

April 8-14, 2005

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International League for Human Rights

## Table of Contents

### I. Domestic

1. Belarus Restoring Part of Defence Complex, Called Stalin Line (*Itar-Tass*)
2. Belarus Joins UN Tourism Agency (*UN News Centre*)
3. Belarus: Taxi Drivers' Hunger Strike Continues (*RFE/RL*)
4. Poll Says Belarusians See No Match for Lukashenka in 2006 (*RFE/RL*)
5. 10 Years Ago Opposition Deputies Were Beaten In Belarusian Parliament (*Charter97*)

### II. Regional

6. Lukashenko: Past Meeting with Putin is Most Resultful (*RiaNovosti*)
7. Secret Alcohol Pipeline Discovered on Belarus-Lithuania Border (*MosNews*)
8. Lukashenko Makes a Bargain with Gazprom (*Kommersant*)

### III. International

9. U.N. Demands Belarus Agree to Rights Probe (*Reuters*)
10. The League Welcomes U.N. Commission on Human Rights Decision (*ILHR*)
11. Excerpts from the Press Release of the United Nations Office in Geneva (*UNOG*)
12. Huge Aid Convoy Leaves for Belarus (*Ireland On-Line*)

### IV. Human Rights & Independent Media

13. Belarus Prosecutor Reopens Probe Into Cameraman's Disappearance (*RFE/RL*)
14. Independent Belarusian Pollster Faces Possible Closure (*RFE/RL*)
15. Private Belarusian Newspaper, Editor Hit with Damages for Libel (*RFE/RL*)

### V. Business

16. Belarus's GDP grows 9.6% in Q1 (*Interfax*)

## DOMESTIC

### 1. Belarus Restoring Part of Defence Complex, Called Stalin Line

Belarus started restoring a small part of the famous defensive complex, called "the Stalin Line" by local people and Western historians.

"This will be a monument to all hero Red Army men of tragic June 1941 and all Soviet army engineers who began to work for the Victory long before the start of the Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945," chairman of the Belarusian charity fund Afghanistan Memory Alexander Metla who was among initiators for implementing the project, told Tass on Monday.

"The Stalin Line' had been built in the 1930s along the 'old border' of the Soviet Union when, for instance, Minsk had been virtually a border city. Around 20 fortified areas which included around 4,000 pillboxes, were being built from the Barents to the Black seas. Four powerful fortified areas – Polotsk, Minsk, Slutsk and Mozyr – were erected in Belarus alone.

When Western Belarus and Western Ukraine acceded to the Soviet Union in 1939, "the Stalin Line" was mothballed. However, some defensive installations played their role in combat operations in June 1941. For instance the Nazi tank armada, rolling towards Moscow, ran into fierce resistance precisely near Minsk for the first time.

“Every pill-box there turned into sort of a small Brest Fortress, drawing great enemy forces, containing their advance for several hours in some places and for several days in other places,” Metla noted.

The historical and cultural complex “Stalin Line” is being created near Minsk, in the area of Zaslavl city where troops of the Minsk fortified area fought to the last soldier. Several firing emplacements are being restored over an area of nearly 40 hectares, artillery battery will be equipped and communication trenches will be driven.

In future, it is planned to put up armoured turrets, other defensive fortifications and to restore a front-line fording bridge. Work is being conducted by engineer troops of the Defence Ministry, Interior and border troops, the Ministry for Emergencies as well as civil organizations.

In Metla’s words, “work is going on throughout the day. We seek to do our utmost so that the first stage of the complex would be opened on May 9, the 60th anniversary of the Great Victory”.

Each person, driving along the highway from the city of Molodechno to Minsk, can see even now several powerful pill-boxes not far from the highway. Spots that remain from blasts of Nazi shells are clearly seen on one of them. Next to the pillboxes, one can see a place where a memorial slab will be put up several days later.

All motorists decelerate their speed at that place. Some of them hoot long in memory of soldiers who had remained there for good, fulfilling their duty up to the end.

*Source: Itar-Tass; April 11, 2005; www.itar-tass.com*

## **2. Belarus Joins UN Tourism Agency**

Belarus has formally joined the World Tourism Organization (WTO), which the United Nations specialized agency says will allow the country to gain many benefits for its tourism industry. The Parliament of Belarus unanimously ratified accession of the country to the WTO last Thursday, which will increase the number of Member States to 146. The WTO Commission for Europe, which is the broader forum on tourism policy at the European level, will now have 41 Member States.

