



Minsk

29 July

**Statement of the Belarusian National Platform  
of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum**

**On mass repressions of civil society organizations in Belarus**

Mass repressions against civil society organizations and independent media are continuing in Belarus. Over the last month alone, in Minsk and the regions of the country, as part of framed-up criminal cases, more than a hundred searches were carried out at the offices of civil society organizations, independent trade unions, political parties, media editorial offices, as well as at the place of residence of their executives, employees and volunteers. Several dozen civil society activists and journalists were detained under criminal and administrative procedures, many of them are still in prison, many had to leave the country under the threat of arrest. Within a few days, about 100 non-governmental institutions and associations across the country found out that a decision had been made on their forced elimination. lawsuits have been filed against dozens of public associations and foundations in order to suspend or liquidate their activities, and their activities are being investigated. At the same time, the scale of repression is growing every day.

This level of persecution against third sector organizations in Belarus is unprecedented in its scope and severity of repressive influence. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the authorities attempted to eradicate civil society organizations regardless of the sphere and nature of their activities, their possible connection with the current political crisis and their actual political position. Human rights, environmental, social, charitable, cultural, research and other organizations were hit. The basis for repression was only the belonging of a person or organization to a civil society field independent of the state.

The activities of many organizations were unique for the country, often in those areas where the state had neither the ability, nor the resources, nor the competence to solve emerging problems. The termination of the activities of such organizations will also entail the suspension of the provision of a lot of services important for the Belarusian society: from the provision of an objective expert assessment to a wide range of social, charitable, educational, cultural and other services, and the protection of human rights.

Of course, in most cases, the elimination by the state of the legal forms of existence of civil society organizations will not be able to destroy either the communities that make up these organizations, or their activities, or their ideas, or their free will. The pogrom committed by the state to civil society organizations in Belarus is not capable of destroying either the civil society itself, which exists in a variety of different forms of civil self-organization, much less the foundation for the existence of the civil society. Nevertheless, a new cycle of repression creates a difficult situation for many organizations in the third sector to search for forms and methods of self-preservation and continuation of activities. Many organizations, primarily social and charitable activities, will be forced to suspend their socially useful work.

The Belarusian National Platform states:

- on the strong condemnation of all repressions against civil society organizations and independent media, their employees and activists;
- the need for the immediate release of all detained employees, members, volunteers of civil society organizations, as well as all other political prisoners;
- readiness to provide any possible assistance with the help of the tools of the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership to support the activities of organizations that have come under pressure.

We call on civil society organizations from all countries to express their support and solidarity with civil society organizations in Belarus that have become victims of a repressive attack by an authoritarian regime:

- to establish and maintain contacts with Belarusian civil society organizations in order to facilitate their activities, provide the necessary assistance and support, including to members of organizations forced to leave the country.

We draw the attention of the international community to the necessity to take into account new circumstances in organizing cooperation and support for civil society organizations in Belarus, which require:

- expanding cooperation with unregistered organizations, which soon will constitute the bulk of the Belarusian civil society;
- expanding and simplifying the procedure of registering and conducting activities for Belarusian organizations in the neighboring countries of Belarus, as well as simplifying the procedure for the entry and stay of repressed civil society activists in these countries;
- expanding opportunities for emergency support and stabilization support for the infrastructure activities of organizations in this difficult period.

The Belarusian National Platform emphasizes the importance of strengthening its legal capacity in the programs of Belarusian-European cooperation, whereas the government of the Republic of Belarus announces the suspension of its membership in the Eastern Partnership program.

*The Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum was founded in July 2010 and embraces 89 organizations and initiatives of various fields of activity based on pro-European values*

