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Compliance Committee to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)

Additional information on new cases of persecution of Brest activists in connection with their attempts to exercise rights under the Aarhus Convention

Dear Chairman and Committee members,

In accordance with paragraph 7 of Decision VI/8c, we inform you about new cases of violation of the rights of activists in Belarus, who exercise their rights under the Convention.

Earlier, Ecohome NGO informed the Committee about the situation with the prosecution of Brest activists opposed to the construction of the battery plant and seeking to exercise their environmental rights in letters dated [March 21, 2018](#), [February 14, 2019](#), [April 4, 2019](#), [March 13, 2020](#), as well as in the chronological description on of the events on [February 14, 2019](#) and [March 13, 2020](#).

Assessing the information received earlier, the Committee in par. 75 of the [Second Progress Review of the implementation of Decision VI/8c on compliance by Belarus with its obligations under the Convention](#) notes that “persons seeking to exercise their rights under the Convention in the Party concerned remain at risk of penalization, persecution or harassment for doing so. Based on the information before it, there is no indication to the Committee that the situation is improving in this respect. The Committee considers this to be gravely concerning”.

To our great regret and disappointment, we note the continuation of this unacceptable practice of persecution of activists in Belarus seeking to realize their environmental and civil rights.

Since we provided the latest information, the following events took place:

1. local government did not approve any single mass events for activists, neither in Brest, nor in the Brest region:

From February 25, 2018, every Sunday, opponents of the battery plant construction come to Lenin Square in Brest to communicate and exchange the latest news on the construction of the plant, however, during all this time, the city and district authorities approved only one event in April 2018 out of more than **350** applications for mass peaceful gatherings in Brest and the Brest region.

2. preventive detention of activists on April 17 and 18, 2020, on the eve of the April 19 meeting of local people to discuss and draw attention to the problem of plant construction:

- April 17, 2020 - activist Dmitry Bekalyuk was detained by police and taken to the Leninsky District Department of Internal Affairs in Brest. The police did not report the reasons for the detention¹.
- April 18, 2020 - blogger and activist Alexander Kabanov was detained in a house in Gorodishe. From April 17, 2020, the police blocked the house².
- April 18, 2020 - Dmitry Androsyuk was detained³.

Local people suggests that the detentions of the activists of the initiative group were allegedly carried out in order to prevent their subsequent participation in the mass event against the battery factory on April 19, 2020.

3. administrative sanctions of activists:

- April 20, 2020 - the Leninsky district court of Brest sentenced 15 days of arrest to Dmitry Androsyuk and Alexander Kabanov under art. 23.34 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Republic of Belarus (violation of the organization or conduct of mass events) for participating in a mass event on April 12, 2020⁴.
- April 20, 2020 - in respect of Dmitry Bekalyuk, the consideration of the case was postponed by the court until April 22, 2020.

Thus, the practice of persecution and harassment of activists in Brest who exercise their environmental rights continues even today.

Based on the aforementioned grounds, we ask the Committee to address to Belarus to undertake measures to stop the persecution of activists who exercise their rights under the Convention, as well as take the necessary measures to prevent such cases.

Executive director

Marina Dubina

¹<https://news.tut.by/society/681270.html>

²<http://spring96.org/be/news/96590>

³<https://spring96.org/be/news/96592>

⁴<https://spring96.org/be/news/96609>