As the first representative of an international organization speaking at the Parliament, WTO Regional Representative for Europe Luigi Cabrini hailed this decision, saying that, “On the one hand our Organization will be a source of technical and strategic tools for the sound development of the tourism industry, and on the other Belarus will benefit from an enhanced visibility as an attractive tourist destination.”

*Source: UN News Centre; April 11, 2005; www.un.org*

## **3. Belarus: Taxi Drivers' Hunger Strike Continues**

The manager of a small taxi company in Vaukavysk, Hrodna Oblast, entered the 25th day of a hunger strike on 8 April.

Some 40 other people, including taxi drivers employed by Autukhovich, have subsequently joined his strike.

Mikalay Autukhovich is conducting the strike to contest the local authorities' demand that he pay a fine of some 2.1 billion Belarusian rubles (nearly \$1 million) for allegedly not possessing a license to provide taxi services and not paying taxes, RFE/RL's Belarus Service reported.

Autukhovich has had problems with local tax inspectors for several years. He previously went on hunger strike in October 2003, when the Vaukavysk authorities seized a dozen of his taxis, accusing him of tax evasion. This time he is charged, in addition to tax evasion, of employing taxi drivers from a firm that does not possess a license to provide taxi services. The case has its legal intricacies.

According to a presidential decree on private entrepreneurship, a single entrepreneur has the right to employ no more than three workers. Autukhovich, who has a license to provide taxi services, actually employs 22 drivers. To avoid violating the said decree, he leases 19 drivers under an agreement from the Vaukavysk-based Nikotrans firm owned by his wife. This firm is not licensed for taxi services. While lawyers have said that Autukhovich's business scheme is flawless from a legal point of view, local authorities think otherwise.

Doctor Iosif Kharuk, who examined Autukhovich on 7 April, told RFE/RL that Autukhovich's condition is serious -- due to the hunger strike, the temperature of his body has fallen to 35.7 degrees Celsius, and his blood pressure has significantly lowered. According to the doctor, there is a threat that in the coming days the hunger strike may impair the functions of Autukhovich's liver, kidney, and brain.

Autukhovich, who is an Afghan war veteran, has been joined in his protest not only by his employees but also former brothers-in-arms from the Afghan war who are not related to his business activity.

*Source; Jan Maksymiuk; RFE/RL; April 8, 2005; www.rferl.org*

#### **4. Poll Says Belarusians See No Match for Lukashenka in 2006**

A survey conducted by the Minsk-based Independent Institute for Socioeconomic and Political Studies (NISEPI) in March found that 46.7 percent of respondents would vote for President Alyaksandr Lukashenka in a presidential election, Belapan reported on 8 April. Two top-ranking opposition politicians, United Civic Party leader Anatol Lyabedzka and former dissident lawmaker Valery Fralou, trailed far behind Lukashenka with 1.4 percent backing each. Nearly 70 percent of Belarusians polled by NISEPI were unable to name a politician who could defeat Lukashenka in the 2006 presidential election.

*Source; RFE/RL; April 14, 2005; www.rferl.org*

#### **5. 10 Years Ago Opposition Deputies Were Beaten In Belarusian Parliament**

10 years ago Lukashenka was an initiator of referendum. He offered to disestablish the white-red-white flag and the national emblem "Pahonya" as national symbols, to give the Russian language the status of a state language, and to support the course of economic integration with Russia, and the right of the president to disband the Supreme Soviet. On April 9 the deputies of the oppositional Belarusian Popular Front have carried out a meeting in front of the building of the Supreme Soviet in Karl Marx Street. They were encircled by the police detachments. On the night of April 11th/12th 1995 the deputies of the oppositional BPF, who went on hunger strike protesting against the referendum were beaten in the Oval Hall of the Parliament by law-enforcers of an unknown special unit in black masks. The names of the deputies who were present there: Mikalay Aksamit, Syarhei Antonchyk, Liavon Barshcheuski, Yuras Belenki, Ihar Hermyanchuk, Valyantsin Holubeu, Uladzimer Zablotski, Barys Hunter, Lyavon Dzejka, Lyavontsij Zdanevich, Mikalay Kryzhanouski, Mikola Markevich, Vital Malashka, Syarhei Navumchyk, Zyanon Paznyak, Syarhei Papkou, Pyotra Sadouski, Aleh Trusau and Alyaksandr Shut. In several hours the majority of the deputies of the Supreme Soviet voted for the proposal of

Lukashenka about announcing a referendum.

