

October 27– November 3, 2005

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International League for Human Rights

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## DOMESTIC

### 1. Political Party Activity Can Be Suspended in Belarus

Amendments to the law On Political Parties took effect in Belarus. The amendments solidify the order of creating political parties, as well as their activities and oversight of their activities.

Additionally, the law's new version specifies measures of responsibility for violating the regulation On the Activities of Political Parties, as well as the basis and order of their liquidation. For the first time, the law introduces the norm of suspending the parties' activities.

The revised law also establishes a ban on registering in Belarus the organizational structures of foreign states' political parties.

*[Text translated by the Editors]*

*Source: Interfax; November 2, 2005; <http://www.interfax.ru>*

### 2. Belarus' "Para Bellum" Cocked to Fire

The dictatorial regime in Belarus for the last weeks boosted its preparations to fight against any attempt to remove it from power. All the means from the old Soviet times are suitable to fight the opposition. The notorious KGB and control over the information for propagandistic war not only inside the country but also over its borders will be used by the Lukashenko's regime. It has also one ally left, which sincerely wishes to he assist this regime to survive...

Basically, using the old Soviet experience there are several directions Lukashenko's regime has to cover for efficient counter-revolutionary activity. The first one is the sphere of information. As the Soviets said the one who rules the information shapes the reality. That is why the authorities organized a huge "informational workshop" for the representatives of the governmental bodies on different levels and the local businessmen. The regime plans to combine their efforts for propagandistic war inside and abroad, but also for collecting intelligence information on the activities of the forces, supporting Belarus democratic opposition. The pretext of bringing together officials and businessmen was "popularizing of the Belarus products abroad" with the help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other Belarus state structures, departments and agencies, spokesmen of which attended the two-day workshop.

But as the oppositional sources in Belarus reported, at the very beginning of the workshop the Foreign Ministry representatives crossed all of the t's, stating that Belarus must have "an aggressive informational policy" and the attending businessmen should assist in that. Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Gerasimenko, who headed the workshop, stated that the Ministry will control the implementation of this policy. The script is simple – the businessmen, working in the neighboring state and in Europe, turn into some kind of non-official representatives of the country, presenting the "good side" of Belarus regime, thus fighting the true awful image of Lukashenko's government. Gerasimenko stated that all of the "Black PR against Belarus and its leader is just a farce", but still the support of the local manufacturers and companies-exporters is needed to oppose it.

Also, often having connections with Belarus diasporas, they will transfer all the information about preparations or support of anti-governmental activities in the country by foreign forces to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which will repay them in certain way. "One point is to make products, to create a favorable investment climate in a region and to reach high results in the social sphere development and the other one is to present these products and to show them to the world," Alexander Gerasimenko noted, pointing that at present foreign representative offices of Belarus function in 46 countries, 20 embassies have own web-sites and the viewer ship of Belarus-TV Channel grew six times against the first quarter this year. That is why every business should

cooperate actively with the Foreign Ministry, which has wide possibilities of distributing information, the Deputy Minister stressed.

This is actually a reviving of the old Soviet method. Or better to say its modernization. In the Soviet times all of the exporting-importing companies and firms were state owned and their employees often conducted spying activity abroad, not only in the sphere of technological espionage but in other branches, including military. They were also used as a channel of bribing foreign officials and businessmen, who could "assist" the Soviet secret services.

Alexander Gerasimenko seems to have a good experience in organizing such a structures. Well? As the Belarus opposition sources note there is no wonder for this man definitely had connection with the Soviet KGB in the past.

Before becoming the Deputy Minister of independent Belarus, he occupied at least three posts during the Soviet rule, which are unattainable without close relations with the Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti of the USSR. Gerasimnko was the lecturer at the Party School of the Belarus Soviet Republic, the first secretary of the regional Communist party committee in one of the areas of Minsk and the second secretary of the Communist party committee of the city of Minsk. The last post even gave him an authority to control certain spheres of the republican KGB branch activity.

But enough about him, and the past, Soviet KGB. The Belarus KGB, the true and proud successor of the Soviet one, came out with another initiative to block any oppositional activity.

The First Deputy head of the KGB Major-General Vasile Dementei presented a draft law on counteracting extremism, which was immediately approved by the Chamber of Representatives of Belarus at the first reading.

Dementei noted that according to the analysis of the current public-political situation shows that a tendency of spreading anti-public manifestations including ones of an extremist nature is observed today in the republic. "Such manifestations can be seen in the activity of several Belarusian political and public organizations as well as of some foreign non-profit agencies and mass media outlets. There are facts of financing Belarusian political departments of extremism views by foreign organizations and of distributing information provocative products, what destabilizes the public-political situation in the republic," Major-General said, official BelTa agency quoted.

