

Edited by Maria Kabalina
International League for Human Rights

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HUMAN RIGHTS & INDEPENDENT MEDIA

1. TRANS KGB Confiscated Angelika Borys's Passport

Today on December 6, 2006, Angelika Borys, head of unauthorized Union of Poles in Belarus, was called for an interrogation to the KGB. The KGB officers confiscated her passport. Thus, they deprived her possibility to accompany Aleksandr Milinkevich during his trip to the Sakharov Award ceremony in Strasburg on December 11.

Earlier *Telegraf* informed that a criminal case on the charges of drug caring was open against Angelika Borys. The KGB investigates the case.

Angelika Borys was detained at the Belarusian-Polish board transition center. An unknown white powder was found in a hiding place in Borys' car. The transition center employees untwisted the car window and found the bag with an unknown powder. Borys was released after she had a test on drugs presence in her blood at the clinic in the city of Grodno.

Angelika Borys stated than that "the drugs in the car she was riding in was a provocation." "I told the police that this situation is just a provocation. The unknown powder was just put stealthily. The policemen themselves did not know what kind of powder it was. First they said it is heroin, than – amphetamine. I think someone just decided to get a promotion on this case," head of the unauthorized Union of Poles in Belarus stated in November.

Aleksandr Milinkevich believes that the authorities confiscate her passport knowingly in order not to let her go abroad.

"The KGB practically prohibited Angelika Borys to attend high level meetings, planned for the Belarusian delegation in Strasburg. Today Angelika Borys is one of the symbols of the fights against human rights abuse in Belarus and an example of defending her own rights. Surely, the ban on leaving the country is a part of the authority's campaign to weak our delegation and prevent our speech at the European parliament session," Aleksandr Milinkevich thinks.

Trans. by Ed.

Source: Telegraf; December 6, 2006; <http://www.telegraf.by/belarus/2006/12/06/kgbpasport/>

2. Belarusian Opposition Activist on Hunger Strike for Almost Seven Weeks

Iryna Kazulina on December 5 visited her husband, former opposition presidential candidate Alyksandr Kazulin, who is serving his sentence of 5 1/2 years in a correctional facility near Vitsebsk, *RFE/RL's Belarus Service* reported.

Kazulin began a hunger strike on October 20, demanding that the UN Security Council discuss the situation in Belarus. Kazulin also wants the opposition Political Council of United Prodemocratic Forces to send a statement about human rights violations in Belarus to the UN Security Council. Iryna Kazulina told journalists that her husband is not going to stop his fasting as long as his demands are unfulfilled. Kazulin reportedly lost 26 kilograms during his 46-day protest.

Source: RFE/RL; December 6, 2006; <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/3-cee.asp>

3. TRANS Police Interested in Milinkevich's Political Plans

Police of the city of Beloozersk released the Belarusian democratic forces leader Aleksandr Milinkevich and his assistant Alexei Kovalts. All the charges against them were dropped. Pavel Mojeiko, Milinkevich press secretary, informed that police interrogated them. As it became clear, the police was interested not in "drug sales", but in what Milinkevich was doing in Beloozerksk.

Today Milinkevich and his assistant were detained in the city of Beloozersk, where they were collecting signatures for nominating democratic forces candidate to the local councils' deputies. Milinkevich and his assistant Kovalets were in the parked car when the police came. The police told them that they had received an anonymous call with the information about unknown people selling drugs and alcohol from the parked car.

The politician's car was taken to the local police station, where it was carefully inspected. The personal belongings of Milinkevich were also examined.

"The police hold Milinkevich for an hour and than released because they did not find any drugs or alcohol," Mojeiko informed.

There is a question to the law-enforcement service: if they are so interested in activity and plans of Milinkevich, why they distract him from the signatures collection. Milinkevich is working on the concrete task and he knows the least about his own plans. The whole group of politicians and experts work out his plans. They honestly and openly print online to all Russians and Belarusians all information about Milinkevich's actions and movements. So, if the policemen in the city of Beloozersk and other cities want to know about the opposition news, it is much easier to get access to Internet. There are so much more news online.

Trans. by Ed.

Source: AFN; December 4, 2006; <http://www.afn.by/news/default.asp?newsid=81106#data>

DOMESTIC

4. TRANS United Civil Party To Press for Central Electoral Committee Resignation

The opposition United Civil Party (UCP) initiated in the frameworks of the "For Freedom" campaign to organize actions to hold free and without any fabrications elections in Belarus. In particular, the UCP intend to obtain the resignation of all members of the central electoral committee, responsible for the last presidential elections campaign.

Anatoly Lebedko believes that "after Lukashenko confessed in fabricating the results of the presidential elections, the members of the central electoral committee have neither moral, not legal rights to organize electoral campaign for local councils. With the reference Lukashenko gave Ermoshenko and her colleagues, you can not allow these people to even come close to the elections."

