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## DOMESTIC

### 1. Lukashenko Allowed to Rent Out a Premise for the Democratic Forces Congress

The state head Aleksandr Lukashenko supported the Minsk City Executive Committee decision about providing assistance to the Democratic Forces Congress to be held in Minsk. The presidential press-service informed about it BelTA while making comments on the result of the meeting the Belarusian leader with Mikhail Pavlov, Minsk Mayor.

According to Mikhail Pavlov "I reported to President that we are ready to suggest several options for the Congress, first of the palaces of culture of the tractor factory, Minsk auto factory, railroadmen, the Sukno Company, the Kamvol Company, although this event is outside of the City Executive Committee competence.

"Today there are many premises in the city, where you can hold such an event on high level. We are ready to provide any assistance," the City Executive Committee Head emphasized.

*[Text translated by the editors]*

Source: TUT.by; September 8, 2005; <http://www.tut.by/>

### 2. The Non-Party Democratic Coalition Creation Was Declared in Minsk

Valery Frolov, Vasily Leonov and Aleksandr Voitovich, three well-known Belarusian opposition politics, announced the creation of the coalition, which should join the non-party democratic forces representatives on the threshold of the presidential elections. The coalition presentation took place on September 7 in Minsk.

A.Voitovich informed that the coalition's goal is "to redeem the Belarusian people from the dictatorship, to build the legal civil society, in which the main value is the ordinary person."

According to A.Voitovich, the unified candidate nomination for the future presidential elections mechanism, which was suggested by the political parties, pushed the coalition's initiators to create it. As a result the non-party candidates were excluded from this process. The new coalition's organizers consider that the non-party sector is also the significant part of the democratic movement.

According to A.Voitovich, the coalition immediate task is to not allow Aleksandr Lukashenko to take part in elections. The press-conference participants troubled to answer the question how this goal will be achieved.

The coalition's first political project should be a republican referendum initiation, V.Frolov added. The questions regarding the election legislation democratization, the contract employment system cancellation, the housing and communal services tariffs growth restriction and the state support of business are planned to take out during the referendum.

According to V.Frolov, at the moment the initiative group consists of 260 people. By the end of the month the organizers hope to increase the participant's number up to 1 – 1.5 thousand of people. In the former deputy's opinion, the referendum initiation might unite the non-party forces as well as the party democratic forces.

The coalition's founders emphasize that the coalition is open for all changes supporters and they expect the democratic forces support their undertakings. / Source: BelaPan

*[Text translated by the Editors]*

Source: *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*; September 7, 2005; <http://www.bdg.by>

### 3. Belarus: The Last Summer Of the Opposition

The apocalyptic phrase "last summer of the opposition" was the title of an article by Dmitry Drigailo, which prognosticated that after the 2006 presidential elections in Belarus, the political opposition would cease to exist. Either it will come to power or "it will be taken to the prosecutor's office" in the event that current president, Alexander Lukashenka, is reelected to office (*Belorusskaya Gazeta*, August 26).

This summer has been marked by the inability of the national organizational committee to obtain permission to use a building in September that will accommodate at least 700 delegates for the purpose of electing an alternative candidate to Lukashenka at an all-Belarusian Congress of Democratic Forces. The urgency of the convocation of this forum is evident, given that the date of the next presidential elections will be announced in January 2006. The chairman of the organizing committee, Alexander Bukhvostov, noted last month that 80 out of 143 planned meetings had been held to elect delegates, the majority of which are nonparty people, while the United Civic Party occupies the second place. The two leading candidates to emerge -- and the almost certain contenders -- are Alexander Milinkevich and Anatol Lyabedzka (*Belorusskiy Rynok*, August 8).

Lyabedzka is perhaps more familiar to the Belarusian public. Aged 44, he is chairman of the United Civic Party and a native of Minsk region, and he has been a strong critic of the Lukashenka administration for some ten years. He has incensed the government by denouncing it at meetings in the United States (October 1999), and for leading demonstrations. In late August he attended a conference in Poland devoted to the 25th anniversary of the Solidarity trade union and was detained by the authorities upon his return, and materials gathered at the conference confiscated from him (*Narodnaya Volya*, September 3).

Milinkevich is a 57-year old physics professor from the Hrodna region, with no party affiliation, though he was proposed by the Soim of the Belarusian Popular Front last February, and nominated by the Belarusian Green Party at this same time. He was a member of the Hrodna city council for six years and speaks five languages (*Charter 97*, February 14).

An important role could also be played by the fringe candidates such as Syarhey Kalyakin of the Communists and Stanislau Shushkevich of the Social Democrats, who must decide to whom to give their support. To date, neither leading candidate would be expected to fare well in a straight contest with Lukashenka. Of the two Lyabedzka has a slightly higher rating -- both are below 2% according to a May 2005 survey by NISEPI. Other surveys suggest that the president has the support of about 40% of the electorate, but an opposition candidate could expect to receive 23-25% (*Svobodnye Novosti Plus*, August 10-17). The election campaign is to be conducted by a political council, which will include the leaders of the national political parties and active public organizations, and the Council in turn will create a National Executive Committee (Shadow Cabinet) (*Narodnaya Volya*, August 19).

However, the next stage of the process -- the location of a building for the forum -- has proved to be a problematic. The organizers have sent some 50 applications signed by the leaders of the five registered political parties (the Popular Front, the Women's Party, the Social Democrats, the United Civic Party, and the Party of Communists) to different organs of executive power, but none has received approval. The response from Babruisk region was typical: it declared that that several concerts were planned for the month of September, and that the rental of the hall would cost 62.2 Euros per hour! (*Narodnaya Volya*, August 17). General Valery Fralou, an opposition deputy in the House of Representatives, commented, "If the opposition is not provided with a place to meet, it is one more sign of the sort of system we have" (*Narodnaya Volya*, September 1).

Conceivably, the forum could be held in the Palace of the Republic in Minsk. However, it could even be held outside the country -- both Smolensk and Kyiv are cited as possible alternative venues, though both may give rise to government accusations of trying to "import revolution" (*Narodnaya Volya*, August 19). The holding of the forum would not necessarily bring success.

