



OFFICE FOR A  
DEMOCRATIC BELARUS  
BRUSSELS

# Belarus Headlines

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## Mass Arrests of Young Front Activists

On Sunday, February 4, riot police detained about 30 members of the youth organization Young Front. It happened when a session of the central committee of the organization was taking place in a private apartment on Tsyanskaya Street in Minsk. On the same day, search operations were conducted in apartments of several members of the YF.

The detained were taken to police department of the Savetski district of Minsk. They managed to inform Radio Sviaboda that the authorities demanded activists Zmitser Khvedaruk and Yauhen Skrabutan to confess their participation in activities of the unregistered organization. To remind the readers, leader of the Young Front, Zmitser Dashkevich, had been sentenced to 1,5 on the same charge.

For several hours, there was no information available about the fate of the detainees.

Later, journalists saw the detainees being walked out from the police office and put into prison wagons. Activists Zmitser Khvedaruk and Yauhen Skrabutan were brought out of the building by KGB men separately. According to information provided by Ra-

dio Sviaboda, Zmitser Khvedaruk had a bag wrapped around his head. Later that day, the young man managed to send sms to his friends saying that he had been taken to a KGB detention facility and he faces a criminal charge.

At around 10 p.m. SWAT policemen in masks burst into apartment of a Young Front activist Aleh Korban. After 11 p.m. all detained Young Front activists, except for Aleh Korbun and Zmitser Khvedaruk, were released. At the same hour searches were held in apartments of Alyaksei Yanusheuski, Nasta Palazhanka, and Yaraslau Hryshchenya from Baranavichy.

Aleh Korbun and Zmitser Khvedaruk remain in the KGB detention facilities, their relatives informed.

To follow the developments on the arrests, please check the Young Front web-site or contact our Office—we'll be happy to present updated information!

Source: <http://lmfront.net/index.php>

### Arrestations massives de militants du « Front des Jeunes » à Minsk

Ce dimanche 4 janvier, les forces militaires spéciales ont arrêté à Minsk 30 membres de l'organisation du Front des Jeunes. L'arrestation a eu lieu dans des locaux privés de la rue Tsyanskaya. Le même jour d'autres membres de l'organisation ont subi des perquisitions à leur domicile.

Les militants de cette organisation non enregistrée par l'Etat Belarusse mis aux arrêts, ont été conduits dans le poste de police de l'arrondissement Savetsky. Par la suite, la Radio Sviaboda (Radio Liberty) a informé que certains d'entre eux (Zmitser Fedortchuk et Eugénie Skrabutan) ont été contraints à avouer leur appartenance à cette organisation non enregistrée. Nous rappelons que le leader de cette organisation, Zmitser Dashkevitch, se trouve actuellement en prison pour participation dans une organisation non enregistrée et déclarée illégale.

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## Three Opposition Parties Received Warnings from the Belarusian Ministry of Justice

The three opposition parties that recently formed a left-wing alliance received an official warning from the justice ministry for holding the union's founding conference abroad.

The Belarusian Party of Communists (BPC), the Belarusian Women's Party "Nadzeya"

and the Belarusian Social Democratic Party "Hramada" established the Union of Left Parties (ULP) at a conference in Chernihiv on December 17. The Ukrainian city was picked as the venue after the parties had failed to find an appropriate auditorium for the conference anywhere in

Belarus.

Explaining the warning, the justice ministry said that Belarus' laws ban political parties from organizing and holding any events outside the country's territory.

The leaders of the parties earlier expressed misgivings that the alliance might not be



## Continue: Ministry of Justice's Warnings



Photo: Ministry of Justice

registered on "political grounds" but stressed that the Union of Left Parties would carry out its activities anyway. In January, the justice ministry, which was considering the union's registration application, requested the parties to present more documents related to the founding conference. "This won't cause any problems for us," BPC spokesman Syarhey Vaznyak commented on the request. "We prepared for the ULP founding conference very thoroughly and so were prepared the registration documents for the justice ministry. We will be happy to provide the justice ministry with the additional documents."

Source: [www.naviny.by](http://www.naviny.by)

### Le Ministère de la justice a mis en garde 3 partis politiques de l'opposition

Le 1<sup>er</sup> février, le ministère de la justice Bélarusse a communiqué des avertissements écrits aux trois partis de l'opposition bélarusse : au Parti Communiste Bélarusse (PCB), au Parti Bélarusse Social - Démocrate (Gramada) et au Parti Bélarusse des femmes « l'Espoir ».

Le site internet officiel du ministère annonce que la cause de cette décision est la tenue par ces partis du Congrès constitutif du groupement politique « l'Union des gauches » organisé à Tchernigov en Ukraine le 17 décembre de l'année passée.

