

Edited by Maria Kabalina
International League for Human Rights

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- **Opposition Calls on G-8 Not to Support Lukashenko; Cites 1,200 Human Rights Cases**
- **Beltranshaz Slated for Sale By Year's End**
- **Belarusian Ambassador in Poland Summoned Over Border Incident**

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HUMAN RIGHTS & INDEPENDENT MEDIA

1. Independent Mass Media Should Be Out of Sight of Officials

Barys Hamaida, a distributor of independent press, has been repeatedly detained this week on charges of "illegal trading" in Vitsiebsk. Authorities are apparently cracking down on such activities in connection with an officially-sponsored annual festival known as "Slavianski Bazar".

Hamaida usually sells newspapers in the city's center, where the Slavianski Bazar has been located. On July 11, he was detained once again while selling *Vitebskij Kurjer M*, and fined for 1 base amount (31 thousand BRB) (about \$13.00 US).

"It's because of Slavianski Bazar!", Hamaida said in an interview with RFE/RL. He said police told him when arresting him, "There are too many officials in the city. Please, wait a bit!"

Barys Hamaida was once again detained again today.

Source: *Belarusian Association of Journalists*; July 12; <http://www.baj.ru/>

2. Grodno Police Jail Dissident in Mental Hospital

Grodno police incarcerated activist Pavel Ezersky, detained during a rally in memory of Dmitry Zavadsky, the disappeared ORT cameraman, in a psychiatric mental hospital, local journalists reported. Ezersky reported that he fell ill and suffered an asthma attack during the police interrogation. Officers summoned an ambulance, which then Ezersky to the mental hospital.

When questioned, Ezersky told police he could not recall the names of the others rally participants. "You'll remember everything in the mental hospital," – Ezersky said policeman threatened him, reported *Deutsche Welle* Belarusian service.

Ezersky told reporters he is getting two injections of some unknown medication each day, but feels well. He was informed that he will be discharged only in a month's time.

Aleksandr Murin, head of the Grodno mental hospital told *Deutsche Welle* reporters that "it was not political ideas that caused Ezersky's hospitalization." But, according to Ezersky's mother, the doctor on duty at the hospital explained that her son was being kept in psychiatric confinement due to his actions during the rally. He will spend at least a month in the mental hospital because he was screaming anti-Lukashenko slogans, *Deutsche Welle* Belarusian reported..

Ezersky's mother, Feliksa Ezerskaya, believes he is being held in the hospital due to his political beliefs. "I do not understand why they keep him in the hospital. He is a calm and balanced person. My son is all I have in my life", she says.

[Translated by Editor]

Source: *Telegraf*; July 11, 2006; www.telegraf.by

3. ONT Journalists Know Nothing About Criminal Case Against Channel Chief

Belarusian reporters have learned of a criminal case against ONT chief Ryhor Kisel. "It was caused by fraud or embezzlement of state funds -- the exact accusation and the article under which the case has been started are not clear," *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* reported.

Meanwhile, Kisel came to work as usual at 9 a.m.," says ONT press secretary Alina Pravatorava. She said that due diligence was undertaken last week at ONT. She added that it was caused by findings of false accounting in the work of their partner, the Telefilm company. "There were no

sanctions against ONT and no fines. Nobody knows anything about any criminal case against Ryhor Kisel".

Source: Belarusian Association of Journalists; July 11; <http://www.baj.ru/>

4. Belarusian Police Seek Damages From Former Presidential Candidate

Officers of a special unit have demanded 13 million rubles (US \$6,046) in damages from Alyaksandr Kazulin, whose case is under review at Minsk District Court, *Belapan* reported on July 10. Officers who testified on July 7 and July 10 said that they were seriously injured during a March 25 demonstration which ended in clashes between protesters and police. Another officer, who detained Kazulin on February 17 in the National Press Center, claimed 2 million rubles in damages. Kazulin, who is charged with "disorderly conduct" and "malicious hooliganism," reiterated his demand for the replacement of the public prosecutor, whom he accused of collusion with the police officers.

Source: RFE/RL; July 10, 2006; <http://www.rferl.org>

5. Rally Barred In Memory Of Belarusian Opposition Figures

Police in the Belarusian capital Minsk have prevented opposition supporters from rallying in memory of prominent critics of the Belarusian regime who disappeared in 1999 and 2000.

Municipal and riot police drove 60 people to Oktyabrskaya Square with their hands cuffed behind their heads.

July 7 was the sixth anniversary of the disappearance of Dmitry Zavadsky, a cameraman for Russian TV news. The previous year, two opposition leaders and a friend disappeared.

