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## Council of Europe Resolutions on Belarus: A Victory for Democracy

On April 28, the Parliamentary Assembly at the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted two resolutions on Belarus calling for Lukashenko's administration to launch an investigation into the cases of disappeared opposition figures and end its persecution of independent media. The timing of these major resolutions could not be better. They come just two weeks after the adoption of another strongly worded resolution by the UN Human Rights Commission which listed a slew of human rights violations in Belarus and appointed a special rapporteur to conduct an investigation in the country. Meanwhile, the U.S. Congress is still ironing out differences in the Senate and House versions of the much anticipated Belarus Democracy Act.

Orest Deychakiwsky at the U.S. State Department's Helsinki Commission told *Belarus Update* that the recent actions taken by the European bodies and the UN are welcome and illustrate "the escalation of interest in the situation of human rights in Belarus."

Yet the United States is no longer the sole advocate for Belarusian democracy. The "maximum political pressure" the PACE asked of its members states to put on Belarus will no doubt be applicable to the ten new countries inducted into the European Union on May 1<sup>st</sup>, including Belarus' neighbors Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania.

Delegates from the ascending European Union states had harsh words for Lukashenko and his government during the Council of Europe's debates on Belarus. This is not surprising, considering that five of the parliamentarians in the 16 member subcommittee on Belarus are from newly minted EU states (not to mention former Communist): Roman Jakic (Slovenia), Jiri Mastalka (Czech Republic), Andreas Herkel (Estonia), Bogdan Klich (Poland) and Jonas Cekuolis (Lithuania), the sub-committee's chairperson.

During the hearings on the human rights situation in Belarus, Mr. Cekuolis spoke unequivocally on the urgency of this matter. "The language in the various documents presented by our Assembly about the state of affairs in Belarus over recent years has become much, much tougher. That is correct. Unfortunately, we cannot make compromises with dictators; when one makes a compromise with a dictator one is taken for granted and the dictator does nothing," he said.

No one has been tougher, especially in terms of language, than Christos Pourgourides, CoE parliamentarian also from a new, if divided, EU country: Cyprus. At a press conference following the adoption of the resolutions, Mr. Pourgourides bluntly called Belarus a "criminal regime" and reiterated his confidence that Lukashenko and other high-level officials were personally involved in the cover-up of four missing persons who were allegedly kidnapped and murdered by Belarusian security officers. Mr. Pourgourides has been active in pushing Belarus higher up on the Council's agenda. He volunteered to write a report to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights on the disappeared cases, and found time to submit another report, this one on the famously repressed press in Belarus. Recommendations contained in these reports mirror those resulting from the final resolutions.

Svetlana Zavadskaya, wife of disappeared TV cameraman Dmitry Zavadsky, told *Belarus Update* after the hearings in Strasbourg that the resolutions are a major step to democracy in Belarus. "Pourgourides's report is very important for me since it marks a new stage in the cases of the disappeared. The report proves that the Belarusian government is criminal... For me and the families of the kidnapped there is more hope that the people responsible for these terrible crimes will be punished." To achieve this end, Ms. Zavadskaya believes, more cooperation among Western governments is needed, "I hope that the joint efforts of Europe and America will help begin legal procedures against the Belarusian officials implicated in the report."

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## **DOMESTIC**

### **1. President's Opponent is Jailed**

The police have arrested a leading opponent of President Aleksandr Lukashenko for theft of documents and unlawful handling of firearms, the authorities announced. The detainee, Mikhail Marinich, a former ambassador who ran against Mr. Lukashenko in 2001, "was found in possession of various top-secret official documents that could harm the government," the K.G.B. said in a statement. "In addition, he was found in possession of two unregistered guns of foreign make and more than \$90,000." Mr. Marinich heads For Belarus's European Choice, an opposition movement.

Source: *NY Times*; April 28, 2004; [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

### **2. Zubr Comes Out In Support of Mikhail Marinich**

Protests in support of detained Mikhail Marinich, former minister and diplomat, was held on April 29 in Minsk in front of the building of the Committee of State Security (KGB). The organizer of the demonstration was Zubr. Two young men brought a large cardboard box with inscriptions "Secret Materials" and "X-files" to the KGB building. They came to the stairs of the main entrance of the KGB building, and dumped out its contents onto the ground.