"The draft law determines the concept "extremism", legal and organizations grounds to counteract this phenomenon and subjects of counteraction – the interior ministry, the State Security Committee and the Public Prosecutor's Office," he added, noting that the provisions of the draft law are similar to the ones in the analogous law of the Russian Federation.

But the most interesting part is that Dementei stated introducing the draft that the secret services of the foreign states are going to destabilize Belarus and will undertake various steps, down to intervention and terrorism. "The facts testify that the main target of aspiration of special services of the foreign states, in particular of the USA is destabilization of political situation in our country. They have clear tactics, up to and including direct intervention. We have seen full mobilization, including the creation of groups which, when required, can engage in activity to overthrow the constitutional order by all means of extremist activity which, in the most extreme case, means terrorism," he added. The KGB official informed that in the neighboring states, in particular Lithuania and Poland, "bases of influence on Belarus", and also points of observation are created. "They try to involve and Ukraine in this, " - he told.

So, apparently the new law would assist in "preventing" the extremism, by "planting" the opposition activists behind bars.

Lets quote the retired KGB officer, lieutenant colonel Valery Kostka: " The bill "On Counteraction to Extremism" adopted by the "chamber of representatives" in the first reading on October 27 puts the opponents of today's Belarusian regime in extremely hard conditions. In fact any their actions could be qualified as violating the new law. I would understand if the law would be adopted in a country where extremism is widespread. Even more severe measures would be needed there. But Belarus is a tolerant country.

That is why I understand that the new law is related to the presidential elections in 2006. The opponents of the regime are discriminated against and put in such severe conditions that a question arises whether they would be able to do any actions at all? Any protest meeting, for instance, against rigged results, could be embraced by this law. All these actions could be interpreted as extremism. Judges and prosecutors would have a juridical base: you have gathered at the square, and it means that you are extremists.

In Belarus, where no extremism exists, these laws seem to be exceptionally unnatural. We do not have any grounds for that; we have a normal peaceful situation. I think that the matter does not concern extremism, but the aim is to make everybody keep quiet," Valery Kostka said to the *Radio Svoboda*.

Summing up it is important to note that the propagandistic war abroad, collecting intelligence data by the Belarus businessmen abroad and the new "anti-extremist" law, bind together represent a formidable triple weapon of Lukashenko's regime against anybody who will throw down a challenge to it at the upcoming elections.

But this is not all. The Kremlin approved with the President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko the candidacy of the new Russian ambassador in Minsk - the former Governor of Altai Region, and currently the aide of the Special Presidential Envoy in Siberian Federal District **Alexander Surikov**. Being close to the Kremlin, Surikov is a good friend of Lukashenko. As the Russian daily *Kommersant* notes, he already demonstrated that he can say right things to Belarus President, which are well received by Lukashenko. For instance, while commenting on the re-election of Lukashenko in 2001, the Altai Governor said then: "The republic and its president are on the right path."

But Surikov is not going to be just an ambassador. As *Kommersant* rightfully noted, he is the "New Governor" of Belarus on behalf of Moscow, sent to observe and to support local native regime, for the Russian authority considers Belarus the last bastion on the way of the wave of Orange and Velvet revolutions. If the Belarus regime falls, Russian is the next ...

*Source: Pavel Simonov, AIA Information Agency; October 30, 2005; <http://www.axisglobe.com/>*

### **3. High-ranking Military Official Arrested in Belarus**

A high-ranking military official has been taken into custody in Belarus.

The head of a supply department is detained on suspicion of taking a bribe.

Uncompromising fight is under way in the Belarusian army against those who commit crimes, the Defense Ministry's press service spokesman Vyacheslav Remenchik said.

As a result, the number of servicemen and civilians involved in crimes has decreased by 21 percent as compared to last year.

At the same time, it is not concealed that legal proceedings were instituted for more cases than in 2004 for bribe taking and power abuses, the spokesman noted.

*Source: Itar-Tass; October 28, 2005; <http://www.tass.ru/eng>*

## REGIONAL

### **4. Russia to Equip Neighboring Belarus With S-300S Surface to Air Missiles**

Russia will provide Belarus with the first S-300 missile systems in March 2006, a senior Belarusian military official was quoted by RIA Novosti as saying.