Relatively small attendance at some meetings has been brought about by fear of official recriminations, especially dismissal from employment for participation -- the exception to this general picture is the city of Minsk. There have also been instances of preventive arrests of delegates, detention by border guards, and infiltration of meetings by members of the police (*Belorusskaya Gazeta*, August 26).

Perhaps most critical is the unity of the opposition. The election process requires the partial sacrifice of party "sovereignty" for the formation of a supra-party opposition bloc. Milinkevich has maintained that if a single candidate is not chosen, then the coalition will be destroyed, but he remains optimistic that this outcome is unlikely (*Belorusy i Rynok*, August 29). Nevertheless, the Congress has already required several compromises from both the Five Plus and broader Group of Ten opposition parties and organizations. It is a bold venture with numerous potential pitfalls.

Source: David Marpels, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*; September 6;  
[http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article\\_id=2370181](http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2370181)

#### **4. Minsk Authorities to Confiscate Church Land**

City authorities in the capital Minsk have told the embattled charismatic New Life church that the land it bought with its church building in 2002 is to be confiscated. The city claims the congregation is using the land on which the church stands "not in accordance with its designation", Forum 18 News Service has learnt. "Our members have paid 13,000 US dollars in taxes on it -- they can't say that it's not ours," New Life's administrator Vasily Yurevich told Forum 18. At a 30 August meeting, church members decided to begin a round-the-clock prayer vigil, challenge the proposed confiscation in court and launch a campaign to keep their land. The church has been denied re-registration by the authorities which under Belarusian law, in defiance of international human rights agreements, renders all activity by the 600-strong congregation illegal.

New Life, the Minsk-based charismatic church forced to meet at its disused cowshed for worship services, looks set to have the land beneath that building confiscated by the municipal authorities, Forum 18 News Service has learnt. "They have declared war on us, but we will not give up our land," New Life's administrator Vasily Yurevich remarked to Forum 18 on 30 August. "Our members have paid 13,000 US Dollars in taxes on it -- they can't say that it's not ours." The average monthly salary in Belarus is estimated to be around 303,000 Belarusian rubles (885 Norwegian kroner, 108 Euros, or 139 US Dollars). Church members have begun a prayer vigil and plan to defend their land.

In a letter dated 23 August but received by the church six days later, Minsk City Executive Committee vice-chairman Mikhail Petrushin announces that body's 17 August decision to confiscate the plot of land beneath the disused cowshed. Viewed by Forum 18, the text of the decision explains that New Life's right to the plot -- originally granted by the municipal authorities along with its purchase in 2002 -- is to be cancelled because the church's use of the land is "inappropriate" and "not in accordance with its designation". It orders relevant municipal departments to "take measures by 1 September to regulate the issue of purchasing from New Life Church the property [cowshed] situated on the aforementioned plot" and to make a financial proposal for this purchase once the building's value has been determined.

While the decision suggests that any action would be taken after 1 September, Yurevich told Forum 18 on 31 August that the church has not been contacted by any state department since it received the text. At an emergency meeting on 30 August, New Life members nevertheless decided to conduct a round-the-clock prayer vigil and alert other churches, foreign embassies and human rights organisations, he said, while a conference bringing together members of 50 other Belarusian charismatic churches affiliated to the Full Gospel Association is planned in support of New Life on 10 September.

Yurevich also reported that the church has invited Minsk city executive committee chairman Mikhail Pavlov to explain to the 600-strong congregation the motivation behind his and his colleagues' decision at their 4 September Sunday service. "We believe this move to confiscate the land is illegal and we intend to challenge it in court," he remarked to Forum 18, accusing the state authorities of being biased against the church. "There are plenty of commercial organizations in Minsk based at cultural institutions which have nothing to do with culture, but no one challenges them for 'inappropriate usage!'"

New Life Church has been worshipping at the disused cowshed ever since being barred from renting a local house of culture in September 2004. As Vasily Yurevich told procuracy officials in December 2004, the church was earlier refused requests to rent other public facilities by district administrations throughout Minsk. The 2002 religion law requires state permission for religious gatherings in premises not specially designed for worship, but the Minsk municipal authorities have consistently refused to grant both this – on the grounds that the building is a cowshed – as well as permission to reconstruct the building as a church, latterly maintaining that it is to be demolished as part of Minsk's general development plan .

Without the necessary state approval to meet at their disused cowshed, New Life Church was refused compulsory re-registration at its address as soon as the religion law's 16 November 2004 re-registration deadline expired. Subsequently, both Vasily Yurevich and Pastor Vyacheslav Goncharenko have been repeatedly charged with organizing illegal worship, most recently following a visit by police officers to the church's 24 July Sunday service.

New Life's attempt to re-register in June 2005 similarly proved unsuccessful. Viewed by Forum 18, a letter dated 17 August from the State Committee for Religious and Ethnic Affairs explained to Pastor Goncharenko that this was because the disused cowshed "is in an unsatisfactory condition" – which Yurevich disputes – and that, in violation of the 2002 religion law, the church failed to enclose the signatures of all its "participants (members)" in the application. The law does not stipulate how the term "participant (member)" differs from the minimum 20 citizens who found a religious organization, however, and Yurevich told Forum 18 that those names were submitted.

*Source: Geraldine Fagan, Forum 18; September 1, 2005; <http://www.forum18.org>*

## **5. Lidia Yermoshina: Presidential Election in Belarus To Take Place No Later Than July 20, 2006**

Presidential election: a few are able to rise to the final challenge

The forthcoming presidential election in Belarus will take place no later than July 20, 2005. The time framework is set by the Constitution: the election campaign should take place no later than two months prior to the expiry of the incumbent president's term in office. The countdown started on September 20, 2001, the inauguration day, chairman of the central election commission of Belarus Lidia Yermoshina told BelTA. She added the commission considers to carry out presidential election strictly within the official schedule. The Chamber of Representatives of Belarus will set the final date for the election during the spring session. One of the first issues the deputies will discuss in the Oval Hall will be presidential election.

Mrs. Yermoshina, summer is the best time to hold such a political campaign. Will there be a high turnout given summer holidays?

Certainly, the turnout will be a bit more modest. But I think the election will be validated. The necessary number of voters – 50 per cent – will come to polling stations. More so since polling stations will be placed in sanatoriums and recreation centers. The Belarusians will be able to vote even if they are recreating in their summer houses by coming to the nearest agricultural council. Besides, there is early election which starts five days prior to the main one. Summer is not the best period to hold election, of course. But the time framework is set by the Constitution and the election code rather than by the degree to which the election time "is or is not proper".