All the events of the night of April 11th/12th 1995 were put on tape by the special services. On the next day after the beating, at a press conference Alyaksandr Lukashenka publicly promised to demonstrate the film completely, without any outtakes, on Belarusian TV. But nobody has watched it. Allegedly the film has disappeared somewhere in special services' archives.

It is no surprise that Lukashenka has not fulfilled his promise, the head of the special projects department of the Russian TV channel ORT Pavel Sheremet believes:

"There is nothing sensational or strange in it. It is clear that the tape had existed, but it was destroyed. Similarly, the recordings of assassinations of Hanchar, Zakharka, Zavadski existed, and some of the KGB investigators saw them, and later these films disappeared also. It is impossible to find out the truth with the current regime in power, but after the change of the regime, everything would be revealed soon," the reporter told to Radio Svaboda.

*Source: Charter9 97; April 12, 2005; www.charter97.org*

## **REGIONAL**

### **6. Lukashenko: Past Meeting with Putin is Most Resultful**

The talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin "were very well-meaning, without reproaches to each other, positive", Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has said on Friday. He was summing up results of the meeting in Sochi on April 4.

"It was one of the most effective meetings held in correspondence with the guidelines of our integration", Lukashenko said.

He noted that, in preparing the meeting, "the right concept had been found", which in great measure determined the success of the talks.

The Belarusian leader made special note of the economic component in the talks. "Belarus is second in trade with the Russian Federation, actually on a par with Germany. The volume of bilateral trade has exceeded 17 billion dollars' worth, increasing by over 40 percent over the past year", the Belarusian leader said.

Moscow is a case apart in the economic contacts between the two countries, Lukashenko said. The mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, has done everything necessary for the development of mutually beneficial trade with Belarus, Lukashenko added.

One of the key results of the Sochi meeting he called agreement on preserving the natural gas tariffs for Belarus in 2006 at the 2005 level. "For our part, our republic will preserve maximally agreeable conditions for the further development and buildup of Russian gas transportation via Belarus", Lukashenko said.

He added that "the Belarusian side is ready to grant Gazprom the required preferences for the development of the gas transport infrastructure in the territory of our republic". Herein lies obvious mutual benefit for both Russians and Belarusians.

The Belarusian government is ready to interact with Gazprom in building the second thread of the Yamal-Europe gas pipeline, Lukashenko said.

*Source: RiaNovosti; April 8, 2005; www.rian.ru*

## 7. Secret Alcohol Pipeline Discovered on Belarus-Lithuania Border

Border guards uncovered a pipe meant to pump alcohol from Belarus to Lithuania on the border between the two countries, Interfax reported on Monday. This is the fifth pipe of its kind discovered since the Baltic countries joined the European Union.

The plastic 150-meter long pipe ran under the Narkunka River across the border between Belarus and Lithuania, but was never used. An investigation is in progress to find its owner.

This is in fact the fifth and by far not the longest pipe intended to provide the Baltic nation with cheap alcohol from neighboring countries. The increase in alcohol smuggling followed the Baltic countries' admission to the European Union that resulted in a sharp rise in prices for legitimate alcohol. The longest pipe of 3 kilometers was reported in December 2004.

*Source: MosNews; April 11, 2005; www.mosnews.com*

## 8. Lukashenko Makes a Bargain with Gazprom

Russia's gas monopoly Gazprom and Belarus Beltransgaz have agreed on the long-term land lease for the Belarus 575-km portion of Yamal-Europe gas main. Confronted by the lack of the above agreement, Gazprom couldn't construct the required four gas compressor stations in Belarus and was unable to attain project capacity of the pipeline.

From 900-km long Yamal-Europe gas main that runs from Russian Torzhok to the Belarus-Polish border, Belarus covers 575 km. The pipes were laid down in April 2003 and Gazprom announced completion of construction of the linear portion of Yamal-Europe pipeline in Belarus. The cost was \$1.2 billion. Gazprom exported 14 bcm of gas via the pipeline in 2003 and widened the shipment to 23 bcm next year. Still, it couldn't reach the 33-bcm project capacity without constructing Krupskaya, Slonimskaya, Orshanskaya and Minskaya gas compressor stations, as only Nesvizhskaya station has been put in operation to-date.

