



## Newsletter #31 (July 12-26)

### Quote of the day

*"Statements of the EU and the US signify disagreement and antagonism to the regime but this is not influencing internal policy where everything is concentrated in the hands of one man".*

Hans Georg Wieck, former head of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus, in an interview to the Radio Liberty Belarusian service, July 18, 2006

### **In Focus**

People all over the world marked the **Day of Belarusian Solidarity** on July 16. Thousands went to Russian embassies in their countries and demanded that the Belarusian issue be raised at the G8 summit held in St. Petersburg and that the Russian government stop supporting the Belarusian dictatorship. In Minsk, 40 Belarusian citizens holding portraits of political prisoners and the repressed were arrested while attempting to approach the Russian diplomatic mission. Many were brutally beaten up. Solidarity rallies were held in many Belarusian cities and abroad. In Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Belgium, the USA, Sweden, the Netherlands, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and many other countries of the world demonstrations were held near Russian and Belarusian Embassies. Belarusian citizens lit candles in their windows as a sign of solidarity with political prisoners and the families of the disappeared.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/07/16/day>)

On July 13, former presidential candidate Alyaksandr Kazulin was **sentenced to five and a half years** in a minimum security colony for "hooliganism" and organizing anti-government demonstrations. In the last days of the trial Kazulin was expelled from the courtroom and deprived of his right to make a final statement. All motions of the defense were dismissed by judge Alyaksei Rybakou. Kazulin was detained during the violent break up of a peaceful rally on March 25, 2006. On that day riot policemen used smoke grenades, noise-making explosives, tear gas and batons. Protesters were brutally beaten, many were hospitalized. According to some reports, not confirmed by the regime, one person died.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/07/13/kol>)

On July 22 **an informal summit of the CIS** was held in Moscow. Heads of eight out of 12 states arrived to the summit. Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, Armenian President Robert Kocharian and Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov were absent. President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev offered to reorganize the CIS. The matter concerns common migration policy, transport system, common plans in the sphere of education and in different humanitarian projects.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/07/24/>)

An official delegation from Venezuela headed by President Hugo Chavez visited Belarus on July 22-24 at the invitation of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka. During a visit to Belarus, Chavez called for joint efforts to counter what he

described as "hegemonic" capitalism. Mr Chavez met Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko and accused the West of crushing fundamental rights. (<http://www.regnum.ru/news/676929.html>)

## Civil Society in Action

On July 12 **unionists held a gathering** in support of the trade union branch of a Minsk automobile plant, which for two years has been trying to become registered. (<http://www.praca-by.info/site/index.php3>)

On July 14 more than 50 cars from the Minsk taxi service "0-52" gathered near the National TV building in Kamunistrychnaya Street and blocked all passages to the building. The **taxi drivers were protesting** against the liquidation of their firm. They demanded a live broadcast on TV to air their grievances. (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/07/14/taxi>  
(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/07/14/taxiphoto>)

On July 13 another **political flash-mob** was held in Barysau. Young people connected with the civic campaign "For Freedom!" went to the Barysau-Minsk highway holding up the names of cities they would like to catch a ride to. They also scrawled on their placards slogans such as: "To a new Belarus", "To free space", "To democracy", "To truth", "To a better future". (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/07/14/mob>)

A protest **against the union of Belarus and Russia** was held on July 18 in Minsk. Young activists gathered in Victory Square with a banner saying: "Cancel the union with Russia". (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/07/19/minsk>)

In July a third issue of the **White Book**, a collection of materials on monitoring the religious situation in Belarus in 2004-2005, was published. (<http://news.tut.by/71335.html>)

### ...despite the repressions

On July 13 the leader of Young Front Artur Finkevich, who is **serving a two-year sentence** in Mahilyou, was sent to work as a builder. ([http://www.mfront.net/af\\_00.html](http://www.mfront.net/af_00.html))

**Before and during the G8 summit** in St. Petersburg representatives of the Belarusian opposition were detained many times. On July 14, during a rally in support of the Belarusian opposition, activists from Russian and Belarusian democratic organizations were detained.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/07/14/razgon>) On July 16 in St. Petersburg near the Pribaltiyskaya hotel, where Russian and foreign journalists covering the summit were staying, 6 activists of the Belarusian resistance group Bunt (Riot) were arrested. Officers of the Russian and Belarusian secret services beat up the detainees, and girls were threatened with rape. (<http://www.prima-news.ru/news/news/2006/7/17/36629.html>)

On July 17 the leader of the United Civil Party Anatol Lyabedzka and opposition activist Anatol Askerka were **sentenced to 10 days** in jail by the court of the Tsentralny district of Minsk. The politicians were detained on July 16 near the Russian embassy in Minsk. (= <http://www.ucpb.org/?lang=rus&open=10610>)

On July 17 a policeman **waved a gun** at the deputy chairman of the United Civil Party Ihar Shynkaryk for trying to take pictures of a police "UAZ" van in which the leader of the United Civil Party Anatol Lyabedzka was being transported to the court of the Tsentralny district. (<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/07/18/ugroza>)

On the night of July 18, unknown hooligans **attacked an editorial office** of the Baranavichy regional newspaper Intex-Press. Leaflets were pasted to the door. They ran: "It's time to pay for everything! Death to traitors to Motherland!"

(<http://baj.ru/2006/Jul/1807nav.asp>)

## **Belarus and the International Community**

On July 13, the US Department of State issued an **urgent statement** about the verdict handed down to Alyaksandr Kazulin who had been sentenced to five and a half years of imprisonment.

(<http://www.svaboda.org/xml/articles/2006/07/A8335226-EFC1-4522-BB7B-DE0F7DF127F7.html>)

On July 13 heads of diplomatic missions of EU countries **condemned the verdict.**

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/07/14/eu>)

"The United States **will not recognize a Belarus-Russia Union state,**" US ambassador to Minsk George Krol said at a meeting with journalists on July 14, referring to the Department of State's statements.

(<http://www.afn.minsk.by/news/news.asp?d=15&m=7&y=2006&newsid=76480#data>)

On July 15 the international association "Civil Belarus" headed by former Czech President Vaclav Havel, **condemned the verdict** handed down to Alyaksandr Kazulin.

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/07/16/gavel>)

EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner also condemned the decision to jail Kazulin. She added that the European Commission continues to follow the post election situation in Belarus closely and to **fight for the release of political prisoners.**

(<http://www.charter97.org/bel/news/2006/07/17/benita>)

On July 20 the President of Latvia Vaira Vike-Freiberga called upon the government of Belarus to **adhere to OSCE standards** and to stop persecution of the political opposition.

(<http://news.tut.by/politics/71406.html>)

On July 20 the Belarusian Foreign Ministry **blasted US politics.** Commenting on the US Department of State's Report on Human Rights in the world in 2005, Belarusian Foreign Ministry's spokesperson Andrei Papou said that "the US uses human rights issues as a pretext for pressuring sovereign states".

([http://www.interfax.by/?id=33&id\\_sp=25163&lang=ru](http://www.interfax.by/?id=33&id_sp=25163&lang=ru))

### **Dates**



On July 27, 1990 the Supreme Council of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) adopted the Declaration on State Sovereignty of Belarus. This day was announced as a public holiday. The holiday was cancelled after a referendum in 1996, at which Lukashenka received unrestricted authority. The democratic community still celebrates Independence Day on July 27.

### **Must read**

««Democracy», Russian-Style», «The Washington Post», July 18, 2006

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/17/AR2006071701297.html>

«Smile when you do that, Mr President», James Robinson , «The Observer», July 16, 2006

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/russia/article/0,,1821421,00.html>

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