

Human Rights Violations in Belarus 25/08-31/08/2008

26.08

► Imprisoned **American lawyer Emanuel Zeltser** is being denied medications that have been delivered for him from the United States, told his defense counsel, Dzmitry Harachka.

The press office of the Committee for State Security (KGB) was not immediately available for comment. A week ago, officers of the Minsk-based US embassy visited the KGB detention center to hand over the medications prescribed to Mr. Zeltser who is suffering very ill health. Mr. Zeltser complained of "constant terrible pain" and expressed fear that he might not survive his term, said the press office of the embassy following the visit. These pills are not given to Mr. Zeltser for more than a week, lawyer Harachka said.

► On August 26 oppositional activists **Yury Karetnikau** found out that a criminal action had been brought up against him.

"Yesterday I visited the visa and registration office of Maskouski district in order to find out whether I can go abroad. I was said that I cannot. The reason for that they told was a criminal case opened against me on July 29, 2008. I was given a document about that. I do not understand what is this all about. If Minsk blast case is meant, in connection with which I was kept in the KGB remand prison on July 16-18, it was brought up much earlier,".

Yury Karetnikau many times told about facts of pressure on him by secret services and law-enforcing agencies. The reason for this close attention to him, he believes, is his participation in the "parliamentary elections". As said by the young politician, he faces such problems at every stage of the electoral campaign.

► Officers of criminal investigation questioned leaders of the organising committee on creation a civil organisation "**Belarusian Christian Democracy**" (BCD) in the case of 4 July blast in Minsk.

As the BCD press service reported on 27 August, criminal investigation officers were interested in members of the organising committee Alyaksei Shein and Dzyinis Sadouski as well as in other organising committee members for the last 5 days.

On 26 August, co-chair of the organising committee A. Shein was questioned by militia captain Alyaksandr Akushka from the Valozhyn district criminal investigation. The militia officer explained to the politician that the reason for the questioning was administrative case of mass street actions, he was convicted last year. A. Akushka asked if A. Shein had some relation to the blast in Minsk. Co-chair of the organising committee refused to be fingerprinted and have DNA expertise, as he wasn't suspected.

27.08

► Yana Palyakova, a member of the initiative group for collection of signatures in support of **Volha Kazulina's** nomination as a candidate for deputy, has addressed the press-service of the former political prisoner Alyaksandr Kazulin.

The activist has told that over the last two days pressure was put upon her by KGB officers of Minsk region in Salihorsk where she lives. KGB officers wanted to know about collection of

signatures by Yana Palyakova in Minsk. First phone calls were received by her yesterday from the phone of a Minsk region KGB officer on duty. Today KGB men called Yana to the mobile phone, inviting her to “meet” and to talk about her work in the initiative group of Volha Kazulina. At the moment check of signatures submitted by citizens in support of candidates for deputies is carried out in precinct election commissions. The actions of the KGB officers who are interfering the electoral process are illegal.

► Democratic candidate **Syarhei Salash** detained in Barysau. Salash told in an interview to Radio Svaboda they try to instigate a criminal case against him on appeal of the head of the Barysau city executive committee and the head of the district election commission to militia. It is unknown what was the reason of the appeal to militia. Syarhei Salash said he was accused of defamation.

28.08

► Searches were held in apartments of Saligorsk branch of “**Young Front**” **Ivan and Ilya Shila, Kristina Samailava, Andrey Tichina and Gleb Snorkin** after which computers hard disks were confiscated.

According to militia the searches were held on the basis of criminal case brought for organizing mass riots. Firstly all of them were detained for spreading the newspaper “Free Saligorsk”. This newspaper is published in 299 copies that’s why there is no need to register it.

► The Leninski district court of Minsk sentenced activist of the civil campaign “European Belarus” **Paval Luksha** to ten days of arrest for distribution of “**Vybor**” newspaper calling to boycott the oncoming “parliamentary election” and protest against possible rigging of the “election” results.

Judge **Mikhail Khomich** found Paval Luksha guilty of violation article 23.34 of the Code of Administrative Offences (calling to take part in unauthorised action). Most articles in “Vybor” covered the theme of boycotting the oncoming “parliamentary election”. Among others an article Your Voice Can Be Heard Only at Square calling to come to October (Kastychnitskaya) square in Minsk at 8.00 pm 28 September if the results of the “election” are rigged.

Paval Luksha was detained when he was distributing “Vybor” newspaper in Rokocovskiy Avenue in Minsk on 18 August. He was set free that time. But today morning, at 7.30, he was arrested by militia officers at the entrance to Kirau machine building plant, where the “European Belarus” activist works as a lath operator.

It should be reminded that Mikalai Lazavik, secretary of the Central Commission for Elections and National Referendums, said yesterday “agitation for boycott of election is not forbidden” in Belarus.

► The activist of the civil campaign “**European Belarus**” **Yauhen Skrabets** was detained on 28 August on suspicion of drawing Boycott! Graffiti on a monument to Lenin situated at the same-name square.

The activist dressed in a T-shirt with Boycott inscription, was walking at the square at 3 at noon. He saw graffiti on the monument, took picture of it and moved on. A militia officer detained

the activist at 3.10, some blocks far from Lenin square, at the intersection of Maskouskaya and Kamsamolskaya Streets. A report was drawn up against Y. Skrabets in the Leninski district militia department. The activist is suspected in offence over article 17.1 (hooliganism) – drawing graffiti on monument. The activist was seized a photo camera, he was returned later. The “European Belarus” activist was set free at 5.50 pm.

30.08

► Oshmianu court fined the activist of Lida branch of “**Young Front**” **Vadzim Barouski** by 10 basic units for not having declared White-Red-White flag and 5 stickers.

A month ago he was detained at the border by KGB on the way home human rights defence seminar in Lithuania. KGB found the flag and stickers and drew up the report.

► The Ministry of Information issued two official warnings to a non-state newspaper **Bobruiskiy Kurier** at once. One more warning had been issued to it on 7 November 2007. Having three warnings, the newspaper can be closed down by the court. The main editor of *Bobruiskiy Kurier* **Anatol Sanatsenka** explains: «I am deeply convinced that these displeasing warnings are directly connected to the fact that the deputy editor of our newspaper Ales Chyhir is a registered candidate for the parliament». According to Sanatsenka, the officials of the Ministry of Information accuse the newspaper of being registered as a countrywide edition but being distributed on subscription only on the territory of Mahiliou oblast. The second warning concerns alleged reprinting of incorrect information from a web-site. «I think that the authorities are ready to suspend the newspaper’s issue for three months or close it. May be, in such a way they are trying to teach us the principles according to which they live. However, we have our own, different principles, the principles by which democratic press is guided all over the world,» comments Mr. Sanatsenka.