The project gained momentum on April 4, 2005, when President of Russia Vladimir Putin and his Belarus counterpart Alexander Lukashenko announced in Bocharov Ruchey residency they finally agreed on Yamal-Europe gas main. This statement was confirmed yesterday, when Bogdan Budzulyak, member of Gazprom's management committee, said at the international conference in Moscow that "construction of Slonimskaya and Krupskaya gas compressor stations had been put off because we had no sanction for it. The sanction was obtained a few days ago and we will commission these stations in October." *Kommersant* found out that Budzulyak meant two compressor stations with the capacity of 80-MW each and the overall project value of around \$120 million.

Gazprom's press service affirmed Belarus consent to seal the long-term land lease for Yamal-Europe main and grant the most favored nation treatment for construction of gas compressor stations. Press release of the gas monopoly dedicated to the meeting of Gazprom CEO Alexey Miller with Beltransgaz GD Dmitry Kazakov was issued yesterday.

Until very recently, Lukashenko has been insisting that the VAT on the cost of such stations' equipment should be paid to Belarus (\$25 million, according to data available to *Kommersant*), reiterating that he had granted \$200 million in tax benefits to Gazprom for pipeline construction. Belarus president gave in a few days ago, when he actually authorized the duty-free import of the station's equipment, provided 2006 gas prices for Belarus will remain in line with this year, i.e. at \$46.67/1,000 cub. m. (less VAT). In its turn, Gazprom has officially confirmed that 2005 parameters used in gas trading will Belarus will survive for the year 2006.

Source: *Kommersant*; April 13, 2005; [www.kommersant.com](http://www.kommersant.com)

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **9. U.N. Demands Belarus Agree to Rights Probe**

The United Nations' top human rights body pressed Belarus on Thursday to agree to a visit from a special U.N. investigator to report on numerous allegations of violations.

The Geneva-based Commission on Human Rights expressed "deep concern" that senior government officials had been implicated in the 1999 disappearances of three political opponents and a journalist in 2000.

It called for the full and impartial investigation of "all cases of forced disappearance, summary execution and torture," and that all perpetrators be brought before independent tribunals.

By a vote of 23 for to 16 against, with 14 abstentions, the commission agreed to renew the mandate of its special envoy for Belarus -- who the government has so far refused to let visit -- for a further year.

It also urged the government of President Alexander Lukashenko to accept visits from special U.N. investigators on torture, disappearances and extra-judicial executions, amongst others.

The resolution, which was proposed by the European Union, was backed by the United States and Ukraine. China and Russia were amongst commission members opposing it.

Source: *Reuters*; April 14, 2005; [www.alertnet.org](http://www.alertnet.org)

### **10. The League Welcomes U.N. Commission on Human Rights Decision**

#### **U.N. Commission on Human Rights Passes Resolution on Belarus, Extends Mandate of Special Rapporteur**

##### ***NEWS ALERT***

##### ***For Immediate Release***

Geneva, April 14, 2004 – The International League for Human Rights, a New York-based international non-governmental organization with special consultative status at U.N. ECOSOC, welcomes yesterday's decision by the U.N. Commission on Human Rights to adopt a resolution criticizing the deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus.

The U.N. Commission on Human Rights resolution E/CN.4/2005/L.32 was adopted on April 14, 2005, under agenda item 9 during the 61st annual session of the Commission by a vote of 23 in favor, 16 opposed, with 14 abstentions.

The Commission also voted to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus for another year.

In particular, the resolution expressed deep concern that senior Belarusian government officials had been implicated in the disappearance and possible summary execution of three political opponents and a journalist, as well as in the continuing cover-up. The resolution urged the Belarusian government to ensure that all necessary measures were taken to investigate fully and

impartially all cases of forced disappearances, summary execution and torture and that alleged perpetrators were brought to justice before an independent tribunal.

Furthermore, in the resolution the Commission called on the Belarusian government to cease harassment of non-governmental organizations, political parties, trade unions, independent media, educational institutions, religious organizations and democracy and human rights activists.

The government of Belarus was also urged to bring the electoral process and legislative framework, including freedom of expression, in line with international standards. It was also urged to establish an ongoing dialogue with the Special Rapporteur as well as the Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on Freedom of the Media.

