the Central Electoral Committee passed a decree dismissing a similar appeal by the two former candidates. (<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/4/50C72F7C-07FA-4BD6-AF88-0D9573DD5026.html>)

On April 6, a Russian political analyst, Andrei Suzdaltsev, was **expelled from Belarus**. Suzdaltsev, had been living in Belarus for 13 years. He was accused of "endangering the national security of Belarus". Suzdaltsev views this as an act of reprisal for his articles on the pre-election situation in Belarus. ([www.bdg.by/news/news.htm?84281,1](http://www.bdg.by/news/news.htm?84281,1))

On April 7, on the eve of Lukashenka's swearing-in ceremony, a political prisoner, the chairman of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Narodnaya Hramada) Mikola Statkevich was **isolated and prevented from leaving the premises** of his "special settlement" in the town of Baranavichy. Previously, Statkevich was isolated in the run-up to and aftermath of the elections -- from March 1 to 27, 2006. The politician is serving a two-year sentence of restricted liberty for organizing a protest against rigged results of the elections and referendum in 2004. (<http://bsdpng.info/2006/04/07/gsag>)

On April 7, activists of the youth movement Zubr Alyaksandr Kazakou and Zmitser Zubro were **sentenced to two years restricted liberty** (corrective labor). The activists were detained on the night of December 28, 2005 for writing political graffiti -- the number 16, which urged people to take part in the Day of Solidarity

with political prisoners. However, they were actually charged with insubordination to policemen.

(<http://zubr-belarus.com/index.php?id=2260&lang=1>)

On April 8, an entrepreneur Mikalay Autukhovich was detained in Minsk. In February the entrepreneur fled house arrest, saying that he was being persecuted on political grounds. On February 13 Mikalay Autukhovich was **placed in a remand prison** before consideration of a tax evasion case by the courts.

(<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/economics/2006/4/920B97D5-85FA-4E61-B5AD-174D27AFA3F6.html>)

In March, a **criminal action for libelling** Lukashenka was brought against a resident of Vorsha, the former workers' leader Mikalay Razumau. At one of opposition Alyaksandr Milinkevich's rallies Razumau stated that the head of the state was implicated in assassinations of missing politicians. Razumau was detained and placed in custody in Vorsha. On April 11 he was taken to Minsk, to a Republican mental hospital in Navinki for forcible psychiatric examination.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/14/lider>)

Minsk police do not think that the **rights of journalists**, detained and placed in the detention center in Akreastsin Street, were violated.

(<http://baj.ru/2006/Apr/1204nav3.asp>)

On March 11, the court of the Pershamajski district of Minsk charged Anton Filimonau, a son of the murdered Belarusian journalist Veranika Charkasava, to two and a half years imprisonment, suspended for 2 years. Anton Filimonau was found **guilty of falsification of bank notes**.

(<http://baj.ru/2006/Apr/1104nav2.asp>)

On April 12, a well-known human rights activist -- deputy chairman of the United Civil party Ludmila Hraznova -- was **summoned to the Prosecutor's Office** in the Savetski district of Minsk to explain her interview to the internet site [www.charter97.org](http://www.charter97.org) on the brutal disbanding of the peaceful demonstration on March 25 and the inadmissibility of Russia's presiding over the G-8 because of its support for the Belarusian dictatorship.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/12/gryaznova>)

On April 12, the court of Minsk's Zavodzki district **dismissed a case** initiated by a former student of the Belarusian State Economic University Tatsyana Khoma against the administration of her university. She was expelled from the university after she visited France and was elected to the council of the ESIB (the National Units of Students in Europe).

(<http://www.studenty.by/news900.html>)

On April 17, 15 **skinheads** aged 18-20, dressed in black, destroyed a stand set up by supporters of Alyaksandr Kazulin. Kazulin's portrait was torn up and leaflets calling for Kazulin's release from jail were burned. They were shouting: "Lukashenka is our president!"

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/17/ak>)

## **Belarus and International Community**

On April 3, the leader of the Belarusian opposition Alyaksandr Milinkevich met Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel, and the President of the Austrian Parliament Andreas Khol. Austria, as a country heading up the EU's rotating presidency, said it views the democratic forces of **Belarus as a real partner** and would support them in international diplomatic circles.