Who can run for the presidency in Belarus?

A candidate, first of all, should be a native of Belarus and citizen of this country and should be 35 or older. A candidate should collect no fewer than 100 thousand signatures in his favor and be a Belarusian resident for the recent 10 years. The referendum of October 17, 2004 showed the decision of the electorate to abolish the restriction which forbade a person to spend more than two presidential terms in office in a row. This means that the incumbent president is entitled to run for the presidency in 2006. The crucial challenge for the future candidates will be to collect signatures for it is rather difficult to get such a great number of them. I would like to remind that in 2001 only four out of 23 initiative groups managed to get through. The Belarusian electorate has become more exacting and serene in decision-making. In 1994 they willingly put signatures – it was a “novelty”, a “game”. Longing for the presidency the candidates are not bound to collect signatures strictly in districts, they can collect them anywhere – in the streets, railway stations, etc. But the response will not be significant in this case since rare citizens have passports with them all the time. The central election commission has every reason to believe there will be very few candidates for the presidency in the forthcoming election. Today there is no other policy maker in Belarus who stands out from the crowd than incumbent president Alexander Lukashenko – all the rest are some kind of vague shadows of politicians.

- How will the election campaign run? Do not you think that the incumbent president has more opportunities to communicate with voters than other presidential contenders?

- Mass media outlets have to cover state bodies' activities and inform citizens about them. In the USA, in Russia as well as in this republic no one can restrict mass media in covering events. If you remember, in the course of the 2001 election campaign the Belarusian leader refused to appear on television. The election campaign will start a month prior to the voting day following registration of all candidates. All of them will be able to appear on television, and live on the radio and to publish their programs in one of the national newspapers.

- How will presidential candidates be financed?

- The state budget will give 2,300 base amounts to every candidate for his campaign, in particular for publishing leaflets. On the one hand the sum is not big; on the other hand – the election campaign should not be driven solely by money-power. In fact, everything depends on strong associates.

- Western countries are declaring their readiness to additionally finance candidates...

- The West has no right to finance participants of election campaigns in other states. If such facts are registered, a response of the foreign ministry will follow. The central election commission is not authorized to operate internationally and apply sanctions to those who finance. We can apply measures toward the candidates. The money from abroad can be spent to finance, first of all, smear campaigns to discredit the main candidate like it was in 2001.

- How will the observation over the election be organized in 2006?

- Observers can be national and international. Participation of national experts will depend on activity of social groups. In line with the law all political parties, personnel of enterprises, public associations can take part in election monitoring. Trade unions, local deputies are usually very active in these issues. The central election commission is very cautious about international observers, taking in view the statements by several countries and the OSCE. Do we need the observers who are not going to recognize the election a priori? Therefore the issue on international experts will be discussed at a high level involving the head of state, foreign ministry, parliament. An international observer cannot come to monitor the election on his own initiative – he should be invited.

Source: *The National Centre of Legal Information of the Republic of Belarus; September 1, 2005;*  
<http://law.by/work/Eng/>

## REGIONAL

### 6. Integration with Belarus Has Gotten Cheaper

#### Friendship of Nations

Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov showed his support for Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's efforts to deepen integration in the union state yesterday in Minsk. He promised to a lot by the end of the year \$146 million for the purchase of natural gas from Gazprom at new, higher prices. In addition, Fradkov opened an exhibit of Russian goods in Minsk and spoke at the first union business forum.

Integration with Russia began early yesterday morning in Minsk. First Lukashenko received the prime minister, in Belarus on a one-day visit, at his residence. "There was a conversation on issues of effective bilateral cooperation," Fradkov reported when he left. The effectiveness of integration of the two countries is impressive indeed. Russia is paying less every year for the gas it delivers to Belarus. Last year, Gazprom raised the price for its product from \$30 per 1000 cu. m. to \$46.68. The Russian federal budget paid the Belarusian federal budget the difference in the form of a \$175-million interstate credit. In 2005, they plan to give the Belarusian budget only \$146 million. Of course, that is small-scale economics so far. But that \$29 million is still not unneeded in the Russian budget and, if Belarusian Prime Minister Sergey Sidorsky and his deputy Vladimir Semashko are to be believed, the Belarusian budget plans to pay its gas debt in the coming years. In any case, Sidorsky and Semashko claimed yesterday that the Belarusian gas debt would be reduced in the next several years from \$300 million to \$120 million. Sidorsky also said that the country is paying Gazprom now only in cash. Gazprom does not deny that information. But it is not hurrying to send Belarus more gas either. Gazprom is supposed to provide Belarus with 20.5 billion cu. m. of gas this year. The Belarusians are asking that that delivery be increased, without a price increase, to 22 billion cu. m. in 2010, 23.7 billion in 2015 and 25 billion in 2020. Gazprom, however, wants to reduce deliveries to 18 billion cu. m. per year. The Russian company is already dissatisfied with the price of \$46.68 per 1000 cu. m. They plan to sell gas to Ukraine for \$160 per 1000 cu. m.

Yesterday's negotiations were not limited to the gas problem. At the opening of the exhibition of Russian goods, Fradkov noted the competitiveness of many models. That, he said, should make it possible to restore the small bilateral trade turnover this year, which customs officials say, has been declining. In 2004, trade turnover reached \$17 billion, but for the first half of this year, it was only \$7 billion. Belarusian customs statistics indicate that trade is up 20 percent this year. No one was surprised at this difference. Each counts in its own way.

Lukashenko explained yesterday how to count. Opening the first union business forum in Minsk yesterday, he reminded the audience that "We have to overcome what divides us patiently and preserve what joins and unites us, without giving up our sovereignty to each other, neither country, choose unified legal, economic and organizational systems that will become the basis for the future union state." The most important conclusion Lukashenko reached was on the economic unification of the countries. "In their time, many spoke about the incompatibility of the Belarusian and Russian economies, but it seems they are compatible." Belarusian Minister of the Economy Nikolai Zaichenko explained to what degree they are compatible. "A difference of opinion remains on the emission center," he admitted. In particular, the Belarusians are continuing to insist that their national bank have equal rights with the Central Bank of Russia in managing the emission center, which in Zaichenko's words, "would create the real possibility for admittance of other states into the currency union of the two states." At the Russian Central Bank, they hold that only Russian financial authorities should be in charge of the emission center. It is a clear negotiations

deadlock. Lukashenko was careful not to mention currency integration yesterday. That must be coming in the second union business forum, which will be held in Moscow.