The Commission insisted that the government of Belarus cooperate fully with all mechanisms of the Commission, including by extending invitations to the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights defenders, as well as the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

The League calls on the government of Belarus to comply fully with the full terms and conditions set out by the U.N. Commission on Human Rights resolution adopted on April 14, 2005, to extend prompt invitations to the Commission's Special Rapporteurs named in the resolution, and to uphold international norms on human rights.

## **11. EXCERPTS FROM THE PRESS RELEASE OF THE U.N. OFFICE IN GENEVA**

### **COMMISSION ADOPTS SIX TEXTS ON VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS AROUND THE WORLD**

*Also Adopts Seven Resolutions on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights  
14 April 2005*

The Commission on Human Rights this afternoon adopted five resolutions and one decision on the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world, including on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba, and Belarus.

...

On the situation of human rights in Belarus, the Commission adopted a resolution by a roll-call vote of 23 in favour to 16 against, with 14 abstentions, in which it expressed deep concern that senior officials of the Government of Belarus had been implicated in the enforced disappearance and/or summary execution of three political opponents and a journalist. It urged the Government of Belarus to ensure that all necessary measures were taken to investigate fully and impartially all cases of forced disappearance, summary execution and torture and that alleged perpetrators were brought to justice before an independent tribunal. The Commission decided to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for a further year.

Belarus said the resolution was nothing more but another attempt to impose on the international community the distorted opinion about Belarus in order to justify the desire of the co-sponsors to interfere in the domestic affairs of a sovereign State. The real situation in Belarus and the practical steps by its Government had repeatedly demonstrated that the accusations targeting the country were ill-founded.

The Russian Federation proposed a no-action motion on the resolution on Belarus which was rejected. China, Cuba, and the Netherlands addressed the Commission on the resolution on Belarus.

...

In a resolution (E/CN.4/2005/L.32) on the situation of human rights in Belarus, adopted by a roll-call vote of 23 in favour to 16 against, with 14 abstentions, the Commission expressed deep concern that senior officials of the Government of Belarus had been implicated in the enforced disappearance and/or summary execution of three political opponents of the incumbent authorities in 1999 and of a journalist in 2000 and in the continuing investigatory cover-up; at the findings of the final report of the Election Observation Mission of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe of 9 December 2004, which stated that the parliamentary elections of 17 October 2004 in Belarus fell significantly short of commitments under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, that the referendum of 17 October 2004 to eliminate term limits on the presidency took place with unrestrained Government bias in favour of the referendum, and that the Belarusian authorities failed to create the conditions to ensure that the will of the people served as the basis of the authority of government.

The Commission urged the Government of Belarus to dismiss or suspend from their duties law enforcement officers and public officials implicated in forced disappearances and/or summary executions, pending an independent, credible and full investigation of those cases, and to hold the perpetrators promptly accountable; to ensure that all necessary measures were taken to investigate fully and impartially all cases of forced disappearance, summary execution and torture and that alleged perpetrators were brought to justice before an independent tribunal and, if found guilty, punished in a manner consistent with the international human rights obligations of Belarus; to cease harassment of non-governmental organizations, political parties, trade unions, independent media, educational institutions, religious organizations and democracy and human rights activists; and to increase its efforts to combat human trafficking and to protect the victims of human trafficking, in particular women being trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. The Commission also decided to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for a further year.

The result of the vote was as follow:

In favour (23): Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Paraguay, Peru, Republic of Korea, Romania, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States.

Against (16): Armenia, China, Congo, Cuba, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

Abstentions (14): Argentina, Bhutan, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Guinea, Honduras, Mauritania, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Togo.

Before the vote on the resolution, the Commission rejected a motion for no-action, proposed by the Russian Federation, by a roll-call vote of 22 in favour to 23 against, with seven abstentions.

The result of the vote was as follow:

In favour (22): Armenia, Bhutan, China, Congo, Cuba, Guinea, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo and Zimbabwe.

Against (23): Argentina, Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Paraguay,

Peru, Republic of Korea, Romania, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States.

Abstentions (7): Brazil, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Gabon, Nepal, Nigeria and Sri Lanka.

Absent (1): Mauritania

LEONID SKOTNIKOV (Russian Federation), speaking in a general comment, proposed a no-action motion, saying that the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus was based on political motives and was not supported by the delegation of the Russian Federation. The delegation believed that the report on Belarus did not reflect the real situation in the country and that it was based on allegations. For that reason, the Russian Federation would propose a no-action motion on the tabled resolution on Belarus.

