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BELARUS UPDATE

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-- WORLD PROTESTS VIASNA'S CLOSURE --

Following the Belarusian Supreme Court's decision to shut down Viasna, a leading Belarusian human rights watchdog, on October 28 (see Belarus Update, Vol.6, No.2), a number of democratic governments, intergovernmental and human rights organizations protested against the closure and expressed their support to the Belarusian NGO. Below are some excerpts from protest letters and press statements concerning the liquidation of Viasna.

ILHR CONDEMNS VIASNA'S CLOSURE AND ASSAULT ON BELARUSIAN NGOS

In an October 30, protest letter to Aleksandr Lukashenko, the International League for Human Rights (ILHR) condemned the Belarusian Supreme Court's decision to shut down Viasna, as well as the Lukashenko government's concerted assault on Belarus' NGO community. "Viasna's closure appears to be part of the ongoing harassment campaign against independent NGOs in

Belarus which are vocal in advocating human rights and democratic reforms,” wrote the League’s executive director Louise Kantrow. “You must be aware that your government’s actions violate the commitments undertaken by Belarus to uphold international standards of freedom of expression and assembly,” added Kantrow.

U.S.: DECISION TO CLOSE VIASNA WAS MADE BEFORE TRIAL EVEN BEGAN

On October 30, commenting on the Viasna decision, Richard Boucher, a U.S. State Department spokesman, said the United States was deeply concerned about the “ongoing repression of civil society in Belarus, particularly the Belarusian government’s assault on independent non-governmental organizations and media.” Calling Viasna, “one of Belarus’ most respected and active non-governmental organizations that provided legal advice, monitored elections, and reported on human rights concerns,” Mr. Boucher pointed out that the court proceedings “made it clear that the decision to close Viasna had been determined before the trial even began.” The U.S. State Department believes this move against Viasna is the latest in a series of closures of NGOs and media outlets that “call into question the sincerity of the Belarusian authorities in wanting to develop a democratic society and improve relations with the trans-Atlantic community.” Finally, Boucher urged the Belarusian government to “cease its attacks on non-governmental organizations and the media and to permit the reopening of those organizations that have been closed on spurious grounds.” (U.S. Department of State, October 30)

EU DEEPLY REGRETS VIASNA’S CLOSURE

In statement No. 472, the European Union (EU) Permanent Council expressed “deep regret” about Viasna’s closure, noting that Belarus “has chosen to ignore the pleas of the international community in this case and others relating to civil society and free media in recent months.” The statement called on Belarus “in the strongest possible terms to reverse the restrictive measures taken against Civil Society” and urged it “to review its unduly restrictive legislation regarding Civil Society, NGOs and Free Media and to bring it into line with OSCE commitments.” (EU, October 30)

OSCE MINSK OFFICE: ANOTHER SETBACK FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

On October 30, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) expressed concern over Viasna’s closure and growing state pressure on NGOs in the ex-Soviet state. “The closure of the Human Rights Center Viasna, one of the leading NGOs focused on protection of human rights and election monitoring is a serious setback and unfortunately the latest result of what must be described as a governmental campaign against independent NGOs,” said Amb. Eberhard Heyken, head of the OSCE Office in Minsk (OOM), on October 30. The OOM noted that “the profile of the affected NGOs suggests that independent activity related to elections and human rights protection is particularly being punished by the authorities.” Some observers view the current clampdown on NGOs as stemming from the state’s fear of NGOs’ active participation in the election process or as the result of the government’s ideological policy.

The OOM is seriously concerned that Belarusian legislation evidently is being used against NGOs for political purposes. “I find no reason to question decisions taken by courts but do

believe that other, less harsh ways of addressing possible shortcomings or violations by NGOs must be worked out by the authorities,” Mr. Heyken noted. “The increased pressure and closure of several NGOs has forced civil society representatives to discuss and find ways out of this critical situation. The OOM shares their concern and supports such efforts,” Mr. Heyken added. (OSCE Minsk Office, October 30)