*Source: Konstantin Smirnov, Kommersant; September 7, 2005; <http://www.kommersant.com>*

### **7. Belarus For Cooperation With More Developed Russian Regions**

Belarus cooperating with Russia will mainly rely on the most developed Russian regions, said Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

"We do not refuse to cooperate with any Russian region, city or even village. But we intend to define the broadest and most promising regions on which we will rely in the development of bilateral ties, proceeding from economic interests," Lukashenko said on Wednesday at the meeting with Nikolai Maksyuta, the chief of the Volgograd regional administration.

The Belarusian president said, "This is a belt of sorts, including the Stavropol territory, the Kuban area, Volgograd and Rostov. Belarusian machine building and the economy as a whole are linked with these Russian regions."

The president remarked that commercial and economic relations with the Volgograd region "in general develop favorably, but we may reach a higher level." "90-million dollar trade turnover is not a bad result, but, in view of strategic cooperation with Russia, we must develop bilateral contacts more intensively," Lukashenko said.

Maksyuta pointed to huge potential of the Volgograd region, which Belarus can draw on. The region can, specifically, supply Belarus with metallurgy products Belarus currently imports from Ukraine. Lukashenko said in this connection he aims to have one channel for steel supplies to Belarus.

"If your standards are normal, you can win a tender," he said. "Quality and price are essential to us." "We find it advantageous to work with one enterprise. We purchase thousands of tones of steel. These are huge amounts, and we wish everything should be open and aboveboard," he said.

*Source: Itar-Tass, September 7, 2005 [www.itar-tass.com/eng](http://www.itar-tass.com/eng)*

### **8. Russia To Lend \$146m To Belarus**

Russia will be able to lend \$146 million to Belarus this year, a source in the Russian government told RBC on the eve of Russian premier Mikhail Fradkov's visit to Minsk.

Belarus wanted the money to compensate its losses caused by an increase in Russian gas prices, the source said, adding that the terms of the loan had been agreed. If the agreement is signed soon, Belarus "could get the money before the end of this year."

Belarus also wants to borrow another RUR 9 billion from Russia to support the Belarus ruble. "From Russia's view, that loan would be inexpedient given the two countries' currency integration plans," the source stressed.

Russia and Belarus continue negotiations on the introduction of a common currency. Corrections to the joint plan of action would be discussed at bilateral meetings in the Belarus capital, the source said, noting "objective difficulties there". Initially, the single currency was scheduled for introduction on January 1, 2006.

Russia and Belarus have not yet reached an agreement to retain the price of Russian gas supplies to Belarus at \$46.68 per 1,000 sq. meters next year, the source said. Russian-Belarus fuel and energy supplies through 2020 are under discussion, but there are disagreements over the issue, the official added. Russia is ready to supply not more than 18 million tons of oil a year,

while Belarus would like to raise the supplies to 22 million tons by 2010, to 23.7 million tons by 2015 and to 25 million tons by 2020.

*Source: The Russia Journal, September 6, 2005; <http://www.russiajournal.com>*

### **9. Lukashenko Calls Belarus-Russia Union State a Geopolitical Reality**

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said Tuesday that the Belarus-Russia union state had become a geopolitical reality.

"Today it is evident to anyone that our integration has taken place. The Belarus-Russia union has become a geopolitical reality," he said while opening the first Belarusian-Russian economic forum.

Lukashenko said a number of organizations had been established in post-Soviet countries for the last 15 years.

"Our Union is leading these processes as an example of equal cooperation," he said.

Lukashenko said Belarus and Russia were not restricted by the framework of bilateral cooperation.

"We are trying to resolve the problems of international policy," he said.

Lukashenko said the adoption of the union state's constitution would bring the two states even closer to each other, but unification would not be simple.

The Belarusian leader said economic cooperation was a "powerful foundation of the integration processes."

He said the results of this were evident: if earlier Russia-Belarus turnover was \$5 billion, then in 2004 it reached some \$18 billion. Lukashenko said this growth was unprecedented for such a short period.

"The economic integration of Belarus and Russia is rather the desire of the two nations than the result of the work done by the presidents and governments. If they [the people of Russia and Belarus] want to live in a single state, this will happen sooner or later," he said.

*Source: RIA Novosti, September 6, 2005; <http://en.rian.ru>*

### **10. Russia, Belarus to Discuss Union State Budget**

The budget of the Russia-Belarus union state could amount to \$109.97 million in 2006, a Russian government official said Tuesday.

According to the official, the budget will come under consideration at a session of the Council of Ministers of the union state in Minsk. Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov and his Belarusian counterpart Sergei Sidorsky are scheduled to attend.

The agenda of the session will feature 27 issues, three of which entail the budget. The union state's Parliamentary Assembly will report on 2003 spending, the preparation of the report on 2004 expenditures and touch on major parameters for the 2006 budget.

The 2006 budget will be 10% larger than that of 2005, the official said.

*Source: RIA Novosti, September 6, 2005; <http://en.rian.ru>*

### **11. Russia Invests USD350 M In Belarusian Economy in 2004**

Russian investments into the Belarusian economy in 2004 amounted to 350 million U.S. dollars, a high-ranking official said.

Deputy Secretary of the Russia-Belarus Union State Valery Drozd told reporters on Monday that Belarus is trying to create a more attractive environment for Russian investors.

He said, however, that Russian business circles do not participate in large Belarusian investment projects.

Drozd believes it is more profitable for Russia to invest in Belarus than in non-CIS countries because the economies of the two countries are deeply integrated and, therefore, Russian investments in the Belarusian economy may be much more effective.

The deputy secretary believes that petrochemical, chemical, machine-building, and defense industries are most promising sectors to invest.

*Source: Itar-Tass, September 5, 2005 [www.itar-tass.com/eng](http://www.itar-tass.com/eng)*

### **12. Moscow Undecided Over New Ambassador to Belarus**

The person who should go to Belarus as ambassador instead of Dmitry Ayatskov has not yet been decided on, an informed source told Interfax.