All four are suspected to have been murdered, but no bodies or evidence have been found.

Source: RFE/RL; July 8, 2006; <http://www.rferl.org>

DOMESTIC

6. Belarusian Entrepreneurs Launch Development Campaign

On July 10, business people in Minsk held a meeting to land the campaign, "For Free Development of Entrepreneurship" and adopted a program of initial actions. The entrepreneurs advocate the active participation of small vendors in political actions to protect their rights noted that small businessmen compose a significant part of Belarusian society.

Viktar Kalej, a Minsk entrepreneur, commented, "We are more numerous than workers and the intelligentsia. 70 per cent of us are people with higher education. These people are hard-working and resourceful. But the president labels us as 'lousy'."

Lukashenko's regime has been negative about the participation of businessmen in politics, the vendors commented. This attitude contradicts the interests of small business. Many businessmen take independent part in political actions and meeting participants have expressed their wish to coordinate these actions. They decided to launch a national campaign titled "For Free Development of Entrepreneurship" and support the idea of active participation in local elections in 2007. Many of them have already decided to run for office.

Viktar Garbachou, an activist of the United Civic Party, explained "There is not a single businessmen in the local [government] councils. The authorities exploit us, take a lot of money

from us in the form of taxes, fines etc. But at the same time they are afraid to let us into the local councils”.

Source; Human Rights Center “Viasna”; July 11, 2006; <http://www.spring96.org/en/>

7. No Bargaining By Svetlana Kalinina

[Text translated by the Editor]

Source: Svetlana Kalinina, *Belorussky Partizan*; July 7, 2006; <http://www.belaruspartizan.org/>

Finally! Three months have passed while waiting to see or what exactly the Belarusian government will propose to Europe and if Europe will swallow this hook. They offered dialogue with the opposition at the non-committal level of deputies who are not decision-makers. Europe swallowed the hook. Predictably, there are many romantic politicians in Europe, who believed that the dictatorship might be reformed in a civilized and democratic way, at the round negotiation table. I do not believe that. But it is not about me. The bargain has been stated, the trump cards of each side became clear.

The four conditions, put forward by OSCE to the Belarusian authorities, were not revoked. Anatoly Lebedko and Sergei Kalyakin deliberately recalled these conditions, while attending the round table on the Belarusian question.

- Release of Political Prisoners;
- Freedom of Mass Media;
- Investigation of Disappeared Belarusian Politicians;
- Electoral Legislation Reform.

Aleksandr Kozulin is the first hostage of the negotiations. There was no reason for the arrest of the former dean and former candidate for presidency arrest till recently. There was no crime in his actions and he did not damage anything, except the portrait of the President. But now the reason has become clear. Kozulin is the most known Belarusian political prisoner, the most scandalous political prisoner, the most symbolic. He will get the maximum sentence. And then the Belarusian authorities for a long time will bargain with Europe about on what conditions to release him. It is not difficult to predict that Kazulin’s release will be evaluated by Europe as a big step towards serious progress in the dialogue, and finally, as evidence of the Lukashenko’s capacity to be taught. This is what official Minsk wants.

The second condition is freedom of mass media. It is clear now why the Belarusian authorities, before the presidential elections, began to attack all the independent newspapers, even the small regional ones, in which politics consists of ads like “Cow for sale. Cheap”. Well, they were closing newspapers by depriving them of their registration certificates, retail licenses, and ruining their business by fines for lack of fire extinguishers above the editor-in-chief’s desk. But it was not enough. It is impossible to sell or subscribe, but it is possible to print outside Belarus. Somebody might even print in Minsk, even in the Belarusian Printing House. This obvious nonsense made sense now. Newspapers are also the subject of bargaining. After long negotiations, the authorities will certainly agree that Belarusian newspapers should pay money to the Belarusian printing houses, and the newspapers’ circulations should be controlled by the state distribution system. I can see all the happiness on the faces of the editors-in-chiefs and European negotiations mediators, how gladly they would be speaking about the breaking of the information blockade. Undoubtedly, this boundless joy would enable them to say that the Belarusian authorities were now implementing the second condition.

It is more difficult with the next conditions. However, it is not possible to agree on everything during negotiations. Besides, Lukashenko will promise that the investigation of the cases of the disappeared people will become even more active and he will likely arrest Pavlichenko (or even Sheiman) as an example. Here it is the success of the negotiations. Final and irrevocable success!