### Les présidents des établissements de l'enseignement supérieur privés seront nommés par le gouvernement de l'Etat

Durant la conférence de presse du 1<sup>er</sup> février, le président de la commission permanente de l'éducation, de la culture, de la science et du progrès technologique de la Chambre des représentants de l'Assemblée nationale Bélarusse, Vladimir Zdanovich, a annoncé que les présidents des établissements d'enseignement supérieur privés seront nommés par la ministre de l'éducation du Bélarus – une telle disposition a été inscrite dans le projet d'une nouvelle loi sur l'enseignement supérieur.

## Rectors of private Universities to Be Appointed by Minister of Education

**Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko said he would never yield to Russia's takeover of Belarus and emphasized that his country was ready for the EU membership and euro's introduction.**

Source: [www.commersant.com](http://www.commersant.com)

*In line with the amended law on higher education rectors of private schools of higher learning will be nominated by the education minister.*

There are some 12 private schools of higher learning at present, and their authorities had been nominated by the owners.

According to Uladzimir Zdanovich the chairman of the Belarusian Commission of Education of the National Assembly, an amendment

had to be made to the existing law on education since "some of the rectors had brought shame to the system of private education in Belarus". Zdanovich points however that there is no question of liquidating private schools of higher learning in Belarus.

Source: [www.belarus-live.eu](http://www.belarus-live.eu)

Actuellement il existe 12 établissements de ce type au Bélarus et leurs présidents sont nommés par les propriétaires de ces écoles. Vladimir Zdanovich explique que cette nouvelle disposition est due à la persistance des abus dans l'éducation privée. Cette mesure est définitive et ne sera pas soumise à débats supplémentaires.

Selon Vladimir Zdanovich, il ne s'agit en aucun cas de fermer les universités privées bélarusses, mais de les encadrer par l'éducation nationale.

## Reporters without Borders: Annual Report on Belarus 2006

*"Reporters without Borders" has published a report on situation with freedom of expression worldwide in 2006. In the section dedicated to Belarus, "Reporters without Borders" speak about the situation in Belarus before and after the presidential vote.*

The government keeps a tight grip on the state media in this former Soviet republic shunned by the international community and persecutes the few independent outlets that fight to survive. Seventeen journalists from the country's Polish minority were arrested over three months in 2005 and

two of them were given jail sentences for "taking part in an illegal demonstration" while covering a protest by small business owners for an opposition website. The regime is increasing its pressure on the independent media as the July 2006 presidential election approaches.

## Continue: Reporters Without Borders

**REPORTERS  
WITHOUT BORDERS**  
FOR PRESS FREEDOM

The only independent daily, Narodnaya Volya, already crippled by fines from losing libel suits, had its accounts frozen on 20 September.

Minsk city authorities seized all copies of the weekly Den in August and then forced it to close by striking its publishers, Denpress, off the official register of publications. The country's main independent paper, the twice-weekly BG Delovaya Gazeta, was being financially strangled with enormous fines imposed in libel cases.

With all opposition papers now forced to print in neighbouring Russia, the monopoly state post office,

Belposhta, said it would stop handling subscriber copies of a dozen independent papers from 1 January 2006, ensuring their probable closure.

Vassili Grodnikov, of Narodnaya Volya, was found dead in his apartment in a Minsk suburb on 18 October with mysterious head injuries. He had been investigating gangs involved in swindling elderly apartment tenants.

Official investigators into the death of journalist Veronika Cherkasova, of the weekly Solidarnost, at her home on 20 October 2004, still insisted it was probably a love or family murder, even though just before she was killed, she

was investigating arms sales by Belarusian officials to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein when he was in power.

The enquiry into the July 2000 disappearance of cameraman Dmitri Zavadski, of the Russian TV station ORT, possibly involving top government officials, is still making no progress.

Source: [www.rsfb.org](http://www.rsfb.org)

### « Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) » : la presse indépendante a quasiment disparu au Bélarus

L'organisation internationale « Reporters Sans Frontières » déplore la situation de la liberté de la presse dans le pays qui, selon ses observations, ne s'améliore guère.

Dans son rapport annuel, RSF note que « la réélection d'Alexandre Loukachenko, en mars, avec 80 % des voix, s'est faite dans un climat des plus déprimants ». « En trois mandats, le président biélorusse a réussi à éradiquer pratiquement toute la presse indépendante, renvoyant la profession à l'ère du samizdat (publication clandestine) », souligne cette organisation.