Earlier this week, it was reported that Ayatskov, who had not yet arrived in Minsk, could be replaced by either Kaliningrad region Governor Vladimir Yegorov, State Duma Deputy Speaker Sergey Baburin, or Duma Deputy Gennady Seleznev. State Secretary of Union State of Russia and Belarus Pavel Borodin has also been mentioned.

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

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **13. Poland Champions Ethnic Minority Rights in Belarus**

Poland wants to build step by step an alliance of the European public and political opinion for the protection of ethnic minority rights in Belarus – leader of the Civic Platform and presidential candidate Donald Tusk has said. Tusk is in Brussels with the persecuted leader of Belarus ethnic Poles Andzelika Borys, who is not recognized by the administration of the authoritarian president Alexander Lukashenko.

Andzelika Borys says it is crucial for Poland to win allies in its efforts to help the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus as their treatment by the administration is tantamount to violation of human rights.

Donald Tusk does not predict a breakthrough soon. The talks with the secretary general of the Council of Europe Terry Davis did not bring any concrete decision, he said. But the fact that Davis learned about the situation of ethnic Poles in Belarus is a success, Tusk believes. In his opinion, European politicians still do not appreciate the role of democratic and citizens movements in Belarus. "These talks show that there is much to be done yet", Donald Tusk said.

*Source: Polskie Radio; September 8, 2005;  
<http://www.radio.com.pl/polonija/article.asp?tlid=27203&j=2>*

### **14. U.S. Embassy Response to Disinformation**

A recent series of misleading statements that have appeared in a Minsk-based newspaper and have been broadcast on several state-owned national television outlets indicates a troubling

pattern of disinformation. The U.S. Embassy in Minsk is concerned about various unsubstantiated and spurious claims about alleged illegal activities of U.S. Embassy officers during 2000-2001. The aforementioned media outlets have questioned these activities and implied that similar activities are taking place currently.

The Embassy reaffirms its commitment to carrying out its diplomatic activities in a transparent and open manner and in a way that is fully consistent with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

As President Bush and Secretary of State Rice have consistently stated, the Belarusian people deserve no less than the basic right of all free peoples to determine their own future and leadership freely and democratically. The United States does not seek to support any single party or candidate in Belarus but only the democratic process largely through providing observers and training to observers and practitioners of the democratic process. The United States will continue to support a broad range of groups of individuals throughout Belarus whose goal is to promote the development of civil society, foster the growth of independent media, strengthen the social and health sectors, encourage the development of small and medium enterprise, and increase respect for the rule of law and human rights.

*Source: Charter97, September 8, 2005; www.charter97.org*

#### **15. To Raise Awareness About Belarus**

Poland wants that the UE representative in Minsk comes from other union state than Poland. It is vital that the situation in our eastern neighbor becomes a European issue, says the Polish foreign ministry.

The issue of Belarus is to be brought to the European parliament on Thursday by the leader of the liberal Civic Platform Donald Tusk and Anzelika Borys, head of the Polish Union in Belarus who had been deprived of her office by the authorities in Minsk. The Belarus issue has become a joint strategy of the government and the opposition. Prime minister Marek Belka said it is one of the priorities of Poland's foreign policy to make Europe realise the gravity of the situation.

"It is a top priority to introduce the question of Belarus to European discussion in a similar way the issue of Ukraine was introduced several months ago."

The controversies between Poland and Belarus arouse after authorities in Minks illegalized elections to the Union of Poles grouping the Polish minority resident in Belarus, but now the issue has crossed the Polish Belarus border.

The head of the European Commission has decided to send its representative to Minsk, Poland does not want it to be a Polish diplomat, since this country stresses that it is not a local conflict between Poland and Belarus, but a problem with the Belarus system. European affairs commentator Jaroslaw Petz says that there are obvious reasons which point why the EU representative should not be Polish.

Tomasz Sajewicz from RP Belarus section, doubts however that Poland's efforts will bring about any changes in Belarus and intensify EU's interest in that country.

For the time being the EU is represented in Minsk by its ambassador, the charge d' affairs will be appointed in a few weeks and it will be his decisions and opinions which will influence EU's policy towards Belarus.

*Source: Polskie Radio; September 7, 2005;  
<http://www.radio.com.pl/polonia/article.asp?tid=27168&j=2>*

## **16. Chernobyl's Harm Was Far Less Than Predicted, U.N. Report Says**

The long-term health and environmental impacts of the 1986 accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine, while severe, were far less catastrophic than feared, according to a major new report by eight U.N. agencies.

The governments of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, the three countries most affected by radioactive fallout from Chernobyl, should strive to end the "paralyzing fatalism" of tens of thousands of their citizens who wrongly believe they are still at risk of an early death, according to the study released Monday.

The 600-page report found that as of the middle of this year, the accident had caused fewer than 50 deaths directly attributable to radiation, most of them among emergency workers who died in the first months after the accident. In the wake of the world's largest nuclear disaster, there were numerous predictions of mass fatalities from radiation.

The report said that nine children had died of thyroid cancer, but that the survival rate among the 4,000 children in the region who had developed thyroid cancer has been 99 percent. An expected spike in fertility problems and birth defects also failed to materialize, the study found.

"The health effects of the accident were potentially horrific, but when you add them up using validated conclusions from good science, the public health effects were not nearly as substantial as had at first been feared," Michael Repacholi, manager of the World Health Organization's radiation program, said in a statement.

U.N. scientists predicted about 4,000 eventual radiation-related deaths among 600,000 people in the affected area, including emergency workers and residents. That is consistent with predictions in the aftermath of the accident by scientists in the Soviet Union, of which Ukraine, Russia and Belarus were then a part.

But the vast majority of residents and emergency workers received relatively low doses of radiation, comparable to naturally occurring levels of exposure, the report said.

Officials said that the continued intense medical monitoring of tens of thousands of people in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus is no longer a smart use of limited resources and is, in fact, contributing to mental health problems among many residents nearly 20 years later. In Belarus and Ukraine, 5 percent to 7 percent of government spending is consumed by benefits and programs for Chernobyl victims. And in the three countries, as many as 7 million people are receiving Chernobyl-related social benefits.