SHA ZUKANG (China), speaking in a general comment on the no-action motion, said China was resolutely against the draft resolution, and seconded the no-action motion proposed by Russia. Belarus had known stability and economic growth over the last few years. However, since the people of the country insisted on choosing for themselves, and the Government chose its own foreign policy, this displeased other countries who tabled this resolution. Belarus had held a referendum on its political system, the result of which did not please those who had tabled the resolution. Human rights were used as a politicised tool in this resolution. In view of the above-mentioned reasons, China would vote in favour of the no-action motion.

RODOLFO REYES RODRIGUEZ (Cuba), speaking in a general comment on the no-action motion, said the Cuban delegate had visited Belarus last year, had seen the situation in the country, and had spoken to the people there to discover their views. The no-action motion was supported because behind the draft resolution there was no real interest in promoting human rights in Belarus, the interests of the United States and the European Union lay behind it, and they intended to change the regime there, as they had in other former Soviet republics, because it was one of the few countries that continued to defend its resources, and refused to throw open its doors to the Mafia to dominate its economy. The European Union and the United States wanted to control this country, and Russia was unhappy because Belarus had an elected government, and this was why Cuba would vote in favour of the no-action motion.

IAN DE JONG (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, in opposition to the motion to take no action, said that a motion to take no action on an initiative constituted an attempt to deny the members of the Commission their right to express their opinion on an issue. It was not a device that could be supported by those that wished to support freedom of expression. The Commission should not be prevented from dealing with the situations in specific countries. No country, large or small, could be considered as being beyond consideration by this forum. The European Union urged the Commission's members to vote against the motion to take no action.

RODOLFO REYES RODRIGUEZ (Cuba), in a general comment, said the United States should be ashamed to speak of the elections in Belarus. The elections in Belarus had been much cleaner than in the county of the sponsor of the resolution. Belarus was one of the richest Republics in the region. The people had affirmed their support to the Government by fully participating in the elections. The draft resolution did not truly reflect the real situation of the country. Cuba would vote against the draft resolution.

SERGEI ALEINIK (Belarus), speaking as a concerned country, said this draft resolution was nothing more than another attempt to impose on the international community the distorted opinion about Belarus in order to justify the desire of the co-sponsors to interfere in the domestic affairs of a sovereign State. The real situation in Belarus and the practical steps taken by its Government had repeatedly demonstrated that the accusations targeting that country were ill-founded. New groundless anti-Belarusian initiatives represented a vivid example of double standards approach exercised by the co-sponsors of the resolution with regard to nations that, like Belarus, chose to conduct an independent domestic and foreign policy. Belarus was a young, independent State,

which progressively was making its own way from being a developing democracy to a well-established democracy.

Demonstrating openness and practical interest in cooperation with the United Nations human rights machinery, based on the principles of universality and objectivity, Belarus absolutely rejected the use of human rights issues as an instrument of exerting political pressure on sovereign States. The report of the Special Rapporteur on Belarus, unprecedented by its approach and openly hostile to the country, was a glaring example of the attempts to use the Commission as a tool of legitimising interference into the domestic affairs of a sovereign State, and the document discredited the Commission's special procedures and undermined the credibility of the body as a whole. The United States had refused to cooperate with special thematic procedures of the Commission, and thus had no moral right to advocate the respect for human rights in the world. Today, the Commission could and should say its firm No to further politicisation of its work and in particular to the adoption of politically motivated resolutions, which stirred confrontation and mistrust.

LEONID SKOTNIKOV (Russian Federation) requested a recorded vote on the draft resolution concerning the situation of human rights in Belarus.

...

*For use of information only; not an official record*

Source: <http://www.unog.ch>

## **12. Huge Aid Convoy Leaves for Belarus**

Today will see the largest ever send-off of humanitarian aid from Irish soil for the survivors of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

15 articulated trucks and 13 ambulances are packed with €2.5m worth of aid for orphanages, hospitals and homes throughout Belarus.

The convoy, organised by the Chernobyl Children's Project, leaves Carlow at noon and will travel three thousand miles over six days.

Organiser Adi Roche says the Chernobyl disaster is one that is still devastating lives.

"The enemy is invisible, you can't see it, taste it, touch it because radiation by its nature is invisible", she said.

Miss Roche continued: "Unfortunately the long-term effects of Chernobyl will far surpass every other tragedy and crisis that we are aware of."

