

**Joint Position of Belarusian Human Rights Defenders on Eve of Next Round of EU-Belarus
Dialogue on Human Rights**

The Belarusian human rights organizations support the continuation of the EU-Belarus dialogue on human rights. In anticipation of the next round, we call on the parties to keep the topic of human rights in the spotlight while building relationships between the European Union and Belarus, and declare our joint position on human rights in Belarus.

We note the absence of significant progress and systemic changes in the situation of human rights and freedoms in Belarus.

The country still:

- practices the death penalty;
- ignores the important recommendations formulated by the international bodies for Belarus to strengthen the independence of the judicial system;
- substantially limits the civil, political and socio-economic rights, including the freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly;
- demonstrates evidence of persecution of human rights defenders and journalists for their professional activities.

Serious improvements are only possible through systemic changes in the field of human rights and freedoms and a valuable dialogue between Belarus and international partners, as well as - or even primarily - a valuable dialogue within the country.

The Belarusian human rights community should be a party to the EU-Belarus human rights dialogue and should be included in this process.

The Belarusian human rights organizations should also be involved in other dialogue processes within the country. In this regard, we urge the Government to establish a dialogue on human rights between the public agencies and human rights organizations and to develop the National Human Rights Plan in coordination with the human rights organisations. The plan may be based on the recommendations formulated for Belarus as part of the Universal Periodic Review procedure. The human rights organizations are jointly developing the implementation indicators for these recommendations which will enable one to assess developments in the situation of human rights in Belarus.

We also urge the Government to steadily fulfil the international commitments voluntary taken on by Belarus as a member of the UN, OSCE and other international structures and mechanisms, and to take steps to implement the conclusions formulated by the treaty bodies, in particular by the UN Human Rights Committee.

*Barys Zvozskau Belarusian Human Rights House
Belarusian Association of Journalists
Belarusian Documentation Center
Belarusian Helsinki Committee
Human Rights Center Viasna
Law Initiative
Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend)
Legal and Expert Partnership “FoRB Initiative”
Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Solidarnosc Committee*