The box was full of toilet paper, which symbolized the "secret materials" Marinich had allegedly

stolen. Toy guns were also there (Marinich is charged with storing illegal arms). Two Zubr activists unfurled a poster with the words: "Free Marinich!" and with the Zubr movement logo.

[text omitted]

According to the participants, they wanted to express protest against Mr. Marinich's arrest. They believe, for an agency which is to care for security of the Belarusian citizens, the KGB has finally turned into a repressive machine. [text revised by the Editor]

Source: Zubr; April 30, 2004; [www.zubr-belarus.com](http://www.zubr-belarus.com)

### **3. Belarusian Opposition Marks May Day and EU Enlargement**

On May 1, the Belarusian opposition celebrated Labor Day and the joining of the European Union by ten new states. In the official event that took place in the afternoon in the park of Yanka Kupala in Minsk, representatives of the *European Coalition Free Belarus* and political parties of the People's coalition 5+ appeared. Unlike the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus and government, the representatives of the opposition went to the rally with social slogans: "Stop prices growth!", "No to mass contracts!", "For decent life!". In addition, activists of the opposition held national and European flags.

Well-known politicians participated, including coordinators of the European coalition *Free Belarus* Mikhail Statkevich and Andrei Sannikov, leader of the United Civil Party Anatoly Lebedko, chairman of the Belarusian Party of Communists Sergei Kalyakin, leader of the Belarusian Labour Party Aleksand Bukhvostov and others.

During the rally dedicated to the Labor Day in the Yanka Kupala Park in Minsk, activists of youth organizations Zubr (Yulia Goryachko), Young Front (Dmitry Dashkevich), the Belarusian Freedom Party (Vasil Parkenkov) and Young Social Democrats (Pavel Gormash and Mikita Krasnov).

Young men holding a banner "Young Front" and flags of the European Union were detained by people. Dmitry Dashkevich was taken to the police department in Minsk, where a report have been drawn up against him as one of the organizers of the action "Chornobyl Way" on April 26. Dashkevich was detained. The court is to consider his case on May 3. Zubr activist Yuliya Goryachko was detained for carrying a national Belarusian flag. The young people were taken to Minsk's Central Police Department.

The actions organized by Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Narodnaya Gramada) were also held in a number of large Belarusian cities. In Gomel and Brest the BSDP (NH) activists took part in city demonstrations under party banners and flags of the European Union. During the demonstrations hundreds of balloons with flags of the European Union and BSDP flew into the sky. In Vitebsk and Grodno Social-Democrats took part in the unsanctioned demonstrations together with businessmen (small traders') organizations. During all the rallies the leaflets with information about the European Union were handed out. [text revised by the Editor]

Source: Charter 97; May 3, 2004; [www.charter97.org](http://www.charter97.org)

## **REGIONAL**

### **4. Belarus' KGB Detained Polish Diplomat**

Belarus said on Thursday it had detained a Polish diplomat whom it accused of spying.

"We have learned that the military attache of the Polish embassy in Minsk, Colonel Kazimierz Witaszczyk, was carrying out spy operations. The diplomat was detained on April 27 as he was

receiving material containing Belarusian state secrets," the Belarusian security service said in a statement.

"Timely intervention by the Belarusian KGB revealed the plans of a foreign intelligence service, brought these under control and prevented serious damage to Belarusian security," the security service, still known as the KGB, said.

The KGB said the Polish diplomat was trying to obtain information from an officer of Belarus's Defense Ministry. It gave no other details.

It was not immediately clear from the statement whether Witaszczyk was still being held. Polish embassy officials in Minsk were not immediately available for comment.

Western countries routinely accuse Belarus, a country of 10 million, of limiting democratic freedoms and staging crackdowns on opponents of President Aleksander Lukashenko.

The ex-Soviet state will border an enlarged European Union when Poland, Latvia and Lithuania join the EU later this week.

Prime Minister Sergei Sidorsky canceled a planned trip to Warsaw earlier in the day. The government press service said the visit was called off due to a change in his schedule and declined further comment.