"Four missile systems will be sent to equip four air defense divisions by next fall," said Igor Azarenok, a commander of Belarus' Air Force and air defense troops. He said the missiles would help improve the country's defense fourfold, and its air defense by 20 percent, and also enhance the joint air defense system of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

"The air defense partnership of CIS countries pioneers real integration and helps establish close military ties between former Soviet republics," Azarenok said. The two countries concluded a contract on S-300 supplies on Sept. 10.

Belarus was part of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union for hundreds of years until the collapse of communism and it is on the direct path of invasion and air attack against the Russian capital Moscow from the west.

Although Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko runs one of the most repressive regimes in any former Soviet republic, he continues to enjoy exceptionally close political and military ties with Russia, reflecting the strategic importance of his small republic to the Kremlin.

*Source: MosNews.Com, November 2, 2005; www.mosnews.com*

### **5. Ukraine's Premier Yekhanurov Believes In Belarusian Fair Elections**

Ukraine expects Belarus to hold democratic elections, Prime Minister of Ukraine Yuri Yekhanurov declared in Washington Carnegie Fund.

"We would like Belarus to hold democratic elections and to become a serene neighbor with whom we mutually understand each other," mentioned Yekhanurov.

According to his words, Ukraine must keep a dialogue with Belarus. "We have normal trade ties," added him.

As a reminder, the next Belarusian presidential elections are to conduct not later than in the middle of July, 2006.

*Source: ForUm; November 2, 2005; http://en.for-ua.com*

### **6. Russia, Belarus Take Second Look At Union**

Russia and Belarus are once again considering joining into a single state, the St. Petersburg Times reported Monday.

A joint commission of officials from the two countries said they plan to write a draft constitution by mid-November that would be presented to voters for ratification.

Critics say the unification plan, on hold for years, is the work of officials nostalgic for the Soviet Union. There also are suggestions it is a way to allow Russian President Vladimir Putin to remain head of state after 2008, when he must step down under the Russian constitution.

Vladimir Pribylovsky, head of the Panorama think tank, told the newspaper the union would not help Russia decide who should rule after Putin.

"Putin would just get a symbolic job, since he would be a president of a union that doesn't mean anything.

Source: ScienceDaily LLC; November 1, 2005; <http://www.sciencedaily.com/>

### **7. Yekhanurov Acknowledged Lukashenko's Propagandist Talent and Compared Him to the Fuhrer**

While speaking at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, D.C., Yuri Yekhanurov, the Ukrainian Prime Minister, mentioned his recent personal meeting with the Belarusian leader Aleksandr Lukashenko. Yekhanurov called Lukashenko a talented propagandist, who knows how to work with the popular masses, and added, "Now I understand why in the 1930s, German women shouted, 'I want to have the Fuhrer's baby!'" // Prime-Tass.

*[Text translated by the Editors]*

Source: Gazeta.Ru; November 1, 2005; <http://www.gazeta.ru/>

### **8. Moscow To Open Its Representative Office in Minsk**

A representative office of Moscow in Minsk will be located in Osvobozhdenie Street, 8, chief of the international economic cooperation department of the foreign economic office of the economy committee of the Minsk city council Vladimir Tishurov has informed.

In accordance with the Russian legislature, any region of Russia can open its representative office in that region of Belarus it has signed cooperation agreement with. Decision on opening the office was taken after the mayor's office of Moscow addressed the Minsk city council with a request to take a decision by November 15 on allocating a detached building or a land plot for Moscow's representative office.

The Moscow administration chose the land plot with a building on it. "Now the Moscow government has to decide whether it will use the building or will build a new facility. It also should get determined with the format of the representative office", Vladimir Tishurov said.

We remind that the talks on opening the representative office of the Russian capital have been held for a year. The issue was on the agenda of a sitting of the Business Cooperation Council of Belarus and Moscow on August 18-19 in Gomel. Then the talks were resumed during the first Belarusian-Russian economic forum September 6-9 in Minsk.

Source: BelTa; October 31, 2005; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>

### **9. 63% of Russians Support Russia-Belarus Unification**

63% of Russians support the idea of the unification of Russia and Belarus in any form. This follows from the results of a public opinion poll, conducted by the Russian Public Opinion Centre early in October. A total of 1,600 people living in 153 cities and villages of 46 regions, territories and republics of Russia were polled.

Presenting the results of the public opinion poll, Pavel Lysov, head of the information department of the Permanent Committee of the Union State, specified that 30% supported the creation of the Russia-Belarus Union State, 20% favored a looser form of unification, similar to the one that exists in the European Union, and 13% supported the idea of Belarus becoming an integral part of Russia.

