

46th session of the UN Human Rights Council

Oral Statement

ITEM 6: Adoption of the UPR outcome of Belarus

My name is Ales Bialiatski. I am a Belarusian human rights activist, Chairman of the organization Human Rights Center "Viasna", and recipient of the 2020 Right Livelihood Award.

Madam President,

Viasna has been documenting violations in Belarus for 25 years, but never before have we faced such a critical human rights situation. Since August 2020, more than 30.000 people have been detained, over 2.400 criminal cases have been initiated on political grounds and around 1.000 of these people are now either in prison or under house arrest. The use of disproportionate force against peaceful protesters as well as torture and other ill-treatments are systematic and widespread. Viasna and myself are currently under the criminal investigation.

In the last months, the authorities have been arbitrarily detaining human rights defenders and journalists, including 4 members of Viasna; lawyers are seeing their licenses being revoked, Belarusian civil society is being rapidly wiped up.

I welcome all UPR recommendations seeking Belarus' full cooperation with the Special Rapporteur and the Office of the High Commissioner as well as those urging the authorities to conduct impartial investigations into human rights violations committed after the elections, calling for accountability for perpetrators of these crimes, and for the release of all political prisoners.

I deeply regret that Belarus, once again, fails to acknowledge these key issues. In the absence of an effective, independent and impartial accountability mechanism to carry out investigations into all human rights violations, impunity will continue to be the norm and there will be no justice for the people of Belarus.

I also echo all recommendations related to the protection of human rights defenders, to ensure that we can carry out our legitimate activities without fear of retaliation and prosecution.

Thank you.