"The monitoring of people with incredibly low doses uses huge amounts of resources and does more psychological harm than good," said Fred Mettler, a professor of radiology at the University of New Mexico who chaired one of three health groups in the study, titled "Chernobyl's Legacy: Health, Environmental and Socio-Economic Impacts." The study, involving more than 100 scientists, was compiled by U.N. agencies, including the International Atomic Energy Agency, and representatives of the governments of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.

*Source: Peter Finn, Washington Post; September 6, 2005; <http://www.washingtonpost.com>*

## **17. Next Stop Is the Belarus BlackBerry Revolution**

A new generation of revolutionaries, inspired by the Polish Solidarity movement and guided by slick marketing experts, is plotting to spread change to Belarus, one of Europe's last dictatorships.

At a pop concert in Warsaw to mark the 25th birthday of Solidarity this week, a Belarusian band, N.R.M., stole the show as the audience chanted: "Freedom for our neighbors!"

A coalition of veteran revolutionaries and clean-cut “democracy engineers” working for Western agencies gathered in the Polish capital to plot their next move. “Plenty still to do,” said one woman, describing herself as a private political analyst of closed societies. “Belarus next, then Burma, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe.” Hers was a busy schedule, but not pure fantasy, given events in some Eastern European countries.

The Serbian overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic (2000), the Rose Revolution in Georgia (2003) and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004) have created a class of revolutionary carpetbaggers who move from one vulnerable dictatorship to the next. Belarus, under President Lukashenko, is next.

The new revolutionaries are not wild-eyed and bushy bearded. They are kitted out with BlackBerries rather than petrol bombs and their latest tool is a computer video game, called A Force More Powerful, that will be used to train budding Lech Walesas.

A Belarusian version of the game should be ready in the next few months. It will show Minsk street scenes, and pose questions and dilemmas useful to anyone trying to mobilise peaceful protest against Mr. Lukashenko. It is, however, youthful energy rather than software that is exporting the revolutionary spirit.

Yesterday two activists from Kmara, the Georgian prodemocracy student group — one of the engines of the Rose Revolution — were deported from Belarus after making contact with Belarusian dissidents. Luka Tsuladze and Georgy Kandelaki, the latter an official in the administration of President Saakashvili of Georgia, had been jailed for 15 days last month on charges of giving “instructions for a revolution”. On their release they were expelled to Ukraine. Leaders of the Serbian group Otpor, the Ukrainian Pora and Kmara also met fledgling protest movements from across Eastern Europe in Albania this summer.

“Revolutions in the modern age have to be marketed,” Ivan Marovic, of Otpor, said. “We invented the corporate branding of politics — and our model was Coca-Cola.”

Dissidents meet to decide the color of the revolution, its anthem and logo. When some of these questions were thrown at Alexei Michalevic, the Belarus opposition leader, in Warsaw he looked baffled. It was all he could do to keep the Belarusian dissident groups together.

And where was the street protest supposed to come from? The biggest spontaneous demonstration that anyone can remember in Minsk was when a McDonald’s restaurant opened in the city and failed to provide enough seating.

More to the taste of the Belarusian opposition is Miroslaw Chojecki, who in the 1970s and 1980s set up a huge underground publishing empire to undermine communism in Poland. Now Mr. Chojecki is gleefully involved in subverting the Lukashenko regime. “We have pressed thousands of compact discs that are then infiltrated into Belarus,” he said. “Our motto is: throw a CD at Lukashenko.”

Much of the resistance work has to be kept quiet lest it embarrass the European Union or stir the anger of President Lukashenko’s friend, President Putin. Relations between Poland and Russia are frayed; the Kremlin believes Poland has become the spearhead of a Western attempt to establish friendly (and anti-Russian) governments along EU borders.

Opposition publications are being banned at dizzying speed in Belarus — the country lost 262 independent newspapers last year — and so Poland and Lithuania have become the printing works of free-thinking Belarusians. Funds have been raised to expand broadcasts from Poland into Belarus. When Mr. Lukashenko shut a liberal grammar school in Minsk, it went underground, teaching pupils in private apartments. When the students finish their courses, they study in

Poland: no Belarusian university will take them. Video smuggling is proving a most effective way of undermining Mr. Lukashenko: it breaks the monopoly of state television.

Steve York, an American film-maker, has been producing a series of 25-minute films on Solidarity, South Africa, the Danish treatment of Jews in the Second World War, and racism. All are being dubbed in Poland and smuggled into Belarus. There they are copied and passed from family to family

One of the masterminds of this technique is Peter Ackerman, a former Wall Street trader, whose film about Serbia, *Bringing Down a Dictator*, was shown repeatedly on independent television in Georgia in the tense days before the uprising. Now, in video format, it is on its way to Belarus. Dr Ackerman was one of the authors of a study that looked at the mechanics of a modern revolution. Available online —Belarusian dissidents still have relatively free access to the internet despite a recent crackdown — it analyses the experiences of 67 countries that have tried to shift from an authoritarian regime over the past 30 years.

Its advice: the opposition has to unite around a single cause, work out non-violent strategies, find ways of communicating with or neutralizing the police, maintain contacts with the foreign media, and take away fear of the dictator by openly mocking him.

Will it work in Belarus? Watch this space.

Source: Roger Boyes, *Times Online*; September 3, 2005; <http://www.timesonline.co.uk>

## **HUMAN RIGHTS & INDEPENDENT MEDIA**

### **18. Mikola Statkevich Not Allowed to Minsk**

Wife of the political prisoner Mikola Statkevich, Valyantsina Statkevich, lodged an appeal to the prosecutor's office of Pershamajski district of Minsk, which prohibited her husband to visit Minsk. Her husband, the leader of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Narodnaya Hramada) Mikola Statkevich, serves the sentence of corrective labor in Baranavichy for organizing street protest after the referendum last year.

Mikola Statkevich started to serve the sentence since July 29. According to the law, if the prisoner had no violations of the internal order, he is allowed to visit his family once a month. However, the leadership of police of Pershamajski district of Minsk, where M.Statkevich is registered, sent a letter to the special commandant's office, and referring to a hard operational situation in the city, asked not to allow the oppositional politician to go to Minsk. Mikola Statkevich's wife Valyantsina considers the actions of the police illegal.