CZECH HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS SUPPORT VIASNA

In a statement issued on October 29, the Czech Committee “For Free Belarus” expressed its support for Viasna. According to the statement, the Committee considers Viasna’s liquidation “the continuation of the attempts of Lukashenko’s regime to suppress the remnants of the civil society in Belarus that started several years ago by liquidation of opposition newspapers and radio stations, was continued by arrests and trials of journalists, closure of Belarusian schools and non-governmental democratic societies.” Pointing out that from the time of its founding in 1996 when the first mass arrests of the opposition representatives started, Viasna became the “most authoritative center that with every means possible defended rights of the people who were pressurized by the regime for their activity,” the Committee praised Viasna activists for collecting information about human rights violations as well as for defending Belarusian citizens at political trials. The Committee believes that the Viasna closure represents a “sign of weakness and fear of the dictators who try to hold their power at any cost.”

Separately, Vaclav Havel, a former Czech President and a prominent dissident, condemned the liquidation of Belarusian NGOs and independent mass media. In a statement, distributed by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) on October 30, Havel said that the court decision to liquidate Viasna was politically motivated and unfair. (RFE/RL, October 29-30).

BELARUSIAN OPPOSITION PAYS HOMAGE TO STALIN VICTIMS

About 700 demonstrators marched on November 2 to Kurapaty, the site of mass executions carried out under Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, and called for an end to political persecution in Belarus. Held on Dziady, a day of commemorating ancestors, the march to Kurapaty – an annual event since 1988 – has acquired an anti-government tilt since Lukashenko had become president.

Demonstrators marched six miles to the site from downtown Minsk. Many carried red and white national flags banned by Lukashenko’s government. Some held pictures of people they identified as political prisoners. More people joined the marchers at the site, and a crowd of about 2,000 listened to speeches and laid flowers on the mass grave and at the foot of a monument to the victims. Dozens of Zubr activists attended the commemoration. Commenting on the importance of the Dziady commemoration for Zubr activists, Evgeny Afnagel, Zubr coordinator, said, “For us and for all Belarusian patriots, it is not only the day of commemorating ancestors. 15 years ago new struggle for Belarusian independence started on Dziady in 1988. Then, Belarus learned about hundreds of thousand victims of the communist regime. Since then, Dziady is the day when we commemorate all those people who died for Belarus in all times. We not only bow in Kurapaty today, we also make a silent vow to continue struggle for Belarus.” [The country’s Prosecutor-General claims that no more than 7,000 people are buried in the mass graves at

Kurapaty, and maintains there is no evidence they were Stalin's victims. However, the opposition alleges as many as 250,000 people died there during Stalinist purges in the 1930s and 1940s.- Ed.] (Zubr, November 3)

U.S. REVIEWS RECENT OSCE HUMAN RIGHTS MEETING IN WARSAW

Addressing the OSCE Permanent Council with his analysis of the October 6-19 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting held in Warsaw, Poland (See Belarus Update, Vol.6, No.1), Amb. Stephan M. Minikes, Head of the U.S. Mission to OSCE, noted that the government of Belarus has made "no substantive progress in addressing the criteria established by the OSCE over three years ago: ending repression and the climate of fear; permitting a functioning independent media; creating a transparent election process; and strengthening the functioning of the parliament." "While the OSCE Office in Minsk, ODIHR, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media all have a role to play in assisting Belarus meet these criteria, ultimately, the potential for genuine, substantive progress requires the Belarusian government to make the right choices and genuinely support OSCE principles in its policies, practices and institutions," said Amb. Minikes. (U.S. Department of State, October 30)

OSCE PA WORKING GROUP CHAIR VISITS MINSK

Ms. Uta Zapf (Germany), Chair of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Working Group on Belarus, visited Minsk on October 30 – November 1. Organized with the assistance of the OSCE Office in Minsk, the visit was aimed at exploring ways to promote dialogue between Members of the National Assembly, opposition voices within the National Assembly, opposition political parties and civil society representatives ahead of the 2004 parliamentary elections. In addition, Ms. Zapf promoted Belarus' participation in an EU initiative, titled "Wider European Neighborhood," as a basis for a greater degree of integration into European structures and further democratization of Belarus.