([http://by.milinkevich.org/data/ic\\_1/91180/rowselect-30-10/](http://by.milinkevich.org/data/ic_1/91180/rowselect-30-10/))

On April 5, the leader of the united democratic forces Alyaksandr Milinkevich had a meeting with the Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union Javier Solana and European Commissioner for Foreign Affairs Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

(<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/4/660128B5-ABBA-4EC0-A5DF-61CF2508BF52.html>)

On April 5, parliamentarians of different factions of the European Parliament signed an **open letter** expressing solidarity with Belarusian democratic forces.

(<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/4/E1BD8AF0-65CE-4D31-B63D-5482E69472AE.html>)

On April 5, the US State Department presented an annual report on how it had supported democracy and human rights across the globe in the previous year. The year 2005 saw "the **continuing erosion of democratic principles** and human rights" in Belarus and Russia, the US Department of State said.

(<http://newsru.com/arch/world/05apr2006/gosdepusa.html>)

On April 5, Chancellor of Austria Wolfgang Schuessel in his speech in the European Parliament demanded **financial support for the Belarusian opposition**. He also expressed his support for sanctions against Lukashenko and his regime.

(<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/4/A2716ACC-AC46-4306-9472-852368ECA45C.html>)

On April 6, Russia's "Union of Right Forces" sent an **open letter to Vladimir Putin** urging him not to recognize the "re-election" of Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

(<http://sps.ru/?id=212191>)

On April 6, a press secretary of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry Andrei Popov called the **resolution of the European Parliament** "another routine document which cannot make a claim to serious consideration in Minsk".

(<http://elections.belapan.com/president2006/rus/show.php?show=92878>)

On April 7, the leader of the democratic forces of Belarus Alyaksandr Milinkevich had a **meeting with German Chancellor** Angela Merkel. It was their second meeting. At the beginning of February 2006 Milinkevich held talks with Angela Merkel and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/04/07/merkel>)

On April 5, Polish Prime Minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz told EuroNews: "The **European Union cannot remain silent** when human rights are violated" "Hundreds or even thousands of Belarusian officials should be barred from the territory of the European Union. As for the most important politicians of Belarus, their accounts in the banks of the EU must be frozen".

(<http://elections.belapan.com/president2006/rus/show.php?show=92845>)

In April, an **address by the Belarusian "Free Theatre"** concerning the beating up and arrest of Belarusian in the period after the presidential elections was supported by more than a hundred well known people from the world of theater including former Czech president and playwright Vaclav Havel.

([http://www.dramaturg.org/domenu.php?menu=expand\\_article&article\\_id=604927143](http://www.dramaturg.org/domenu.php?menu=expand_article&article_id=604927143))

On April 13, the government of Estonia afforded students from Belarus expelled from universities on political grounds the **opportunity to study** in Estonian universities. Earlier Poland and the Czech Republic stated that they are ready to admit Belarusian students for the same reasons.

([http://by.milinkevich.org/data/ic\\_1/91225/](http://by.milinkevich.org/data/ic_1/91225/))

On April 14 in Vilnius Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus met with **participants of protest actions** in Belarus, and with Iryna Kazulina, the wife of Alyaksandr Kazulin, and the chairman of the United Civil Party Anatol Lyabedzka.

(<http://www.svaboda.org/articlesfeatures/politics/2006/4/37A9A0FF-998F-4483-AE77-1BEE9CDECC06.html>)

In April, a group of **independent Russian observers** headed by the leader of the Union of Right Forces Nikita Belykh and a deputy of the State Duma Vladimir

Ryzhkov, presented a "Report on Evaluation of the electoral process in Belarus". The authors of the report stated that "the elections were out of line with the legislation of the Republic of Belarus and have fallen short of international standards of free and fair elections".  
(<http://sps.ru/?id=212303>)

### Dates



On April 6, 1999 oppositionist Henadz Karpenka (Gennady Karpenko), died suddenly under mysterious circumstances. He was a prominent figure in Belarus: Vice-Speaker of the 13th Supreme Soviet, the head the National executive committee, set up by the Belarusian opposition, doctor of technical sciences, associate of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. His wife and children had to leave for Germany because of persistent persecution. They were awarded the status of political refugees in Germany.

### Must read

"West should stop doing business with Lukashenko", By Sergei Korol, "The Financial Times" (UK), April 1, 2006

<http://news.ft.com/cms/s/06ec67ce-c11b-11da-9419-0000779e2340.html>

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