"I want to receive explanations why they are afraid to let my husband visit Minsk for three days. Is the operational situation so difficult indeed? A police chief in city department that he is afraid that Statkevich would make a demonstration or something like this in three days. Mikola wants to visit his family and spend some time at home. I have an impression that the authorities are afraid of any person already," Valyantsina Statkevich said to Radio Svaboda.

Source: *Charter97*, September 8, 2005; [www.charter97.org](http://www.charter97.org)

### **19. Georgian Youth Activist Describes Jailing In Minsk**

Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze -- two activists of Georgia's Kmara, an organization that was instrumental in deposing the Georgian government during the bloodless Rose Revolution in 2003 -- were arrested in Minsk on 24 August, reportedly because the authenticity of their passports raised official "doubts." The following day a KGB official announced on Belarusian Television that they would be deported from Belarus for meddling in the country's internal affairs. But the

authorities subsequently changed their mind once again, and a district court in Minsk on 29 August sentenced the two Georgians to 15 days in jail each for "petty hooliganism,"

finding them guilty of a fight that they had allegedly started in a prison cell. Amnesty International declared them prisoners of conscience. On 2 September, the Minsk City Court released them, finding the district court's verdict "ungrounded."

Kandelaki gave an interview to Natalya Radzina from Belarus's Charter-97 human rights group on September 5 under the title "Paranoia is a sign of the regime's death throes." Below is a translation of this interview.

- Charter-97: Giorgi, why did you come to Belarus?

- Giorgi Kandelaki: We came with a very simple aim -- to support the democracy-oriented youth of Belarus. It is funny that the Belarusian authorities believe that we are experts in the theory of nonviolent resistance. On the eve of the Rose Revolution in our country, we used a handbook written by the Belarusian movement Zubr.

Our aim was to give emotional support to Belarusians. Our friends from Zubr have sufficient knowledge.

- Charter-97: Tell us about your arrest.

- Kandelaki: On coming to Minsk we knew that checking in at a hotel is tantamount to [undergoing the required] registration [for foreigners]. The hotel sends registration data to the police. After that we noticed that the police began to shadow us and that our telephones began to be tapped. On the eve of our arrest, our registration term expired, but we decided to remain in Belarus for some more time and prolonged our registration. Apparently, there was no time to report that to the police, and they found a formal reason to detain us.

We were detained when we were walking jointly with Zubr coordinator Uladzimir Kobets in downtown Minsk. When we showed our registration documents to the plainclothes policemen who stopped us, they looked like fools. But they arrested us all the same. Later, I learned that a prosecutor's authorization of the prolongation of our arrests mentioned that something was allegedly wrong with our documents. The most absurd thing was that the authorization also mentioned that we were not occupied with "publicly useful work," which implied that we were vagrants in Minsk. I told them I am a Georgian journalist. Luka said he is a theater director and works for Georgian Public Television. But that made no impression on them, they simply did not listen to us. Then they took us to a pre-trial detention prison. We thought that they would release us after a day.

But it happened otherwise.

- Charter-97: What were the conditions like in your cell?

- Kandelaki: I had the impression that the very format of that institution creates a legal vacuum there. In our cell we met people who were kept there for two or three months without trial or investigation. The conditions contradicted human dignity. The prison bed was an ordinary wooden board, on which eight to 10 people had to sleep. A cover was not allowed. When we were evicted from the hotel, we wanted to take at least towels out of our things but they did not allow us. Of course, they did not allow us to take any warm clothes either. We only managed to take toothbrushes with us. It was awfully cold at night. Only after five days, thanks to the publicity raised by Belarusian human rights activists and Georgian diplomats, we were able to take some of our things to the cell.

- Charter-97: How did the Belarusian police behave toward you?

- Kandelaki: After the night I spent in the pre-trial detention, an interrogator asked me mockingly: "Well, Mr. Kandelaki, how do you like being in the Republic of Belarus?" I told him that some day he would be ashamed of what he does. He answered that "this will never happen."

The behavior of the police was arrogant and impudent. We were isolated from any information, we were not told why we had been arrested. Even though Georgian consul in Kyiv Zurab Kvachadze and Georgian consul in Moscow Zurab Pataradze visited the pre-trial detention facility, they were not allowed to meet with us. And we were not told that they had come and were trying to see us. On the contrary, we were persuaded that nobody was interested in our lot, that there was only one telephone call from somewhere, and that was all. The Vienna Convention [on Consular Relations] was violated all the time.

On Sunday [28 August] in the evening, a man named Bondarchik was placed in our cell. He began talking about music. The most interesting thing was that he talked about those groups whose compact discs we had in our suitcases. We realized that he was a provocateur, and we refused to speak with him. After half an hour he requested that he be transferred to a different cell. They took him away and, I think, simply released him. But the following day we were taken to court and accused of insulting and threatening that man Bondarchik, who spent just half an hour in our cell. We were being persuaded to give up on a lawyer but after we insisted on having one, they found some random man. He told me: "Son, I understand everything, but the judge will not put his head under the hammer." As a result, we got 15 days in jail each.

I know one thing -- we will manage to make accountable all those responsible for our illegal arrest. Those people will surely be punished after democracy is established in Belarus.

- Charter-97: How did you leave Belarus?

- Kandelaki: The Belarusian authorities did not acknowledge that their actions were unlawful; they simply found excuses to release us after they became afraid of the consequences of the scandal [connected with our arrest]. The reason for the release of Luka Tsuladze was that his name was allegedly written down incorrectly in the police report. I was released allegedly because my knowledge of Russian is poor and it was difficult to conduct an investigation and court proceedings against me. However, as you see, my command of Russian is quite good. The most absurd thing is that we have to pay for our stay in that pre-trial detention center.

- Charter-97: Did you feel the solidarity of [other] Belarusians during your arrest? Do you know that three activists of the [Belarusian youth organization] Zubr are now under arrest for acting in solidarity with you?

- Kandelaki: We met with one of the arrested Zubr members in the cell and he told us what happened. These people are real heroes. They are educated, cultured young people, the real patriots of their country. I have no doubt that they will very soon secure freedom and democracy in this country.

- Charter-97: What, in your opinion, is the real motive behind your arrest in Belarus?