*Source: Reuters; April 29; www.reuters.com*

## **5. Stepashin: Russia and Belarus...Rivals**

The Union state hasn't managed to realize a single serious program, announced Russian Audit Chamber Chairman Sergei Stepashin. "Not even one of four serious programs of the Union state have yet to be realized," he said. According to him, there presently remains the issue of "how effective in general it is to carry out these programs which are financed by the Union state government."

His speech also covered such programs as "diesel automobile production" and "Union television."

"We have analyzed the Union television program, and it seems to me that this is a timely issue, but unfortunately, instead of creating a 'Union television,' we began to compete for the TV product market and we are fighting each other over the domestic market," the Audit Chamber Chairman said. "We presented the matter of how to conduct an analysis of effective means in these programs," he added.

Stepashin said there are strategic programs which can affect the infrastructure of both countries, but, unfortunately, they are "for some reason not being implemented." He mentioned the construction of the Berlin-Moscow railway, which would have gone through Belarus. This program, Stepashin said, has the ability to attract additional investment into the two countries' infrastructure. [translated from the Russian by the Editor]

*Source: Strana.Ru; April 30, 2004; www.strana.ru*

## **6. Rusakevich: Necessary Conditions for Mass Media Development in Belarus**

All the conditions necessary for mass media development have been made in Belarus, said Belarusian Information Minister Vladimir Rusakevich in an interview with Interfax.

"The existing law on mass media provides the necessary conditions on the level of international standards for mass media information activities," stated Rusakevich. "Mass media in Belarus is

developing. This is the main indicator for the existence of a normal climate for mass media work,” he continued, having underscored that “if the situation in Belarus corresponded to the resolution recently passed by PACE this week, mass media wouldn’t have developed at such a tempo.”

“The PACE statements about the absence of independent media in Belarus is a cliché which has been used for ten years,” Rusakevich emphasized. “PACE will substitute questions of fundamental disrespect to the law and economic calculation with their understanding of human rights,” the minister stated.

Rusakevich reported that currently over 1,305 mass media outlets have been registered in Belarus, and four channels: NGTRK, Lad, STV and ONT, as well as 50 local and regional TV companies, 185 radio and TV programs. “Every month registration orders from among 10 mass media outlets come in to the Ministry, approximately the same number that get liquidated. As a rule, the failure of mass media to appear becomes the reason for the liquidation,” the Minister added. [text translated from the Russian by the Editor]

## **7. The Opposition Stands Under the Banner of May Day**

This weekend numerous, albeit modest, demonstrations in honor of Labor Day will be held in Belarus. This year the Federation of Belarusian Trade Unions will coincide May Day with celebration of the 100-year old trade union movement in our country.

The Federation’s main celebration event will take place in Yanka Kupala Park in Minsk. They will be there for half a day, reports the FBTU press service: “a commemorative rally, and then from 1 p.m. a concert featuring Russian and Belarusian stars of the stage—Natasha Korolyova, Inna Afanasyeva, Larisa Gribaleva, Aleksei Khlystov, Kirill Sluka, the group “Stocks” and others. Around 10,000 people plan to participate.”

Authorities limited the May Day celebrations to the park, although trade unions were counting on a more public and noisier place, such as the October Square. In the last few years government officials have refrained from a large May 1 holiday, as official meetings and demonstrations have been connected with opposition figures and their slogans and flags, mostly social-democrats. It is understandable that the uninvited guests are ruining the holiday for responsible comrades.

Furthermore, this year on May Day the trade union federation is uniting nearly all of the opposition. Having edged its way in the crowd of “loyal” union members, gathered here in a voluntarily coerced order, the opposition could transform this meeting into its own act of protest under economic and political slogans.

The national coalition Five Plus announced its decision to participate in the official May Day celebration. Moreover, opposition demonstrators will go to the Victory Square, where a gathering of participants has been planned at 11 a.m. The Belarusian Communist Party, the Belarusian Labor Party, and independent trade unions have sent a request for this May Day celebration format.

According to one of the Five Plus leaders Anatoly Lebedko, the coalition plans to participate in the celebration under the its platform “five steps to a better life.” In an interview with Belarusian News Anatoly Lebedko said that the opposition has “peaceful plans for May Day, considering that many members of our coalition are trade union members. We simply want to use the opportunity to conduct a legal street demonstration. We hope that they will not catch us and come to kick us out of the park.”