Lysov added, however, that in 1999 the idea of the creation of the Union State had been supported by 83% of Russians. "The negative trend is the result of the slowing down of the pace of the creation of the Union State," he stressed.

Text revised by the Editors

Source: Itar-Tass; October 28, 2005; <http://www.tass.ru/eng>

## INTERNATIONAL

### **10. Belarus President Says Sweden and Germany to Blame for His Mistakes**

Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko said Sweden and Germany should be blamed for everything that goes wrong in his republic because he used these two countries as models when setting his political goals.

“When I was a young president still, I set up my political objective aimed at building a socially-oriented economy and I have named the countries that were examples for us. These were technology-rich Germany and the socially-oriented economy built by the Swedish model,” the Interfax news agency quoted Lukashenko as saying on Thursday.

“If we are doing something wrong we are not to blame, but rather you, because we have learnt from you,” Lukashenko said when receiving credentials from newly-appointed Swedish ambassador.

Lukashenko is often called by media the last European dictator for his authoritarian policy. All Belarus officials have been banned from entering the countries of the European Union since 2002, together with former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic and Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe.

*Source: MosNews.Com, November 3, 2005; www.mosnews.com*

### **11. Alexander Lukashenko: Belarus Stands For Stability On European Continent**

Belarus has always stood for stability and has been taking an active part in the fight against destabilizing factors in Europe, Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko stated today when receiving credentials from Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Portugal to Russia and Belarus (on concurrent) Manuel Marcelo Monteiro Curto.

“Belarus has never been a threat to the European continent and other states. We have never destabilized the situation and will never do it. We are taking an active part in the fight against destabilizing factors in Europe and realize that a lot depends on us, as we are in the geographical center and in the focus of attention of the European continent”, Alexander Lukashenko underlined addressing the diplomat.

Belarus knows well the policy of Portugal in respect to this republic. “Your country has always taken sensible steps to make Belarus a real member of the European family”, the Belarusian leader said.

Alexander Lukashenko assured the ambassador he would be rendered necessary assistance to promote bilateral relations.

The head of the Portuguese diplomatic mission took note of the necessity to expand and strengthen the economic relations between Belarus and Portugal.

*Source: Belarusian Telegraph Agency: November 3, 2005; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>*

### **12. U.S. Urges Belarus To Stop Harassing Local Helsinki Committee**

Diplomat says case is part of pattern of harassment against independent press

The United States is calling for the Belarusian authorities to end their continuing harassment of the Belarus Helsinki Committee, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that reports on human-rights violations and monitors elections.

Belarusian authorities are seeking to reopen a case against the Belarus Helsinki Committee (BHC) on charges of which it has been cleared repeatedly. This effort “makes a mockery of rule-of-law principles,” U.S. diplomat Bruce Connuck told the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) October 27.

“In the context of the sustained harassment by the authorities of the Belarus Helsinki Committee, which engages in admirable work to raise awareness of the serious human rights problems in Belarus, we can only view this latest development as politically motivated,” said Connuck. In June 2004, the Supreme Economic Court of Belarus dropped all charges against the BHC, finding that charges of tax evasion were groundless, according to a statement by the U.S. Embassy in Belarus welcoming the decision at that time.

However, in September 2004, the Belarusian Ministry of Justice filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Court aimed at closing the Belarus Helsinki Committee. Ambassador Stephan Minikes, the head of the U.S. Mission to the OSCE at the time, noted that the lawsuit was filed after the BHC questioned the legality of an upcoming referendum on eliminating presidential term limits.

The BHC was not informed about the exact charges that were filed against it, and ultimately the Supreme Court returned the case back to the Ministry of Justice “without consideration,” according to the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF).

Nevertheless, the Belarusian authorities are continuing their repressive policies toward independent NGOs. In October, a protest against the June 2004 court decision that cleared the Belarus Helsinki Committee of tax evasion charges was prepared by the first deputy chair of the Supreme Economic Court (SEC).

“The IHF and BHC consider the actions of the first deputy chair of the SEC to be contrary to the rule of law and to be politically motivated, directed to liquidation of the human rights organization, which reports about the widespread human rights violations and undertakes monitoring of election campaigns in Belarus,” according to an IHF news release.

At the OSCE October 27, Connuck, the chargé d'affaires of the U.S. Mission to the OSCE, called on Belarus “to end its campaign against the Belarus Helsinki Committee and to allow the normal development of civil society in accordance with OSCE commitments.”

#### Belarusian attacks against independent media condemned

The campaign by the Belarusian authorities against the BHC has been part of a larger war on the independent press and all organizations not under strict government control.