- Kandelaki: The entire system of power in Belarus is based on total paranoia. Even our cellmates doubted that the Belarusian authorities have enough wit not to put themselves in a stupid situation. This is an empirical feature of such regimes. As soon as the authorities -- either in Serbia or Georgia or Ukraine -- espoused such paranoia, their death throes began.

Apart from this, according to our information, Moscow intervened in this affair. A signal to arrest us came from there.

Paranoia in this regard exists in Russia, too. If a democratic wave sweeps across Belarus, Russia's plans to reanimate the empire will completely collapse. The recent deportation from Moscow of Marko Markovic, an active participant in the Orange Revolution and producer of the [Ukrainian rock music] group Okean Elzy, shows whom we are dealing with.

- Charter-97: What would you like to say to young Belarusians?

- Kandelaki: I admire them. I believe in them. And they must believe in themselves and pursue their goal without turning back. The Belarusian people are very wise and they will say "no" to the dictatorial regime. The time has come.

*Source: RFE/RL, September 7, 2005; www.rferl.org*

## **20. Belarusian TV Accuses Polish Diplomats**

Yesterday Belarusian State TV accused Polish diplomats of transferring a newspaper of the Union of Poles in Belarus *Glos znad Niemna* over the border. It could cause expulsion of Polish representatives from Belarus, the influential Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* informed today.

On Monday the program "In the center of attention" showed a commentary, in which Polish consul general in Hrodna Andrzej Kretkowski was charged with transporting copies of the newspaper *Glos znad Niemna* over the border. After that the acting ambassador of Poland in Minsk Marian Semakowic, was accused of coming to Hrodna, gathering activists of the Union of Poles in Belarus in the consulate and allegedly instructing how to organize unrest in Vaukavysk, where the UPB congress was planned. The accusations were illustrated by video recordings of police cameras, placed by the Polish consulate in Hrodna.

The TV program can become a reason for eviction of other Polish diplomats from Belarus. The same thing happened in May, when the deputy ambassador of Poland in Belarus Marec Bucko had appeared in the program "In the center of attention". Soon after the program the authorities in Minsk asked him to leave the country.

*Source: Charter97; September 6, 2005; <http://www.charter97.org/eng/>*

## **21. Georgian Youths Jailed In Belarus Return To Tbilisi**

Two Georgian youth activists who spent a few days in Belarusian police custody have returned to Tbilisi.

The two, Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze, arrived in the Georgian capital yesterday from Ukraine. They met with

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili at the State Chancellery today.

Saakashvili thanked Ukrainian authorities for their help in securing the release of the two activists.

On 30 August, Kandelaki and Tsuladze were sentenced to 15 days of administrative detention on charges of violating Belarus's travel regulations. But they were released sooner than expected.

Both men belong to Kmara! (Enough!), the youth movement that helped Saakashvili rise to power during the November 2003 Rose Revolution.

Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has accused his opponents of seeking a similar revolution in his country.

*Source: RFE/RL, September 6, 2005; www.rferl.org*

## **22. "BDG" Is Reregistered**

On September 2 the Ministry of Information announced that *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta* was reregistered under a new name - *BDG. Delovaya Gazeta*. Pyotr Martsau, the newspaper's publisher and editor-in-chief, informed BelaPAN about it. The newspaper's Friday issue could not be distributed due to delay during the process of the reregistration.

Such newspapers as *Belgazeta* (former *Belorusskaya Gazeta*), *Economicheskaya Gazeta* (former *Natsionalnaya Economicheskaya Gazeta*), *Belorusy i Rynok* (former *Belorussky Rynok*) were reregistered in August. The reregistration was due to the President's decree of May 31, 2005 "On using words like "national" and "Belarusian" in the names of independent and non-governmental organizations".

*{Text revised by the Editors}*

*Source: Belarusian Association of Journalists, September 5, 2005; www.baj.ru*

## **23. Member of the Union of Poles in Belarus Leaves Jail**

Member of the Union of Poles in Belarus - Tadeusz Gawin – has been released from jail, having spent 30 days there. The union's creator was first sentenced to 15 days in prison for participating in what was identified as an illegal gathering in front of the association's building one day earlier. The sentence was prolonged to 30 days after Tadeusz Gawin allegedly beat his prison mate.

Most members of the Union of Poles in Belarus were either detained or arrested recently after the authorities in Minsk refused to acknowledge the union's new composition. Elections were repeated and leaders linked to the Lukashenko regime chosen.

*Source: Polskie Radio; September 1, 2005;  
<http://www.radio.com.pl/polonia/article.asp?tId=26933&j=2>*

## **BUSINESS**

### **24. Fuel and Energetic Balance of Belarus by 2020 Might Be Signed Within Month**

The fuel and energetic balance of Belarus by 2020 might be signed within a month, first deputy prime minister of Belarus Vladimir Semashko said during the first Belarusian-Russian economic forum.

In his words, to this end a special Belarusian-Russian commission was set up. Vladimir Semashko noted that the fuel and energetic balance 2006 will be included into that elaborated by 2020. The prices for Russian gas for Belarus in 2006 are expected to remain the same – USD 46,68 per 1,000 cubic meters. Now an issues on supply of 21 or 21,5 billion cubic meters is under discussion.

*Source: The National Centre of Legal Information of the Republic of Belarus; September 7, 2005;  
<http://law.by/work/Eng/>*

### **25. Russia To Keep Selling Gas to Belarus For 47 dlrs per 1,000 cm**

The contract for Russian gas supplies to Belarus in 2006 will be ready for signature in October, Belarusian First Deputy Energy Minister, Eduard Tovpanets has told the media.

"It has been agreed in principle that the price of Russian gas for Belarus will remain at this year's level," he said.

Currently Russia exports natural gas to Belarus for 46.68 dollars per 1,000 cubic meters (VAT excluded).

Tovpanets said the tariff of Russian gas transit through Belarus would not be changed next year, either.

At the same time he refrained from forecasting Russian gas prices in the longer term.

“One should bear in mind that Russia has no fixed tariffs. They are set anew each year. There is a possibility the price will not remain frozen,” Tovpanets said. He speculated that tariffs may change with the countries’ admission to the WTO.

*Source: Itar-Tass, September 2, 2005 [www.itar-tass.com/eng](http://www.itar-tass.com/eng)*

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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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