In addition the trade union federation is uniting with the European Coalition Free Belarus. According to one of its leaders Nikolai Statkevich, on May Day the “Europeans” will require repeals of the contractual hiring system and elimination of increasing tariffs on housing services,

as well as promote the integration of Belarus into the European Union. This year May Day coincides with the expansion of the EU. [translated from the Russian by the Editor]

*Source: Kirill Poznyak, BelaPan; April 29, 2004; www.naviny.ru*

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **8. European Union Ambassadors Pay Visit to *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta***

On Monday, May 3, diplomatic mission heads from European Union member states stationed in Minsk (France, Ireland, U.K., Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Sweden, and Estonia), together with the U.S. Embassy, paid a visit to the editorial office of the *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta* [Belarusian Business News].

The visit, which symbolically took place on World Press Freedom Day, was meant to draw the attention of their government and public opinion to this fundamental aspect in Belarusian civil life. Together with the editorial office coworkers, the delegates paid a moment of silence for journalists around the world who have suffered for carrying out their journalistic duty.

The European Union ambassadors used the occasion to express to Belarusian journalists, who work in publications and are subject to pressure, their respect for their professionalism and bravery.

*Source: BelaPan; May 3, 2004; www.naviny.by*

### **9. Russian Parliamentarian: Obstruction of Belarus by PACE will Not Lead to Anything Good**

The resolutions on Belarus, adopted Wednesday at the plenary meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), leads the situation into a blind alley, said Konstantin Kosachev, the head of the Russian delegation in the PACE and chairman of the State Duma's committee for international affairs.

"As a matter of fact, this is a complete boycott of Belarus which leads the situation in a blind alley and only provokes a retaliatory tough reaction on the part of the Belarusian authorities and creates new problems," Konstantin Kosachev said.

According to him, the Russian delegation tried to remove the clause from the resolution which in fact obstructs the possibility of a dialogue with Belarus. However, the majority of the session participants did not support the proposal.

"We believe that this position is not correct. We are convinced that the task of the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly is not to use repressions and to punish some or other countries but to help these states in bringing their legislations and the law enforcement practice to conformity with the norms of the Council of Europe," Kosachev said.

According to him, today "the Belarusian side has been refused the possibility of giving explanations with regard to the arisen situation. As a result of this, "the sentiments in the PACE are being formed unilaterally, without the account of all the circumstances of the matter." "From our point of view, this is absolutely incorrect," Kosychev underscored.

In its resolution the PACE demanded that Belarus should conduct an independent investigation into the cases of disappearance of people and correct its policy with regard to the mass media. Apart from that, the PACE underscored that it considered inexpedient the presence, including unofficial, of the Belarusian parliamentarians at the PACE session.

*Source: RIA Novosti; April 28, 2004; www.rian.ru*

## **10. Katsyian Accuses PACE of “Democratic Fascism”**

Sergei Katsyian, Deputy Chairman of the International Commission of the Belarusian Parliament, in his interview with *BelaPan* called the recommendations adopted by the PACE a manifestation of “democratic fascism”.

“If Western countries want to prove that they are really democratic, first they are to institute legal proceedings against Javier Solana (former Secretary General of NATO), Madeleine Albright (Ex-US Secretary of State), Clinton (former US President) and others, who unleashed war in Yugoslavia”, said the parliamentarian.

Katsyian does not see any danger for Belarus from adoption of such resolutions. “Decisions of this kind have been adopted many a time, and they were adopted under the pressure of the USA”, he said. According to him, West European parliamentarians “are subordinate to the USA” and “rubber-stamp these resolutions from the USA dictation”.

*Source: Charter 97; April 29, 2004; www.charter97.org*

## **HUMAN RIGHTS & INDEPENDENT MEDIA**

### **11. Lukashenko Condemns External Intrusion in Trade Union Affairs**

Interference of international trade union organizations with the activities of Belarusian trade unions is impermissible, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said.

“We cannot allow external forces to interfere with trade union affairs of an independent democracy, make their judgments and dictate their will with the blessing of unscrupulous and irresponsible people,” Lukashenko said at a Friday meeting marking 100th anniversary of the Belarusian trade union movement.