The delegation met with Mr. Konoplyov, Deputy Chairman of the House of Representatives and Head of the Belarusian Delegation to the OSCE PA, and other parliamentarians. The delegation also met with Mr. Latypov, Head of the Presidential Administration, Mr. Martynov, Foreign Minister, Mr. Rusakevich, Information Minister, and Mr. Golovanov, Justice Minister, as well as representatives of opposition parties and NGOs. Finally, the delegation met with family members of political prisoners and the disappeared. Since the Working Group believes that a properly-amended electoral code is a fundamental element which could serve as a basis for a free and fair electoral process, Ms. Zapf reiterated to the Belarusian officials the need for changes in the electoral legislation. Mr. Latypov and Mr. Martynov replied that such changes are currently being considered by the government. In addition, Ms. Zapf highly recommended that the Belarusian government invite international observers.

Mr. Rusakevich promised Ms. Zapf to encourage a wide public dialogue on the draft Media Law and to send it to the Council of Europe and the OSCE for review by international experts to ensure that the law meets both international standards and local needs. Ms. Zapf noted that the

Working Group, in cooperation with the OOM, intends to organize a round table on the law in early 2004.

Concerned about what she believed amounted to a “systematic crackdown” on civil society in Belarus, Ms. Zapf raised the recent closures of an NGO and a trade union by the government. According to her, the Working Group views these latest actions of the Belarusian authorities as a “most negative step away from the development of civil society and urges the authorities to seek out a genuine cooperation with such organizations rather than undermine their very existence.”

Finally, the delegation expressed “deep disappointment” that the authorities seem to have abandoned the cases of the disappeared political figures completely without having ever provided any satisfactory answers as to the circumstances surrounding these disappearances. Referring to the upcoming visit of Christos Pourgourides, who is preparing a report on disappeared persons in Belarus for the Legal Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly, Ms. Zapf urged the Belarusian authorities to cooperate fully and seize this opportunity to make a genuine effort to shed light on these cases. (OSCE PA, November 2)

RAPPOREUR ON DISAPPEARED TO VISIT BELARUS

Christos Pourgourides (Cyprus, EPP/CD) will visit Belarus on November 5-8 at the invitation of the Belarusian Parliament. He will meet the Foreign Affairs and the Interior Ministers, and will gather information from the Interior Ministry and the judiciary officials on the four cases the committee has decided to prioritize, namely the cases of Yuri Zakharenko, Victor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovsky, and Dmitry Zavadsky. Mr. Pourgourides will also meet with the families of the disappeared, human rights NGOs and representatives of the international community in Minsk. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) suspended the Special Guest status of the Belarusian Parliament in 1997 but resolved to maintain dialogue with parliamentarians and the authorities. (PACE, November 3)

LAW ON PUBLIC ACTIONS AMENDED

On October 30, the Lower Chamber of the Belarusian Parliament amended the law “On Meetings, Processions, Demonstrations and Picket Lines,” Belapan reported. As amended, the law toughens the requirements for public actions and increases the organizers’ liability for violations of the law. For example, the law allows the closure of political parties for a single “serious violation” of the law due to the organizers’ failure to provide security. A “serious violation” is any disorder that causes property damage in the amount of 10,000 minimal wages or bodily injury. In addition, the clause obligating courts to hear appeals of charges of violating this law within a three days’ period was struck from the final version. (Belapan, October 30)

-- MEDIA FREEDOM IN BELARUS --

IT’S OUR TIME!

On October 24, a new information bulletin, titled *Nashe Vremya (Our Time)*, was launched by the Molodechno chapter of Zubr, Belarusian youth opposition movement. *Nashe Vremya* will inform Zubr supporters about the situation in Belarus and about resistance activities. According to Zubr, the bulletin is a natural response to the current information vacuum in Belarus caused by the government's closure of several dozens independent newspapers during last two years. All TV channels are controlled by the state and very few people in Belarus have access to the Internet. *Nashe Vremya* is not the first example of Zubr's struggle against an information blockade. Similar bulletins were previously launched in Borisov and Minsk. In addition, the Zubr periodic newspaper is circulated nationwide. The first issue of the bulletin contained information about recent actions of Zubr movement in Borisov, Minsk and Molodechno, analytical article by Vladimir Kobets, a Zubr coordinator, and legal advice to the youth how to avoid being drafted into Lukashenko's Belarusian Union of Youth. (Zubr, October 24)