Reporters Without Borders repeatedly has denounced Belarusian government attacks on the independent media, most recently on October 28, when it noted that “17 journalists from the country’s Polish minority have been arrested in the past three months.”

On October 29, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported the arrest of 70 members of an independent election-monitoring group on charges of attending an unauthorized meeting. In testimony before the Helsinki Commission October 25, Daniel Fried, the assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, said repression in Belarus “has only deepened” in 2005. “New legal measures aim to silence independent voices, monopolize information, and obstruct all elements of political opposition and democratization,” he said.

Referring to the Belarusian government’s “cynical contempt for freedom and democracy,” Fried said it falls further and further behind in realizing its OSCE commitments.

“The regime in Belarus continues to consolidate its monopoly on information,” he said. “It has intensified its attempt to stifle the besieged independent media. Rather than protecting it, the law

straitjackets free speech. The authorities have suspended newspapers, levied crippling fines, and brought specious libel suits to chill dissent.”

Concerning NGO's, Fried said, “The government of Belarus continues to make it even more difficult, if not impossible, for NGOs, political parties, independent trade unions, and private educational institutions to function.”

In short, the harassment of BHC appears part of a larger campaign to crush all dissent in the former Soviet republic, he concluded.

The Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, which was passed unanimously by both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, provides assistance for Belarusian political parties, NGOs and independent media while prohibiting U.S. government agencies from providing loans and investment to the Belarus government, except for humanitarian goods.

"At a time when freedom is advancing around the world, Aleksandr Lukashenko and his government are turning Belarus into a regime of repression in the heart of Europe, its government isolated from its neighbors and its people isolated from each other," Bush said in a statement about the act.

*Source: Jeffrey Thomas, U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs; November 2, 2005; <http://usinfo.state.gov/>*

### **13. Belarus Interested In Cooperation With NATO, Not Membership**

Belarus is interested in closer cooperation with NATO, but does not seek to join the organization, Defense Minister Leonid Maltsev said at a press conference Wednesday.

Maltsev said Belarus was participating in NATO's Partnership for Peace program, but unlike other nations, it did not view the program as a stepping-stone toward membership.

Joining the trans-Atlantic alliance has never been on the Belarusian agenda, the minister said.

*Source: Irina Chumakova, RIA Novosti, November 2, 2005; <http://en.rian.ru>*

### **14. Foreign Ministries of Belarus and FRG Discuss Ways To Create Positive Image of States Abroad**

Officials of the foreign ministries of Belarus and Germany have discussed ways to create a positive image of the two states abroad. In the course of a meeting in Berlin the sides shared their views concerning the work of structural units of the foreign political departments in the information sphere. Special attention was devoted to covering of the cooperation between Belarus and Germany, BelTA was informed by acting head of the information department – spokesman for the foreign ministry of Belarus Ruslan Esin.

Within the framework of the visit the Belarusian delegation, which was composed of representatives of the foreign ministry and the national press center, held talks in the federal department for the press and information and in the editorial offices of the leading German newspapers.

*Source: BelTA; November 1, 2005; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>*

### **15. Belarusian KGB Warns of Western "Intervention"**

Belarus's security service, known still by the Soviet acronym KGB, accused the West on Thursday of plotting to undermine President Alexander Lukashenko with tactics that could extend to direct intervention or terrorism.

Lukashenko, in power in the country of 10 million since 1994, is accused by Western countries of undermining democracy by cracking down on opponents, squeezing out independent media and clinging to Soviet-style economics.

He has accused various countries, especially the United States, of interfering in Belarus's affairs and vowed to cut short any move towards the kind of popular uprisings that overthrew governments in former Soviet Georgia and Ukraine.

"The main driving force of Western states' intelligence services, notably the United States, is to destabilize our country," Deputy KGB head Vasily Dementei told a parliamentary debate on extremism.

"They have clear tactics, up to and including direct intervention. We have seen full mobilization, including the creation of groups which, when required, can engage in activity to overthrow the constitutional order by all means of extremist activity which, in the most extreme case, means terrorism."

He gave no details.

Lukashenko, genuinely popular among many Belarusians, particularly outside the capital, has accused the United States and European Union of launching an "information war".

He has also alleged that activists are being trained at bases in two countries bordering Belarus -- Poland and Lithuania.

The U.S. administration denounces Lukashenko as "Europe's last dictator" and has allocated \$25 million to help the country's relatively small and divided liberal opposition.

The EU is soon to launch radio broadcasts into the country lying between Russia and Poland. Lukashenko last year won popular approval, in a referendum denounced as fraudulent in the West, for a constitutional change allowing him to run for a new term in 2006.

