

Human rights defenders condemn mass detentions ahead and during peaceful assemblies on March 25, 2018

Minsk - March 26, 2018

We, representatives of Belarusian human rights organizations, strongly condemn the preemptive detentions of activists throughout the country on the eve of mass events in honor of the centenary of the proclamation of the Belarusian People's Republic, as well as during and after these peaceful assemblies. According to human rights defenders, on March 25, police officers detained at least 110 people. At least 12 people in Minsk were charged under Art. 23.34 of the Administrative Code (violation of the procedure for organizing and holding mass events). They can be subjected to administrative detention.

We once again remind that ensuring freedom of assembly, as guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Constitution of Belarus, is a political obligation of the state.

We are particularly concerned about the harassment of journalists in connection with their professional activities. At least seven such instances were documented, including five journalists detained during the coverage of the peaceful assembly in Yakub Kolas Square in Minsk.

During the monitoring of the assembly in Yakub Kolas Square police officers detained eight observers of the joint monitoring service of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee and the Human Rights Center "Viasna". We consider it unacceptable to prosecute human rights defenders in connection with their peaceful activities in monitoring peaceful assemblies.

We stress that human rights activities should be guaranteed by the state in accordance with the Declaration on the Right and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms approved by the UN General Assembly Resolution 53/144 of December 9, 1998.

We, representatives of the Belarusian human rights community, call on the authorities to:

- immediately release the preemptively detained activists;
- put an end to the practice of pressure, detention and bringing to administrative responsibility of participants in peaceful assemblies;
- ensuring that journalists and human rights defenders are able to carry out their professional activities without hindrance and without threats;
- drop the administrative charges against human rights defenders.

Belarusian Helsinki Committee

Legal Initiative

Human Rights Center "Viasna"

Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House

Advisory Center on Contemporary International Practices and their Legal Implementation "Human Constanta"

Legal Transformation Center

Expert and Legal Partnership "Initiative FORB"

Belarusian Documentation Center

Initiative Group "Identity and Law"

Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Belarusian Association of Journalists