“The role of trade unions in Belarus is bigger than in any democracy,” and some leaders of international organizations may dislike that, Lukashenko said.

Trade unions are a pillar of the Belarusian society together with local councils, youth, women and veteran organizations, the president said. He pledged support to trade unions, which cooperated with the government and other power bodies in the improvement of living standards. “This is the greatest achievement of which not a single trade union movement or a trade union organization of the world can boast,” the president said.

*Source: Itar-Tass; April 30, 2004; www.tass.ru/404.html*

### **12. Amnesty Int’l: Stop Harassing Independent Trade Unions and Their Activists**

Independent trade unions and their activists in Belarus are subject to a deliberate pattern of obstruction, harassment and intimidation by the authorities in their attempt to ultimately silence them, Amnesty International said today.

“Independent trade unions struggle to survive in a climate in which the authorities are stifling their activities by curtailing their rights to freedom of assembly and expression. In this they share the fate of all human rights defenders in the country,” said Amnesty International.

The independent trade union movement in Belarus is coming under increasing pressure to conform with government policies - its members are under constant harassment, while its unions struggle to survive in an atmosphere where a disturbing number of non-governmental

organizations have been closed on the basis of controversial legislation and regulations, widely considered as restrictive, by a judiciary whose independence has been repeatedly called into question by the international community.

There is compelling evidence that the right of association is violated in Belarus on a regular basis. The Belarusian and international trade union movement have highlighted the following violations of core conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO):

Trade unions have been subjected to a complicated bureaucratic system of registration; The Belarusian authorities have interfered in the internal affairs of the Belarusian trade union movement by imposing overly restrictive legislation on international trade union funding, deliberately manipulating trade union finances and interfering in trade union elections; Independent trade unions have been subjected to discrimination - independent trade union leaders have reportedly been dismissed from their positions, while trade union members have been pressurized to leave their trade unions.

Trade union leaders are particular targets for harassment, culminating at the end of 2003 in short-term prison sentences for a number of activists whom Amnesty International considered to be prisoners of conscience:

On 30 October 2003 the chair of the Belarusian Automobile and Agricultural Machinery Workers' Union, Alyaksandr Bukhvostov, was detained by police in the centre of the capital Minsk for staging a peaceful protest action against the government's alleged interference in the trade union's internal affairs. It was alleged that the Ministry of Industry had ordered enterprise managers to exert pressure on the local trade union structures in order to force them to leave the union and affiliate with a government-sponsored trade union. Alyaksandr Bukhvostov organized the picket, which he saw as the only remaining option to protest against these alleged actions. On 30 October 2003 a court in Minsk sentenced him in a closed hearing to 10 days' imprisonment for staging an unsanctioned demonstration.

On 18 September a court in Minsk sentenced the President of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions, Alyaksandr Yaroshuk, to 10 days' imprisonment for contempt of court. The alleged offence related to an article which Alyaksandr Yaroshuk had written in the independent newspaper, *Narodnaya Volya*, on 21 August 2003, criticizing the decision of the Belarusian Supreme Court to close down the Trade Union of Air Traffic Controllers of Belarus.

Belarus is party to the two core Conventions of the ILO guaranteeing freedom of association - Conventions No. 87 and No. 89. The government is also party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both of which provide for the right to freedom of association. Fundamental human rights and freedoms are guaranteed in its constitution. However, there is a gaping chasm between the government's stated commitment to protecting the rights of workers and the reality.

These gross violations of basic human rights have prompted international organizations which promote and defend trade union rights to launch their own investigations. In November 2003 the ILO established a Commission of Inquiry into ongoing violations of freedom of association. A similar step was taken by the European Commission in January 2004, when it opened an investigation into violations of core labour standards in Belarus. Furthermore, the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) at its 60th Session in Geneva (15 March - 23 April 2004) adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in Belarus in which it calls on the government to cease harassment of trade unions and established a Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus.