The opposition has abandoned its frequent internal disputes and named a single candidate, independent Alexander Milinkevich, to stand against him.

*Source: Reuters AlertNet; October 27, 2005; <http://www.alertnet.org>*

## **16. Statement on Belarus Helsinki Commission**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Bruce Connuck to the Permanent Council, Vienna

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States deeply regrets that we are again compelled by the actions of Belarusian authorities to raise the continuing harassment of the Belarus Helsinki Committee.

We understand that the Deputy Chairman of the Belarusian Supreme Economic Court is petitioning for the court to overturn its previous rulings clearing the Belarus Helsinki Committee of certain financial charges.

Re-opening a case against the Belarus Helsinki Committee on charges for which it has been cleared more than once makes a mockery of rule-of-law principles.

In the context of the sustained harassment by the authorities of the Belarus Helsinki Committee, which engages in admirable work to raise awareness of the serious human rights problems in Belarus, we can only view this latest development as politically motivated.

We remind the Belarusian Government that, under the 1991 Moscow Document, it committed to "welcome NGO activities, including, inter alia, observing compliance with CSCE commitments in the field of the human dimension."

This commitment applies not only to the Belarus Helsinki Committee, but also to many other civil society organizations that have fallen victim in recent years in Belarus to capricious legal requirements and spurious court cases.

We call on Belarus to end its campaign against the Belarus Helsinki Committee and to allow the normal development of civil society in accordance with OSCE commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

*Source: U.S. Mission to the OSCE; October 27, 2005; <http://www.usosce.rpo.at>*

## **HUMAN RIGHTS & INDEPENDENT MEDIA**

### **17. The Police Returned *Narodnaya Volya*'s Saturday Issues**

On November 3 the police returned *Narodnaya Volya*'s Saturday issues to UCP representatives. This happened after UCP members showed the contract allowing them to distribute the newspaper in Belarus for free to the head of Hrodna Region Police Office.

According to UCP members, the main reason for detaining the circulation of *Narodnaya Volya* was checking its contents and looking for material that could disgrace the President. Yury Istomin, a UCP Hrodna affiliate member, informed BAJ about it.

On October 31 a car containing 3400 issues of *Narodnaya Volya* was detained. There were three representatives of the United Civil Party Hrodna affiliate in the car. The police claimed that they would return the issues only after the UCP representatives showed them the invoice on the car and the contract with the editor giving permission to distribute the newspaper. The police officers immediately demanded to open the boot and when they saw the issues of *Narodnaya Volya* they called for reinforcement from Hrodna. (UCP members think that the reinforcement was waiting somewhere nearby because police officers arrived a few minutes after the call). The police looked through the date-line of the newspaper and took pictures of the passenger compartment and the boot, drew up a report of the check-up and took the UCP members to Hrodna Region Police Office. Then the detained were released. The police claimed that they would return the issues only after the UCP representatives showed them the invoice on the car and the contract with the editor giving permission to distribute the newspaper.

*Source: Belarusian Association of Journalists, November 3, 2005; [www.baj.ru](http://www.baj.ru)*

### **18. Svetlana Zavadskaya To Create the Journalists Assistance Fund**

Svetlana Zavadskaya, the wife of journalist Dmitry Zavadsky, who was kidnapped five years ago, is convinced that time is ripe for creating the Dmitry Zavadsky Journalists Assistance Fund in Belarus.

Zavadskaya explained her decision by saying, "Belarusian independent journalists have to work in wartime-like conditions. They are intimidated, thrown in prisons, slapped with huge fines, frequently based on trumped-up charges, kidnapped or killed. And all of this simply because they are fulfilling their professional duty, trying to provide their people with truthful, independent and objective information. To speak the truth in the today's Belarus means to risk your own life."

She stressed that it is necessary to devote maximum effort in order to help Belarusian independent journalists "to survive in today's difficult conditions."

"This will be the main goal of Dmitry Zavadsky Fund: to help journalists who find themselves in trouble and their families. Dmitry's life was taken away because, apparently, he possessed information that the authorities were highly afraid would become public. I want to try to shield other journalists and their family members from a similar tragedy. Five years ago I was able to survive only thanks to such help, including financial help, although the financial support was coming from outside my country. That's why the idea to create similar fund in Belarus was conceived. Persecution of individual Belarusian journalists makes other member of the writing brotherhood think twice whether telling the truth today is worth being imprisoned, subjected to a multimillion fine, or killed for it tomorrow" said Zavadskaya.