Source: *Ireland On-Line; April 10, 2005; [breakingnews.iol.ie](http://breakingnews.iol.ie)*

## **HUMAN RIGHTS & INDEPENDENT MEDIA**

### **13. Belarus Prosecutor Reopens Probe Into Russian Cameraman's Disappearance**

Prosecutors in Belarus said today they were reopening an investigation into the disappearance of Russian TV news cameraman Dmitri Zavadskii.

Zavadskii worked for Russia's ORT television. He disappeared on 7 July 2000, after he left for the Minsk airport to meet a Russian colleague.

He has not been seen nor heard from since and despite fears he may be dead, his body has never found.

Yuri Azarenok, a spokesman for the prosecutor general's office, said the case was being reopened because of, quote, "the need to conduct investigative actions."

Azarenok declined to say more about the decision.

A Belarus court convicted four people, including two security service officers, in 2002 in Zavadskii's disappearance but the cameraman's relatives remain skeptical that the right people were convicted.

*Source; RFE/RL; April 12, 2005; www.rferl.org*

#### **14. Independent Belarusian Pollster Faces Possible Closure**

The Belarusian Justice Ministry has taken its case against the Independent Institute for Socioeconomic and Political Studies (NISEPI) to the Supreme Court, requesting that the court close down that institution over a number of alleged irregularities, RFE/RL's Belarus Service reported on 11 April. The ministry accuses the NISEPI of failing to provide documents and renting offices at a different location from its registered address. Official pressure on NISEPI intensified following the constitutional referendum on 17 October. NISEPI cooperated with Gallup/Baltic Surveys on an exit poll that suggested authorities rigged the referendum to lift the constitutional two-term limit on the presidency and allow President Alyaksandr Lukashenka to remain in office (see "RFE/RL Belarus and Ukraine Report," 26 October, 5 November, and 29 December 2004). "We have not violated any laws or norms," NISEPI Director Aleh Manayeu told RFE/RL. "Our mission...is to promote the formation of civic society, democracy, and market reforms in independent Belarus by way of sociological surveys. This is exactly what has become the main irritating factor for the authorities after the 17 October referendum."

*Source; RFE/RL; April 12, 2005; www.rferl.org*

#### **15. Private Belarusian Newspaper, Editor Hit with Damages for Libel**

A district court in Minsk on 11 April awarded 10 million rubles (\$4,500) in damages against Iryna Khalip, deputy editor of the privately owned "Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta" newspaper, and 50 million rubles (\$22,500) against the newspaper for defaming Arkadii Mar, editor of the New York-based newspaper "Russkaya Amerika," Belapan reported. Mar, whose newspaper reportedly comes out twice a year and focuses on Central Asian dictators, interviewed Lukashenka in mid-February and vowed to devote 12 pages in a special edition to the Belarusian leader. Khalip ran a story in late February claiming that the aim of interviewing Lukashenka was to cheat money out of the Belarusian authorities by exploiting their desire for positive coverage in the foreign press. Khalip wrote that Lukashenka was the third state leader to be cheated in that fashion. The judge rejected a defense request to ask the U.S. Embassy in Minsk whether Mar is actually the editor of "Russkaya Amerika" and refused to hear Khalip's arguments in the case.

*Source; RFE/RL; April 12, 2005; www.rferl.org*

### **BUSINESS**

**16. Belarus's GDP grows 9.6% in Q1**

Belarus's gross domestic product expanded 9.6% year-on-year over the first quarter, the country's statistics and analysis ministry reported.

Industrial output increased 11.6% over the quarter and agricultural output 12.5%.

Output of consumer goods increased 10.6% in January-March: the production of food goods increased 12.4%, that of non-food items 9.2%. Retail trade expanded 19.7% and services produced for the private sector 11.3%.

Foreign trade--calculated in comparable conditions and factoring in changes to how indirect taxes are applied in trade with Russia--increased 18.6% year-on-year in the first quarter, with exports up 25.3% and imports 11.4%.

Belarus's GDP grew 11% in 2004, 6.8% in 2003.

*Source: Interfax; April 12, 2005; www.interfax.ru*

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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 Sanwaree Sethi at [sanwaree\\_ilhr@hotmail.com](mailto:sanwaree_ilhr@hotmail.com) or Olga Tarasov at [otarasov@ilhr.org](mailto: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 Lukashenko's wholesale assault on human rights and the rule of law in Belarus.

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