The leader of the UCP intends to submit to every representative of the Chamber of Deputies a suggestion to start an impeachment to Lukashenko, the UCP press service informs.

"I am a realist. In our conditions it is easier to land the Belarusian cosmonauts on the moon than to practically realize the impeachment process. It is all are the results of the fear Lukashenko felt in the fall of 1996. The state lawyers added so many limits to the impeachment procedure. The possibility of using it is close to zero. In addition, you have to appeal to people whom the authorities brought to the Oval Cabinet. I do not expect that deputies will immediately start to defend the law and voters' rights. The opposite is more likely. However, the nice surprises may happen. General Frolov came to the Chamber of Representatives as the authority supporter but as a honest and decent man he preferred to live and work in the framework of law."

"This appeal, as well a demand for the Cahmber of representative members to resign, and appeals to the Prosecutor's Office, to the High Court, are the bell, which must to wake our society up. The bell should be heard all over Belarus. People, awaked by this bell on March 19, 2007, will

come back to the Kalinosky square to demand free elections without fabrications," Lebedko stated during his interview to the UCP press service.

Trans. by Ed.

Source: Belorussky Partizan; December 4, 2006; <http://www.belaruspartizan.org/bp-forde/?page=100&backPage=13&news=7415&newsPage=0>

5. Belarus' Nuclear Vision

Belarus plans to build a nuclear power plant to reduce its dependence on energy imports, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said Friday.

"The development of our own nuclear energy as a way to ensure Belarus' national security has no alternative," he said during a government session.

Lukashenko said the nuclear plant would come on line in 2015. // *Reuters*

Source: The St. Petersburg Times; December 4, 2006; http://www.times.spb.ru/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=19645

6. Opposition Leaders Eager to Talk to Officials

The National Committee of the United Democratic Forces called for a discussion of the European Union's new strategy toward Belarus with the Belarusian top government officials.

In particular, the leaders of the united opposition forces called on Sergei Sidorsky, Prime Minister, and Gennady Nevyglas, head of the Presidential Administration, to hold a joint discussion on the 25-nation bloc's offer of cooperation.

Last week Brussels said that it would offer more aid and trade to Minsk if it made progress on democracy and human rights. The offer got a cold reaction from Minsk.

United Civic Party leader Anatoly Lebedko said that the proposed strategy is planned for both the government and all citizens of Belarus. "It concerns almost everyone. And this means that a collective decision should be made. Monopoly or taboo is not acceptable here," the politician said. "A public nationwide discussion on television and in newspapers is needed. This is indeed a barely visible path that we can start moving toward the direction opposite to a split, confrontation and hostility."

The National Committee plans to launch a campaign to inform the public about the EU's offer. "People should be entitled to choose. Reliable information will help them make a conscious choice," Mr. Lebedko noted. // *BelaPAN*

Rev. by Ed.

Source: Belorusskie Novosti; December 1, 2006; http://www.naviny.by/rubrics/inter/2006/12/01/ic_news_259_263111/

REGIONAL

7. Gazprom Says No Progress in Gas Talks with Belarus

Russia's gas monopoly Gazprom said on Wednesday there was still no progress in gas talks with Belarus to guarantee stable supplies for the country and the transit of gas to Poland and Germany next year.

"There is still no ground for optimism," Gazprom's spokesman Sergei Kupriyanov told *Ekho Moskvy* radio station.

Gazprom wants to raise gas prices for Belarus to over \$200 per 1,000 cubic metres from around \$46 now. The company has said it would accept a share in Belarus's local trunk pipelines to guarantee lower prices in 2007.

Source: Reuters; December 6, 2006;
http://today.reuters.com/news/articleinvesting.aspx?view=CN&storyID=2006-12-06T122452Z_01_L06582132_RTRIDST_0_RUSSIA-BELARUS-GAS-URGENT.XML&rpc=66&type=qcna

8. TRANS Lukashenko's Press Secretary: Russian Mass Media Fight against Belarus

Pavel Legky, head of the presidential administration press service, stated on *ONT TV Channel* that Russian mass media is holding an information war against Belarus. He made this statement while commenting on the accident during the press conference at the CIS Summit, when the Russian journalists were not allowed to attend.

Pavel Legky expressed his opinion: "In the reality, these journalists are only soldiers on the battlefield. There are commanders, the real customers behind them. You can not see these commanders well, but we know them well. They are a certain part of business elite, and certain politicians, who do not like what is going on. Some of them have their own vision of the Belarusian leadership. And finally they are marginal political outsiders, who are interested only in abusing someone, no matter whom," *RFE/RL Belarusian Service* informs, referring to the *ONT* channel.

Legky believes that "demarche of the Russian journalists [most of them stalked out of the conference – *Telegraf*] started only after a high level official from the Russian delegation gathered the journalists around him. The journalist received some directions. We can only guess what kind of directions."

Trans. by Ed.