In this sense, the just published book ‘The Belarusian Bridge’, by Mecheslav Grib, is relevant to the subject. A very interesting document is published in the book -- an agreement titled ‘About the Social-Political Situation and Constitution Reform in the Republic of Belarus’, due to which Aleksandr Lukashenko managed to avoid the impeachment and by which he with his own signature confirmed that he undertook the following obligations:

“Within 20 days after the republican referendum the President of the Republic of Belarus will form the Constitutional Assembly on an equal footing. The President of the Republic of Belarus – the head of the Assembly, 50 deputies of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Belarus, delegated by the factions of the Supreme Council proportional to their number in the Supreme Council, and 50 Presidential representatives. (In the beginning there were also 20 representatives of the civic associations, but they were struck down due to someone’s zeal to get the document signed.)

- Constitutional Assembly to accept the new version of the Constitution of Belarus within three months.
- Before the new Constitution was passed the President does not undertake any actions on the prescheduled dismantling of the Supreme Council’s authority, and the Supreme Council does not undertake any actions to dismiss the President.”

Do you remember, what became of all this?

As at the first time, Lukashenko desperately needs reduce tension and buy some time. He will undertake any obligations in order to freeze the situation on the Western flank right now, when Russia is trying to resolve the question of changing the authorities in Belarus. Negotiations and round table are the ideal option in this case. The President is very good at giving promises. You just listen.

8. Belarusian Government Plans To Sell Beltransgaz Before Year-End

Deputy Prime Minister Uladzimir Syamashka has announced that a special working group will next week begin appraising assets of Beltransgaz, Belarus' gas-pipeline operator, Belapan reported on July 6. Syamashka said that the appraisal team will include experts of the ABN AMRO bank and Russia's gas giant Gazprom, which has long sought a controlling stake in the Belarusian gas pipeline.

According to the Council of Ministers press office, Syamashka said the government is ready to carry out the transaction before the end of the year, stressing that it will accept the team's conclusions. In return, Belarus will insist that Gazprom honor its promise made in 2002 to sell Belarus gas at a price equal to the domestic rate in Russia's Smolensk Province if the deal goes through, he added. Gazprom has threatened to raise the gas price from \$46.68 to \$200 for 1,000 cubic meters in 2007.

Source: RFE/RL; July 7, 2006; <http://www.rferl.org>

REGIONAL

9. Alexander Lukashenko: Belarus Position on Union State Unchanged

President Alexander Lukashenko has confirmed today that Belarus' position on the key issues of the Union State construction remains the same, BelTA learned from the presidential press service. The Union State construction issues were discussed on July 11 in the course of a meeting between the Belarusian leader and a delegation of Kamchatka oblast of the Russian Federation. Mikhail Mashkovtsev, Governor of the Russian region, noted he understands Belarus' position on the issue.

During the talks, the two parties discussed possibly increasing deliveries of Belarusian products to Kamchatka oblast.

Alexander Lukashenko emphasized that Belarus, as the center of the civilized world, strives for keeping its production at the highest level. Many Belarusian companies, including ones involved in food production, are modernized. Belarusian products are famous for their high quality, he said. "Consumers prefer Belarusian products even if they are more expensive as they are made of ecologically friendly raw materials, without any additives", the president said.

According to the Belarusian leader, Belarus has managed to preserve the most important companies and ensure their stable work. They successfully compete in Russian and western markets.

"We are grateful to you for buying Belarusian farm machines and we are ready to expand cooperation in this field – to set up service and sales centers, to organize direct supplies", Alexander Lukashenko said addressing the governor of Kamchatka oblast.

Source: Belarusian Telegraph Agency; July 11, 2006; <http://www.belta.by/engnews.nsf>

10. Belarusian Opposition Calls on Putin to Stop Supporting President

On July 10, the families of political victims in Belarus delivered a statement to the Minsk embassies of G8 countries in which they called on Russian President Vladimir Putin to stop supporting Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, Belapan reported.

According to the statement, more than 1,200 opposition supporters were jailed, dismissed from their jobs, or expelled from educational institutions during and after the March presidential election. "I believe that it is necessary to raise the issue of political prisoners in Belarus at the G8 summit, because it is the pain of the entire world, not just Europe," said Ina Kuley, who coordinates the committee for support of political victims, the organization established this spring by the team of opposition leader Alyaksandr Milinkevich.

Source: RFE/RL; July 11, 2006; <http://www.rferl.org>

11. Tourism Cooperation Program Draft Submitted to Byelorussian Government

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan prepared a draft program for tourism cooperation with Belarus and submitted it to the government, local agencies reported. Trend reports with reference to the Ministry.