She noted that the issue of kidnapped politicians and public figures in Belarus is directly linked to press freedom. People will be able to find out who is implicated in these crimes only after press freedom will exist in the country.

"Today we can not bring to every Belarusian citizen the real information about the high-ranking officials' participation in prominent individual's disappearances. Almost no independent newspapers remain in our country, there is no non-state television, and the official media outlets do not raise this issue at all. Moreover, not every independent journalist undertakes this topic out of fear of becoming the next victim of the regime," Zavadskaya added.

According to Zavadskaya, the Fund will cooperate with "all of those who want to see Belarus become an independent and democratic country, where the freedom of speech will be not just a dream but an everyday reality."

She reminded that for more than five years, the Belarusian authorities have not only failed to investigate the criminal case of her husband's kidnapping, but also have obstructed the investigation.

"They are treating the case of the journalist Veronika Cherkasova's murder in the same manner. I believe the authorities will do everything, in order to avoid opening a criminal case regarding the death of the journalist Vasily Grodnikov. Why answer the multitude of questions from the relatives and journalists, when it is easier to remain quiet?" concluded Zavadskaya.

*[Text translated by the Editors]*

*Source: AFN; November 3, 2005; <http://www.afn.by/>*

### **19. Nikita Sasim Demand To Punish the Guilty**

Another apply of Nikita Sasim with demand to punish the guilty in the dispersal of street action on September 16 was sent back.

Action on September 16 dedicated to the sixth anniversary of kidnapping vice-speaker of Supreme Council Viktor Ganchar and businessman Anatoly Krasouski was brutally dispersed by riot police. Several participants of the action were wounded. Nikita Sasim spent one week in hospital with brain concussion.

Earlier his appeal was sent back from the police department. Yesterday Maskouski district court refused to start proceeding on his appeal. Now Sasim is going to sent appeal to Minsk city court.

*Source: ZUBR; November 3, 2005; <http://www.zubr-belarus.com/>*

### **20. Andrzej Pisalnik Is Warned Again**

On November 2 Hrodna Leninski District Office of Public Prosecutor pronounced an official warning to Andrzej Pisalnik for "having insulted Belarusian people" in one of his articles. During his interview to BAJ Andrzej Pisalnik mentioned the fact that his article was published in a foreign edition.

The reason for the warning was Andrzej Pisalnik's article "Aliaksandar Ryhoravich's Poles" that had been published in # 21 of *Glos znad Niemna* printed in Poland. Mr. Urublyeuski, the public prosecutor who signed the warning, considered that this article "disgraced" Belarusian citizens and the present head of the Union of Poles in Belarus Mr. Luchnik. If the journalist continues writing articles of this kind the Office of Public Prosecutor will call him to account for it "in accordance with established procedure". In the Office of Public Prosecutor Andrzej Pisalnik was told that his actions may be interpreted as a violation of art. 130 of the Criminal Code.

This has been a second warning pronounced to Andrzej Pisalnik lately: on September 29 he was warned that it was inadmissible for him to call himself the editor-in-chief of the Union of Poles' weekly *Glos znad Niemna*.

Andrzej Pisalnik is already a suspect in one criminal case (together with Andrzej Pachobut he is suspected of threats directed against the head of Shchuchyn Polish House (art. 185 of the Criminal Code of RB)).

Andrzej Pisalnik stresses the fact that in the warning *Glos znad Niemna* is mentioned as "a newspaper of the Polish Republic": this means that the Office of Public Prosecutor applied sanctions for an article printed in a foreign edition knowingly.

The journalist is worried about this fact because he works for one more Polish edition - *Rzeczpospolita*. "I published articles on many topics that are not approved by Belarusian authorities in this edition. Still, there has been no warnings yet", - says Andrzej Pisalnik. He thinks that Belarusian authorities are trying to stop the printing of *Glos znad Niemna* in Poland because this newspaper has a great influence on Belarusian Poles.

There were some other people called to account for their statements in foreign mass media - the head of UCP Anatol Lyabedzka (for taking part in some programmes of "Russia" TV-channel (namely Zerkalo and Vesti Nedeli), the deputy head of BHC Harry Pahaniajla (for an interview about political changes in Belarus to a Swedish TV-channel "TV-4").

Source: *Belarusian Association of Journalists, November 3, 2005; www.baj.ru*

## **21. Information Ministry Cancelled Registration of *Kurjer iz Borisova***

On October 24 the Information Ministry of Belarus issued an order to declare invalid the registration certificate of an independent newspaper *Kurjer iz Borisova*. The representatives of the newspaper informed about that the Belarusian Association of Journalists on November 1. Meanwhile, the founders of the newspaper continue their struggle for their right to exist.