--TRADE UNION NEWS--

BELARUSIAN TRADE-UNION LEADER JAILED FOR UNAUTHORIZED PROTEST

On October 30, a Minsk district court sentenced Alexander Bukhvostov, chairman of the Union of Automotive and Agricultural Machinery Workers, to 10 days in jail for his attempt to stage a picket in Minsk's central Kastychnitskaya Square, despite an official ban, Belapan reported. The city authorities designated infamous Bangalor Square, at the city's outskirts, for his protest. Bukhvostov was arrested immediately after he unfolded two posters and began distributing an appeal accusing the government of pressuring members into leaving his union and joining one that is controlled by the authorities. Plain clothed agents seized him and forced him into a police bus. According to Radio Liberty, Igor Komlik, head of the Trade Union of the "Planar" enterprise, was detained together with him. In an hour, Minsk Tsentralny District Court sentenced Bukhvostov to 10 days of administrative arrest for violating Art.167 of the Belarusian Administrative Code. (Belapan, October 30)

ILO TO HEAR COMPLAINTS OF BELARUS TRADE UNIONS

At the 288th Session of its Governing Body to be held in Geneva on November 6-21, the International Labor Organization will review the complaint concerning the non-observance by Belarus of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No.87), and the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No.98), made by delegates to the 91st Session held in 2003 of the International Labor Conference under the ILO Constitution's Art. 26. As Sir Roy Trotman, chairman of the Workers' Group, noted in his June 18 letter to J. Somavia, Secretary-General of the ILC, the complaint rests on numerous instances of gross violations of these fundamental ILO Conventions, committed in recent years by the Belarusian authorities. The full text of the complaint, including an extensive list of violations, can be found at the ILO website at www.ilo.org [The 1948 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention and the 1949 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention were ratified by Belarus on November 6, 1956. While they were largely dormant during the Soviet times, they can now be used effectively against the Lukashenko government's encroachments on trade unions' rights. – Ed.] (ILO, October 31)

-- RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN BELARUS --

JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS CONSIDER CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST COSSACKS

Representatives of major Jewish organizations in Belarus plan to ask prosecutors to investigate the illegal incitement of ethnic hatred against Jews which took place at an October 25, 2003, meeting of the All-Belarusian Union of Cossacks in Minsk, Charter 97 reported. During the meeting, which featured prayers by Russian Orthodox priests and which organizers claimed took place with the blessing of Metropolitan Filaret, copies of the anti-Semitic newspaper *Russky Vestnik* were freely available. This paper, which focuses on Russian Orthodox themes, in addition to the usual staples of anti-Semitic press, is officially banned in Belarus.

Yakov Basin, head of a group which defends Jewish rights in Belarus, is quoted in the report as saying that despite the ban, *Russky Vestnik* is also available at the Pravoslavnaya Kniga (Orthodox Book) bookstore in Minsk, which is affiliated with the local Russian Orthodox Exarchate. "This clearly violates Article 130 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus regarding the deliberate incitement of ethnic hatred," Mr. Basin said. Yuri Dorn, head of the Belarusian Union of Jewish Communities, told Charter 97 that the Orthodox Church should make a clear statement about the distribution of anti-Semitic material at the Cossack meeting. A spokesman for the Exarchate denied any Church involvement. (Charter 97, October 29)

BELARUS: WHEN IS A MONASTERY NOT A MONASTERY?