Amnesty International appeals to the Belarus government to:

Ensure that trade union activists will not be imprisoned or harassed by the police simply for their political beliefs and for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of assembly;

Stop the deliberate pattern of obstruction, harassment and intimidation of trade union activists;  
Immediately review laws, regulations and administrative practices related to the registration and activities of independent trade unions in order that their establishment and free operation be facilitated in accordance with ILO obligations;  
Abide by its obligations under the ILO conventions and the international treaties to which it is party;

Comply with ILO Commission of Inquiry and implement ILO recommendations;  
Ensure full and prompt implementation of the UNCHR's resolution and cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur.

Source: Amnesty International; May 1, 2004; [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

### **13. Belarusian Association of Journalists: Statement on World Press Freedom Day**

Belarus has remained the last country on the map of Europe where the state has effectively established monopoly on mass media. Belarusian authorities consistently increase their pressure on democratic editions. The results of media monitoring carried out by the Belarusian Association of Journalists show that the very existence of free press in Belarus is currently in danger. From the beginning of 2004 the Ministry of information has stopped publication of non-state editions on five occasions, including newspapers *Zgoda*, *Vecherny Stolín* and even such non-political editions as *Kriminalnoye Obozrenie*, *Versiya* and *Detektivnaya Gazeta*. The problems with printing and distribution of independent newspapers are getting more and more serious. Some of the newspapers, including *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*, *Den* and *Salidarnast* had to "emigrate" and are currently printed in Russia. State press distribution monopolies *Belpochta* and *Belsoyuzpechat* refuse to distribute *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta* and a number of other editions. Simultaneously, obstacles for organization of the alternative system of distribution are being created.

The practice of unjustified confiscation of printruns of mass-media critical of the authorities is becoming commonplace. The situation with the newspaper *Den* is especially alarming. On April 7, 2004 police of Iyve district (Grodno region) confiscated the whole printrun of the eleventh issue of *Den* on the way from Russia. The edition is exposed to huge pressure on the part of the Public Prosecutor Office, KGB and tax bodies.

The arsenal of methods of economic pressure on democratic press is being constantly updated. For instance, referring to its exclusive right on distribution of TV listings in mass-media, Belarus' cable agency (BelTA) founded by the Administration of the President has demanded from certain editions the payment in the amount of about 2,500 thousand US dollars per month.

The practice of filing legal suits against independent newspapers demanding huge amounts of money continues to be used regularly. The largest independent newspaper *Narodnaya Volya* is currently defending its interests in two court hearings.

The destiny of the colleague of ours, BAJ member Dmitry Zavadsky, who has disappeared in July 2000 remains unknown. On March 31, 2004 the Office of the Public Prosecutor of Belarus once again suspended investigation into the criminal case on his abduction.

On April 28, 2004 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted two special resolutions condemning disappearances of people, and the practice of discrimination of mass-media in Belarus. The participants of the meeting support the statements of the European Parliamentarians.

On the Press Freedom Day we address the Belarusian authorities with the requirement to be guided in its relations with media by the norms of the Constitution, the Law on press and other

mass media and universal norms of international Law. We also demand to stop unjustified prosecution of independent media and journalists.

*Source: Belarusian Association of Journalists; May 3, 2004; www.baj.ru*

#### **14. US Embassy: Commemorating World Press Freedom Day**

The statement was adopted by the participants of the meeting of Belarusian journalists on the World Press Freedom day on May 3, 2004.

Today, we join the rest of the world in commemorating May 3 as World Press Freedom Day. It is a day the United Nations General Assembly established in 1993 for the world's peoples to recognize the fundamental principles of press freedom.

Americans have long revered freedom of the press from our earliest days as a nation. The United States Constitution enshrines this freedom in its first Amendment, and it is one of the core values of American culture. The world's democratic communities recognize a free, pluralistic and independent press is an essential component of any society striving to be democratic. Without access to free, objective, independent information and the freedom to express different views, societies are not able to make free and fair decisions about their futures. History has shown such freedom is a key guarantor of social and political stability in societies.

Today we also wish to pay tribute to the many professional journalists who serve the vital function of providing information and views to their societies and the world. These brave men and women often face great hardship, even death, as they seek to inform us of the truth. We acknowledge the sacrifice and honor the professionalism and bravery of the hundreds of journalists who have lost their lives or been imprisoned or repressed as they sought to perform their journalistic duties. We call on all journalists to observe their professional credo of seeking truth, just as we call on all governments and societies to respect the right of journalists to express their views freely and openly.