It is said in the order that the registration certificate has been found invalid basing on the decision of the Economic court of Minsk region of August 22 this year and an abstract of record of a liquidation commission of the "Press service" society of September 28. The order was signed by first deputy Information Minister Liliya Ananich.

As we have informed, in August the court sustained a claim of Minsk regional executive committee to liquidate the "Press-service" which publishes the newspaper *Kurjer iz Borisova*. Judge Tamara Benchuk supported the position of the executive committee, and the registration of the "Press-service" was declared invalid. A liquidation commission was chosen. The enterprise was to be liquidated before January 1, 2006.

Meanwhile, representatives of the "Press-service" have not addressed all possible instances of the court to appeal against this decision. One of these days they appealed to the Supreme Economic Court of Belarus.

Source: *Charter97; November 2, 2005; http://www.charter97.org/eng/*

## **22. Gomel Authorities Threaten a BelaPAN Correspondent with Canceling Her Journalist Accreditation**

Yauhien Pabalaviets, the Press Secretary of Gomel Regional Executive Committee refused to inform a BelaPAN News Agency correspondent Alena Paskannaya about the visit of the Belarusian Foreign Minister Siarhiej Martynau to the region, which took place on October 28, 2005. He told the journalist that her accreditation had been cancelled and that she wasn't authorized to work as a correspondent for the News Agency.

Alena Paskannaya asked to provide her with an official document, which would explain the reasons for accreditation cancellation. Some time later, the Press Secretary phoned the journalist and told her she would be allowed to enter a restricted list of events only.

The BAJ Monitoring Service learned that the threat stemmed from the Executive Committee representatives' discontent with the facts that BelaPAN correspondent publications were reprinted by *Narodnaya Vola*.

*Text revised by the Editors*

*Source: Belarusian Association of Journalists, October 31, 2005; [www.baj.ru](http://www.baj.ru)*

## **23. Members of Election Monitoring Group Arrested In Belarus**

Police broke up a meeting of an election monitoring group and arrested dozens of members in what the organization's leader said was an effort to prevent independent observation of next year's crucial presidential vote in Belarus.

Police entered the movie theater where the organization, Partnership, was meeting Saturday and arrested some 70 participants on charges of holding a gathering without approval from authorities, its leader Nikolai Astreiko said. He said the meeting was part of an effort to comply with a requirement that independent election observer groups register with the Justice Ministry.

The Interior Ministry said police entered the theater because of an alleged bomb threat, but declined to comment further. A Minsk court on Monday sentenced two Partnership members to 15 days in custody and ordered several others to pay substantial fines.

First elected in 1994, Lukashenko has extended his rule through a series of elections and referendums that Western observers and government called fraudulent. A year ago, he pushed through a referendum last November allowing him to run for president an indefinite number of times, and he has said he will seek a second term in next year's vote. Officials have said it will likely be held in July.

*Source: Pravda.Ru; October 31, 2005; <http://newsfromrussia.com/>*

## **24. Zubr Coordinator Denied a Right to Go Abroad**

A coordinator of the human rights service of the Zubr movement Iryna Toustsik was denied an exit permit stamp in her passport by the department of Passports and Visas Service of Kastychnitski district of Minsk. As said by the human rights activist to the Charter'97 press center, she had been told by Passports and Visas Service's representatives that "the KGB (State Security Committee) has questions to her".

Iryna Toustsik was offered to come on Wednesday, November 2 and receive her passport. Meanwhile the KGB is make enquiry, the members of staff of the Passports and Visas Service said.

The coordinator of the Zubr human rights service links these events to her oppositional activities.

Source: ZUBR; October 28, 2005; <http://www.zubr-belarus.com/>

## **BUSINESS**

### **25. National Bank Set To Reduce Inflation To Projected Level**

The National Bank of Belarus (NBB) has announced that it will continue efforts in the fourth quarter to reduce inflation and ensure stability of the national currency.

The NBB expects the exchange rate the Russian ruble to be between 74.5 and 76 Belarusian rubles on January 1, 2006. The US dollar's exchange rate is expected to be between 2,140 and 2,160 rubles.

The NBB Information Office said a strong ruble, economic growth and a favorable foreign economic situation would enable it to reduce inflation to a projected level and spur positive changes in terms of competitiveness of export prices.

Source: *BelaPAN*; November 2, 2005; <http://www.belapan.com>

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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 63rd 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 Maria Kabalina at [cis@ilhr.org](mailto:cis@ilhr.org) 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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