



**STATEMENT**

**OF THE BELARUSIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM  
OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM:**

**"WE DEMAND STOP PROSECUTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS  
SERGEY DROZDOVSKY, OLEG GRABLEVSKY  
AND REPRESSION AGAINST THE CIVIL SOCIETY OF BELARUS"**

Minsk

04.02.2021

On January 21, 2021 the Financial Investigations Department of the State Control Committee launched an investigation against members of the human rights organisation "Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities". The department stated that the investigation is connected with "possible illegal seizure of funds received by the institution in the form of charitable contributions and international assistance in the period from 2020 to the present for the purpose of providing assistance to Belarusian citizens with disabilities".

The organisation's office, as well as the homes of organisation's members were thoroughly inspected. That resulted in confiscation of equipment, i.e. computers and mobile phones, and documents. On the same day, following the inspections, the director of the organisation, Mr. Sergey Drozdovsky, and its lawyer, Mr. Oleg Grablevsky, were taken to the Financial Investigations Department of the State Control Committee.

On February 2, Messrs. Drozdovsky and Grablevsky were invited to the Financial Investigations Department of the State Control Committee again, presumably, to receive the confiscated equipment back. However, they were pulled in for questioning instead. The human rights defenders were questioned for almost 7 hours, and lawyers were not allowed in to assist them, despite the fact that the latter arrived simultaneously with the human rights defenders and stayed in close proximity to the building all the time.

Mr. Drozdovsky claims that staff of the Financial Investigations Department of the State Control Committee called him a criminal and a fraudster, and pressured him in the course of interrogation. It became known that during the interrogation, Mr. Grablevsky was forcibly stripped naked. He was insulted, threatened with prison and physical violence.

We would like to note that Mr. Sergey Drozdovsky moves in a wheelchair and spending 7 hours in one room with almost no ability to move was a real torture for him.

Messrs. Drozdovsky and Grablevsky made information about the circumstances of their stay at the Financial Investigations Department of the State Control Committee public immediately after the interview. This information caused a powerful public response.

In the afternoon of February 3, 2021 contact with Messrs. Drozdovsky and Grablevsky was lost. As it turned out, they had been arrested and taken to the Investigative Committee. Around 23.00 the same day it became known that their legal status had changed to that of suspects in a criminal case. Mr. Gablewski was detained and sent to the detention center in Okrestina Street for 72 hours. Mr. Drozdovsky was sent under house arrest.

Belarusian National Platform believes that the actions of the Financial Investigation Department of the State Control Committee and the Investigative Committee against the human rights defenders Sergei Drozdovsky and Oleg Grablevsky are politically motivated and constitute prosecution for human rights activities.

We call for an end to the intimidation and harassment campaign against human rights defenders, civil society activists, and non- profit organisations in Belarus.



### **Belarusian National Platform demand:**

- That all attempts to harass and pressure Belarusian human rights defenders in connection with their professional activities, and, in particular, the persecution of our colleagues, Messrs. Drozdovsky and Grablevsky, be stopped, and the latter be immediately released;
- That national and international obligations to ensure guarantees for implementation of human rights activities in the country be complied with and that the rights and freedoms of citizens be respected.

We **call** on representatives of embassies and international organisations to publicly condemn these actions by the authorities and demand immediate release of Messrs. Drozdovsky and Grablevsky. We call on the UN Special Rapporteurs to use all the opportunities provided by their mandates for immediate influence in order to stop the pressure on human rights defenders and civil society activists.

The Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities is a well-known human rights organisation in Belarus. The institution provides legal assistance and advice on the rights of people with disabilities. The Office is engaged in awareness-raising and educational activities, publishes thematic literature, and shares expertise on issues related to the rights of people with disabilities and overcoming stigmatization in society.

*The Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is the leading platform for cooperation of Belarusian civil society organisations in the field of interaction with the countries of the European Union and the Eastern Partnership. It unites more than 90 organisations and initiatives of civil society in Belarus. Founded in July 2010.*