The Greek Catholic Church has no registered central body in Belarus under the 2002 religion law "On the Freedom of Faith and Religious Organizations," therefore officially its two monasteries "do not exist," Forum 18, an international religious freedom watchdog, reported. [International experts believe that the law, which distinguishes between so-called "traditional" and "new" religions, contradicts Art. 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. – Ed.] Under the same law, the church's 15 registered parishes are not considered to have any legal relationship with each other. Also, because the church's headquarters are in the Vatican, not in Belarus, and its current head is not a Belarusian citizen, the law precludes its central registration. According to Forum 18, even if the Greek Catholics had a registered central body, its monasteries still could not legally exist because they do not have the legal minimum number of fully professed monks. The local state official commented to Forum 18 that only fully professed monks could legally count because "novices might leave at any moment, or their mothers could come and take them home." (Forum 18, October 30)

CALVINISTS KEEP LOW PROFILE

Although the Reformed Church's history in Belarus goes back to the 16th century, the drafters of the 2002 religion law seemed to "forget about the Calvinists," the presbyter of Minsk present-day Reformed Church has told Forum 18 News Service. The Evangelical Lutheran Church is the only Protestant body described as "inseparable from the common history of the people of

Belarus” in the 2002 Religion Law. The Minsk Reformed Church managed to hold an international conference to mark this year's 450th anniversary of the Reformation in Belarus, but faced a great deal of official obstruction. Following the conference, the Reformed Church was told it needs to obtain official permission to hold worship services, but has yet to received any response to requests. Forced to find another location for its services, the community has been effectively prevented from advertising them. The presbyter told Forum 18, “We cannot even tell people that this Church exists, preaches Jesus Christ and doesn't bite.” (Forum 18, October 31)

-- BROTHER SLAVS --

MOSCOW BLAMES BELARUS FOR DELAYING INTRODUCTION OF RUSSIAN RUBLE

Russia has blamed the Belarusian authorities for delaying a decision on the introduction of the Russian ruble as the two countries' sole legal tender, Interfax, Russian news agency, reported. “Belarus’ virtual refusal to fulfill the ratified Russia-Belarus Union agreement, which envisions the introduction of a single currency starting January 1, 2005, means that President Lukashenko has not yet found his place on the political stage of the future union,” a Russian government source told Interfax. Experts have suggested that any further delay may make it impossible to meet the deadline for implementing all the single currency agreements. (Interfax, October 31)

-- AT HOME IN BELARUS --

BELARUSIAN PRESIDENT PRAISES SOVIET-ERA KOMSOMOL

On October 29, Alexander Lukashenko attended a reception dedicated to the 85th anniversary of Komsomol, the Communist Union of Youth organized by V.I. Lenin, Belapan, Belarusian news agency reported. “I thank my lucky stars for an opportunity to be a member of this organization, a dynamic vanguard of the Soviet youth,” Lukashenko said. The Belarusian strongman asserted that “the best of Komsomol’s experience” has been applied to the present day youth movement in Belarus, in particular, to the Belarusian National Youth Union, which is regarded by the government as Komsomol’s successor. On the same day, Lukashenko awarded the Belarusian Order of Honor to Boris Pastukhov, a deputy of the Russian State Duma, who was the last Soviet era Secretary General of Komsomol. (Belapan, October 29)

...WHILE FORCING YOUTH INTO LUKOMOL

The Belarusian regime is accused of coercing and bribing youngsters into joining a movement which is seemingly aimed at bolstering its support, Nadezhda Vasilevskaya, a Belarusian journalist, who writes for Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) from Minsk. According to the journalist, a youth organization apparently created to encourage the youth to back Lukashenko’s regime is using underhanded methods to boost its membership. For example, college students are offered a range of incentives if they join, including scholarships, free dormitory and a good job after graduation. [In Belarus, graduates of state-sponsored colleges are still assigned to jobs. If they choose to find a job themselves, their employer will have to

reimburse the state for their tuition, which may amount up to \$6,000, thus hindering the practice.
– Ed.]

Set up by President Lukashenko in the fall of 2002, the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRYU), which is currently financed by the state, is supposed to promote patriotism and high moral values among the country's youth. But critics say the initiative stems from Lukashenko's disappointment with the low level of support among the youth for his candidacy in the last presidential election. Some critics of the BRYU believe that without government funds, the union will fall apart as it is little more than a propaganda tool. "Such bodies have a serious flaw. As soon as they lose the financial support of the state, they disintegrate," said Alyaksandar Milinkevich, head of Ratusha, a NGO based in the western city of Hrodna, which was closed down by the authorities. (IWPR, October 30)