Here in Belarus, press freedom is a vital element of this nation's emerging democracy. A strong, robust, free and professional press is a fundamental factor for stability and democratic growth in Belarus as it is in the United States of America and around the world. On this day, we salute the corps of journalists, editors and technicians in Belarus who strive to bring to the Belarusian people independent news, commentary and information. We respect their integrity. We honor their dead. We support all Belarusians who work to realize, maintain and develop press freedom in Belarus.

*Source: U.S. Embassy in Minsk; May 3, 2004; minsk.usembassy.gov*

#### **15. Belarusian Ambassador's Statement at OSCE Anti-Semitism Conference (excerpt)**

Mr. Chairman,

The problem of anti-Semitism cannot be solved at the national level unless our actions to this end are co-ordinated at the international level. Today, virtually open borders exist between all European countries. A rise in anti-Semitism, racism or xenophobia in one country or group of countries spreads like a cancerous growth throughout all of Europe. In a number of cases, the Internet and other media are creating a favourable breeding ground for this phenomenon. It is our duty to counter this expansion.

With that in mind, we are somewhat concerned as regards the consolidation of efforts to this end at the international level.

At the 60<sup>th</sup> meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Belarus and the Russian Federation proposed a resolution drawing the international community's attention to the problem of the resurgence and spread of neo-Nazism, neofacism and aggressive nationalism, which serve as a breeding ground for anti-Semitism as well.

The resolution was adopted with the support of the majority of the members of the Commission. To our surprise, European Union countries, the United States of America and Japan voted against the resolution. What is the conclusion to be drawn from this by neo-Nazi and neofascist elements and the other such scum against whom this resolution was directed?

In conclusion, we should like to reiterate that the problem of anti-Semitism remains a challenge to the entire civilized world. If it is to be effectively countered, we need not only joint actions by the governments and civil society of the participating States but also the pooling and co-ordination of efforts at the international level.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

*Source: OSCE, Statement by Belarus; April 28, 2004; [www.osce.org/events/conferences/antisemitism2004/](http://www.osce.org/events/conferences/antisemitism2004/)*

## **BUSINESS**

### **16. Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia Set to Build Oil Transport Corridor**

Belarus, Ukraine and Latvia are working over versions of the organization of the Odessa-Brody-Mozyr-Polotsk-Ventspils oil transport corridor with a capacity to carry at least 10 million of tons of oil a year.

Belarussian state concern Belneftehim, Latvian oil transport operator LatRosTrans, the Latvian communications ministry, Ukratransneft company and Kiev-based oil transport institute signed a memo of intent in Minsk on April 26, sources close to the negotiations told the *PRIME-TASS* economic news agency.

The intention is to build a stretch of the oil pipeline that will connect the Ukrainian Odessa-Brody pipeline to the Belarusian major oil pipelines.

The parties agreed that the oil transport institute would have a preliminary version of the feasibility study for the organization of oil pumping through the joint pipeline system before May 20, 2004.

LatRosTrans, for its part, will prepare in conjunction with other participants project financing variants, including investments from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

"In order to expedite project implementation, the Ukrainian side is due to draft the proposals for the attraction of international organizations, the European Commission among them, to participate in the project," the source said.

"The project provides Belarus with the possibility to increase deliveries of crude oil to its oil refineries, as well as with additional oil transit via its territory," the source said.

The Latvian side has shown considerable interest in the project, especially since the Ventspils port capacities are currently under loaded since Russia's Transneft (TRNF) Company refused to use the capacities for Russian exports.

*Source: BelaPan; May 1, 2004; [www.naviny.by](http://www.naviny.by)*

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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](http://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. To send letters to the Editor or to subscribe/unsubscribe please contact Nate Young at: [cis@ilhr.org](mailto:cis@ilhr.org).

For current and back issues, list of events, and more information about the League's advocacy activities in Belarus, please visit the Belarus Update website at: [www.belarusupdate.org](http://www.belarusupdate.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 Lukashenko's wholesale assault on human rights and the rule of law in Belarus.

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