



International Service for Human Rights

The Reports in Short

ISHR's summaries of documents for the UN Commission on Human Rights
62nd Session and Human Rights Council 2nd Session

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus¹

Mandate

The mandate was created in 2004², following deep concern over the situation of human rights in Belarus. It was set up to establish direct contacts with the Government and with the people of Belarus, with a view to examining the situation of human rights in Belarus, and follow any progress made towards the elaboration of a program on human rights education for all sectors of society.

Activities

- Eight communications and three press releases were issued concerning the detention of political opponents to the regime; laws affecting the freedom of association, movement and assembly; the harassment of non-State media and human rights defenders; violations of freedom of opinion and expression; and the murder of journalists.

Annual Report³

Scope

To report on the human rights situation in Belarus. The Government of Belarus has not responded favourably to the Special Rapporteur's requests to visit the country and has in general not cooperated with him in the fulfilment of his mandate. The Special Rapporteur has therefore gathered information through visits to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland; discussions and consultations with representatives of Belarusian human rights and other civil society organisations, the United Nations and specialised agencies, the European Union, the Council of Europe and diplomats; media reports; and documentary sources.

Key Conclusions

- There has been a **dramatic deterioration** of the situation of human rights in 2005, characterised by rejection of pluralism in all sectors of society, refusal of dialogue, lack of inter-institutional checks and balances, denial of civil rights and repression of political freedoms, persecution of opponents of the regime as well as the use of the judiciary, law enforcement and security agencies as instruments of political repression;
- A political super-structure has developed, which preserves an **obsolete command economy** surviving only within a context of political oppression and social hardship;
- The regime reinforced its **authoritarian** character through the intensification of post-Soviet propaganda and the development of the cult of the President's personality using the State media and the national education system. The official State doctrine is directed against the consolidation of the **Belarusian national identity**. The regime also uses any cultural diversity to undermine social solidarity, and does so in a way that affects the international and regional security and stability;
- Belarus is rapidly turning into a **real dictatorship**, with **clear totalitarian inclinations**;
- The Government of Belarus intends to **obstruct cooperation with the international community** in the future by the introduction of a new article in the Criminal Code which prohibits the submission to international organisations of "false information" on the situation in the country;

¹ Summaries prepared by Cléa Thouin, Intern, ISHR, supervised and edited by Meghna Abraham, Information Program, ISHR.

² Commission on Human Rights *Resolution 2004/14*.

³ E/CN.4/2006/36, 16 January 2006.

- Belarus does not respect the **obligations** it has taken on under various international human rights instruments;
- Some positive steps on the part of the international community include the EU's efforts to promote human rights in Belarus, and the attention dedicated to the human rights situation by the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe, OSCE and NATO.

Key Recommendations

- All states member of the UN, including Belarus, must accept and enforce the decision of the Commission on Human Rights to establish a special procedure to monitor the situation of human rights in Belarus as well as all of the Commission's resolutions;
- The **Security Council** should adopt appropriate measures to ensure the respect by the Republic of Belarus of its legal obligations;
- Belarus should bring its legislations, institutions and policies in line with **international human rights and democratic standards**;
- Belarus should launch a **public education and awareness program** in the field of human rights;
- Belarus should sign and ratify the draft **International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances** as soon as it is open for signature;
- Belarus should convene a **national round table** on the situation of human rights with participation by all relevant actors to define a **road map** for the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur, other special procedures and treaty bodies;
- Belarusian **civil society** should continue and multiply its efforts to establish a dialogue with the government and to consolidate and democratise the Belarusian nation;
- The Secretary-General should adopt appropriate measures to investigate the apparent involvement of Senior Government officials **in international organised crime and illegal arms sales**;
- The international community must continue to support the democratisation process through various means, such as attaching conditions to trade relations and raising awareness of the problem;
- The Council of Europe should allow Belarus to sign the **European Convention on Human Rights**;
- The Commission should extend the special Rapporteur's mandate, and enlarge its scope and means.