-- ELECTION 2004 --

EUROPEAN COALITION "FREE BELARUS" CREATED IN MINSK

In an effort to find a common platform ahead of the next year parliamentary election and to accelerate the integration of Belarus into the European Union (EU), representatives of NGOs and political parties, announced on November 1, the tenth anniversary of the EU, the creation of the European Coalition "Free Belarus," Charter 97 reported. According to the Coalition's organizers, the objectives of the new movement include creation of a democratic state and an open society in Belarus, based on the principles of freedom, solidarity, and citizens' activity. Other objectives include attracting attention of the Belarusian public to the ideas and values of united Europe in social, economic, legal, and cultural field, the European experience of organizing state and economic affairs and social sphere, as well as informing the EU agencies and citizens about Belarus, and discussing the problems of the integration of Belarus into the European Union.

The new coalition plans to achieve its objectives by preparing and disseminating information on the EU history, its structures, objectives, functions, and achievements; carrying out scientific and practical workshops, conferences, and round tables; carrying out public actions devoted to the integration of Belarus into the EU; analyzing the public opinion on the problem of joining the EU; organizing contacts and trips of the representatives of various professional groups to the EU states and from these countries in Belarus; spreading information materials in the EU states and organizing information meetings with the representatives of the EU agencies and the EU governments' officials with the objective to explain the European choice of the Belarusian society; creating election blocks of the European orientation. (Charter 97, November 1)

-- INTERNATIONAL NEWS --

BELARUSIAN AMBASSADOR: RUSSIA WON'T SWALLOW US

Mikhail Khvostov, the newly appointed Belarusian ambassador to Washington, stated on October 30 that Belarus will never become part of Russia, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) reported. He also said Minsk wants better relations with the United States and denied

that his government is harassing opposition groups and that it sold weapons to Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

The U.S. State Department has told RFE/RL that it has credible evidence that a group of Iraqi officers were in Belarus in the fall of 2001, to be trained to use the S-300 anti-aircraft system against British and U.S. jets patrolling the former "no-fly" zones over Iraq. Speaking at a RFE/RL briefing in Washington, Khvostov, a former foreign minister, dismissed the allegations which, if true, would mean that Minsk violated the United Nations sanctions. "I am familiar with the information that Iraqi air-defense personnel were trained in Belarus," he said. "I was at home then, and I deny it. That was not the case because it was prohibited by the appropriate resolution of the UN Security Council. We were in strict compliance with the resolution."

When asked about his government's handling of NGOs, Amb. Khvostov denied that his government is targeting any specific groups, saying all NGOs are treated the same way. "There is no special approach by the government to the situation of a particular NGO. Any NGO and newspapers should go along with the existing way," he said. "That's it. And if there is a violation then they should have the result (consequences)." As for Minsk's relations with Washington, Khvostov suggested it is up to the United States to improve the relationship. But he also suggested that Belarus is keen to improve relations with both Washington and the European Union out of necessity. "We started to voice the necessity to improve relations with the West – first of all, with the United States, the European Union, the European continent – not because we doubt that the relations with the Russian Federation will become difficult, but because we propose this cooperation and we need the adequate reply from the European Union and the United States," he said. [Since Lukashenko extended his stay in office through what the United States called an unconstitutional referendum 1997, Washington has had a policy of "selective engagement" with Minsk. – Ed.]

Khvostov said if Washington would adopt a policy of "constructive engagement," which would entail more contacts, then that would be the first step toward normalizing the relationship. (RFE/RL, October 31)

-- CALENDAR OF EVENTS --

November 5-8 – PACE Rapporteur on Disappeared visits Belarus

November 6-21 -- ILO considers violations of Belarusian trade unions' rights

The Belarus Update is a weekly news bulletin of the Belarus Human Rights Support Project of the International League for Human Rights, www.ilhr.org. The League, now in its 62nd year, is a New York-based human rights NGO in consultative status with the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the International Labor Organization. Visit www.belarusupdate.org for back issues, analysis, and links to news sites and NGOs in Belarus. Letters to the Editor: vcole@ilhr.org, subscription services: otarasov@ilhr.org

The Belarus project was established to support Belarusian citizens in making their case for the protection of civil society before the international community regarding Alexander Lukashenko's wholesale assault on human rights and the rule of law in Belarus.