The program has been drafted in accordance with the agreement the two countries signed on cooperation in tourism. The program reflects proposals on expansion of the further cooperation for the years 2006-2007. The decision on the program drafting was made during the session of Azeri-Byelorussian intergovernmental commission for economic cooperation.

Azerbaijan included in its program projects to attract investment in development of tourism, set up of joint ventures, organize tours to Azerbaijan and so on.

Source: S. Agayeva, Trend News Agency; July 11, 2006; <http://www.trend.az/>

INTERNATIONAL

12. Supporters of Imprisoned Belarus Opposition Activists Seek Support from G-8

Friends and family members of imprisoned opposition activists in Belarus have sent an open letter to G-8 leaders, calling on them to press for the release of the activists.

They also appealed to G-8 member countries to press Russian President Vladimir Putin to withdraw his support for Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko.

Mr. Lukashenko was elected to a third term in March in an election Western governments call fraudulent.

The open letter comes ahead of a summit in St. Petersburg of the world's seven leading industrialized democracies plus Russia. It also comes on the heels of the start of a trial of former opposition presidential candidate Alexander Kozulin.

Kozulin faces up to six years in prison if convicted on charges of "hooliganism" and "incitement" to mass disorder. The charges are tied to the protests that followed the election. Authorities declared the vote an overwhelming victory for President Lukashenko.

Some information for this report was provided by *AFP*.

Source: Voice of America; July 11, 2006; <http://www.voanews.com/>

13. India, Belarus to Discuss Areas of Mutual Cooperation

New Delhi, July 11: India and Belarus will discuss areas of mutual cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, industry, science and technology and culture during the visit of an Indian delegation.

The high-level delegation, headed by Minister of State for Industry Ashwani Kumar, left for Belarus capital Minsk last evening, an official release said here today.

The delegation comprises of senior officials of department of industrial policy and promotion, fertiliser and coal, it said.

The Minister would discuss areas of mutual cooperation with Belarus' Minister of Industry and Foreign Affairs.

The two sides would discuss possibilities of cooperation in banking, road construction and a joint venture for the manufacture of tractors in Belarus, the release said.

India imports potash from Belarus and there was a big opportunity for exports from India to Belarus including BHEL's turbines for its power sector, it added.

Source: Zeenews.Com; July 11, 2006; <http://www.zeenews.com/>

14. Belarusian Ambassador In Poland Summoned To Polish Foreign Ministry For Explanations Of Incident At Belarusian-Polish Border

Paval Latushka, Belarusian ambassador to Poland, was summoned to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to give explanations concerning the refusal to permit Polish senators to enter Belarus, Polish MFA Press Secretary Andzej Sadas reported.

The press-secretary did not give information about the details of the conversation. He emphasized that Poland especially resented the interpretation of denial. Professor Stelmachowski, leader of the faction Wspolnota Polska, received entry visa to Belarus but at the border the visa was cancelled. The cancellation was explained by “new circumstances”.

Stelmachowski was heading to Belarus to take part in the celebration of the anniversary of the liberation of Vilnius by Armia Krajowa in 1944.

Source; Human Rights Center “Viasna”; July 11, 2006; <http://www.spring96.org/en/>

15. Belarus Refutes Lithuania’s Claims on Violations of Its Airspace

The Lithuanian Defense Ministry claimed Monday [July 12] that a Belarusian Air Force helicopter intruded into its airspace at around 10:35 local time (08:35 GMT).

“The Belarusian helicopter Mi-24 broke almost 100 meters deep into Lithuanian airspace in the Varena district,” Lithuanian Air Force commander Arturas Leita said. “Radars of Lithuanian border forces registered that flight.”

Lithuanian Air Force has opened an investigation over the incident.

Meanwhile, officials at the Belarusian Defense Ministry in Minsk strongly denied Leita’s statement.

“The information that a Mi-24 helicopter of our Air Force broke into Lithuanian airspace totally contradicts reality,” Vladislav Remenchik, the chief press officer at the Defense Ministry said when Itar-Tass asked him to comment on the situation.

“Monday, scheduled flights were held at our airbase No. 181 and all the helicopters strictly observed the specified flight routes,” he said. “None of them violated Lithuanian airspace, which is proved by data of objective control of Belarussian Air Defense Forces.”

Earlier, the Defense Ministry strongly denied Lithuania’s claims that a Mi-8 helicopter had intruded into its airspace in the night hours of June 20.

Source: Itar-Tass; July 10, 2006; <http://www.tass.ru/eng>

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.