Au printemps 2006, de nombreux journalistes étrangers ont été expulsés du Bélarus ou n'ont pu obtenir de visa d'entrée. Parmi eux la journaliste de « Libération » Laure Mandeville qui s'est vue refuser un visa d'entrée. Dans le rapport des Reporters l'on apprend que ce refus a été argumenté par « la publication d'articles mensongers sur la situation au Bélarus ».

### « Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) » :

la presse indépendante a quasiment disparu au Bélarus

## Oil Transit through Belarus Becomes More Expensive by Third

Belarus will raise the price on transit of Russia's oil through its territory since February 15. The tariffs, which were the same since 1996, will be raised by almost 30 percent. Considering current amounts of export, it will increase the expenditures of Russian oil companies by \$50 million a year. Meanwhile, Transneft head Semen Vainshtok yesterday said that the company's tech-

nical council has already approved the construction of a pipeline branch detouring Belarus to Primorsk with the capacity of 50 million metric tons of oil annually.

The Economic Ministry of Belarus decided to change tariffs on oil transit. Transneft has already been notified, said Belarus. However, the company claimed it wasn't notified, add-

ing that tariffs can be changed only upon agreement of parties. Russian oil companies have not commented on Belarus' decision so far. Yet, experts believe the companies' expenditures will grow insignificantly. Meanwhile, Minsk's imposing extra tariffs for oil and gas transit make it more and more probable that a new export pipeline can be built, detouring Belarus.







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**We are on the web:**  
[www.democraticbelarus.eu](http://www.democraticbelarus.eu)

*The Brussels-based Office for a Democratic Belarus is a non-profit organization run by Belarusians living abroad. The Office's task is to strengthen ties between the Belarusian pro-democratic groups, including NGOs, political parties and the Belarusian independent media, and the EU institutions, the Council of Europe, NATO, the United Nations, international human rights groups and international press.*

*The Office is governed by a Belarusian Executive Board. The International Consortium of the organization coordinates and supports Belarus-related activities and events, develops communication and networking capacity, as well as provides technical and information assistance.*

*The initiative is supported by a number of European and US donor organizations willing to assist in promoting Belarus in Western Europe, as well as European values in Belarus.*

*The Office for a Democratic Belarus is extremely grateful to all governments, organizations and persons who contributed to the establishment of the organisation. Thank you for your cooperation and solidarity.*

## Announcements:

### EPP-ED Study Day on Belarus in the European Parliament

The EPP-ED Group is holding a study day on Belarus on Thursday, 8 February 2007 in the European Parliament in room PHS 3 C050 from 9:30h until 18:30h.

The Group has invited a number of distinguished speakers, including the two Belarusian Sakharov Prize winners Mr Alaksyander Milinkevich and Mrs Zhanna Litvina, the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Mr David Kramer, the Director-General of DG RELEX Mr Eneko Landaburu, and the Director of High Representative Solana's Policy Unit Mrs Helga Schmid, as well as speakers from think tanks, and other academic and European institutions.

The study day will be opened by Parliament President Hans-Gert Poettering and the new Chair of the EPP-ED Group, Mr Joseph Daul.

"The EPP-ED Group has always been on the forefront in the fight for democracy and human rights, and we will continue to do so. I believe that it is very timely for us to discuss Belarus in a study day, since it is the last remaining dictatorship in Europe, and with enlargement it is now a neighbouring country" - said Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee in the EP, Mr Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (EPP-ED) who will conclude the discussion.

The study day is divided into four thematic sessions which deal with Belarus as a neighbour of the enlarged European Union, full programme below.

*The event is open to all participants and press.*

**Date:** 8 February at 9.30  
**Venue:** European Parliament  
PHS 3C050

#### **PPE – DE Journée d'étude sur le Bélarus**

Ce jeudi, le 8 février 2007, le groupe parlementaire du PPE - DE tiens une journée d'étude sur le Bélarus. Cette journée se tiendra au Parlement Européen, dans la salle PHS 3 C050 de 9h30 à 18h30. A cette occasion, le groupe invite des orateurs parmi les mieux placés pour parler de la situation au Bélarus, y compris les deux lauréats du Prix Sakharov, Monsieur Alyaksyander Milinkevich et Madame Zhanna Litvina, ainsi que le sous-secrétaire d'Etat adjoint des Etats-Unis d'Amérique Monsieur David Kramer ; le Directeur Général de la DG RELEX Monsieur Eneko Landaburu, la Directrice de l'Unité politique du Haut Représentant Solana, Madame Helga Schmid, ainsi que les représentants des institutions européennes, des think tanks et du milieu académique.

La journée d'étude sera ouverte au Parlement par le Président Hans-Gert Poettering et par le nouveau président du groupe PPE-DE, Monsieur Joseph Daul.