Exempt from:

Source: *Telegraf*; December 4, 2006; <http://telegraf.by/belarus/2006/12/04/smirussia/>

INTERNATIONAL

9. TRANS Milinkevich Appeals to Bush, Chirac, and Merkel to Save Kozulin

Today Aleksandr Milinkevich appealed in an open letter to the presidents of Russia, USA, France, and the German Chancellor to "do all the possible to save life of Aleksandr Kozulin and to free all political prisoners in Belarus."

"The life of the politician Aleksandr Kozulin is under the threat,' leader of the united democratic forces stated in his letter. Milinkevich made Lukashenko and the Belarusian authorities completely responsible for Kozulin's life and health.

"For eight months of imprisonment and 48 days of hunger strike Aleksandr Kozulin lost 48 kilos. According to the doctors, his temperature is 36, 2°, his pulse beating is 60 per minute, his blood pressure is 74/60. It is a critical blood pressure: brain can not function normally at this pressure, hearts and kidney start to weak. (температура тела политика составляет 36,2 градуса, пульс - 60 ударов в минуту, давление 75 на 60 мм. рт. ст. Это критическое давление, при нем невозможна нормальная работа головного мозга, начинаются перебои с сердцем, отказывают почки) At this stage of hunger strike brain hypoxia starts," the letter says.

Milinkevich appealed to Vladimir Putin, George Bush, Jacques Chirac, and Angela Merkel "to do all the possible to save Kozulin's life and to free political prisoners in Belarus."

"Kozulin, former rector of the Belarusian State University, professor, believes that only the UN Security Council may influence on changing the situation in Belarus. The Republic of Belarus is one of the UN founders and Belarus must take in consideration a decision made by the UN Security Council. Aleksandr Kozulin promised to stop hunger strike if one of the G8 countries states an intention to raise a question of human rights situation in Belarus at the UN Security Council session," Milinkevich remind one of the Kozulin's demands.

"Courage and determination of Aleksandr Kozulin in his struggle for his rights is a symbol of an attempt of all Belarusians to live in a free democratic country," the Belarusian politician finishes his letter.

Trans. by Ed.

Source: AFN, December 6, 2006; <http://www.afn.by/news/default.asp?newsid=81194#data>

10. Belarus Faces Fresh EU Trade Sanctions Threat

The European Commission has renewed a push to impose mini-trade sanctions against Belarus for violation of trade union norms, with Belarus opposition leader Alexander Milinkevich "cautiously" welcoming the move.

EU member states on Tuesday, December 5, held initial talks on Brussels' recommendation, with Belarus' trading neighbors Latvia, Lithuania and Poland still opposed but with Italy now in favor of the move.

Italy's approval means EU agriculture ministers will be able to rubber stamp the decision on December 20, with due process seeing Belarus being kicked out of the EU's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) on trade in mid-2007.

"Belarus' trade union reforms have not been sufficient to merit the withdrawal of our proposal," a commission spokesman said. "We feel strongly confident that this will go through with the necessary support."

The commission already submitted the recommendation once in August this year, but it unraveled when Italy blocked the move in an attempt to push pro-Belarus sanction states, such as UK and Sweden, to yield to Italian needs in a separate shoe trade dispute.

"The shoe issue is over, so Poland does not have a blocking minority any more," an EU diplomat stated. "The Belarusians have done nothing - the smart move would have been to implement temporary trade union reforms and then take them away once the GSP threat had passed."

Belarus still has a chance to turn things around before the mid-2007 implementation deadline however, with El Salvador already setting a precedent for last-minute reforms that led to the EU halting a GSP expulsion process.

Jobs would go

The sanctions would see tariffs worth some €400 million a year imposed on Belarus textile and wood exports - but not energy exports - to the EU, and could cost up to 100,000 jobs especially among small traders in the border regions.

Reacting to the news Mr. Milinkevich told *EUobserver* "I have always been cautious about trade sanctions because they impact ordinary people" and warned that Minsk could spin GSP against Brussels if the EU does not follow-up with a "broad information campaign."

"But of course it's the Belarus government that has brought this about," he added. "If there are sanctions, they would be fully justified in terms of what Belarus has signed up to [in the conventions of the International Labor Organization]."

Strasbourg trip planned

Mr. Milinkevich confirmed he will come to Strasbourg next week to pick up a human rights award, the European Parliament's Sakharov prize, but said recent events - which have seen him briefly arrested and released three times - do not bode well.

"I plan to come and I hope they [the authorities] let me go. These arrests seem like they are looking for a pretext to stop me. But I am hopeful it will go well," he said.

Source: Andrew Rettman, EUObserver, December 5, 2006; <http://euobserver.com/24/23032>

The Belarus Update is a weekly news bulletin of the International League for Human Rights (www.ilhr.org). The League, now in its 65th year, is a New York-based human rights NGO in consultative status with the United Nations and the International Labor Organization. To send letters to the editor or to subscribe/unsubscribe please contact Maria Kabalina at cis@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.
