



ECBA Statement about Belarusian Imprisoned Lawyers

The European Criminal Bar Association (ECBA) is deeply concerned about the imprisonment of several dedicated lawyers in Belarus, who have been targeted for their commitment to upholding the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and the right to legal assistance.

Vitaly Brahinets, a highly experienced criminal lawyer and member of the Minsk Regional Bar Association, is well-known for his fervent support of human rights and the legal profession. He defended notable individuals such as Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski, philosopher Vladimir Matskevich, and expelled lawyer Andrei Mochalov. Despite being aware of the risks associated with politically motivated cases, Mr. Brahinets faced adversity when his license was suddenly revoked by the Belarusian Ministry of Justice, without any prior notification. Following his arrest, he subsequently received an eight-year prison sentence for charges that were manifestly political in nature. His detention is widely recognized as a part of a politically motivated move, and he is considered a political prisoner. Both Belarusian and international human rights activists and lawyers have rallied to provide support for him during this challenging time.

Aliaksandr Danilevich, a prominent Belarusian lawyer specializing in international commercial arbitration and sports law, has been an attorney within the Minsk City Bar Association since 2013. During the political crisis in Belarus, he provided legal assistance to notable athletes and openly condemned government repression and violence. He initiated a public anti-war petition within the Belarusian legal community, advocating for peace in Europe and the protection of the rights of Ukrainians. Mr. Danilevich took personal risks by being the first signatory of this vital petition.

Maxim Znak, a lawyer associated with the Borovtsov & Salei Law Firm in Minsk, played a critical role in providing legal support to presidential candidate Viktor Babaryko, unjustly rejected from participating in the 2020 Belarusian presidential election. He also represented opposition leader Maria Kalesnikava. His commitment to justice and human rights led to his arrest on September 9, 2020, making him the last active member of the Coordination Council to be detained.

The imprisonment of these lawyers, who worked to uphold the principles of justice, poses a grave concern. According to reports, they have faced unjust legal processes and have been deprived of their freedom for the mere act of carrying out their professional duties.

The ECBA urges the Belarusian authorities to fully adhere to international human rights standards, including the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We demand an immediate end to the persecution of these lawyers and thorough, independent, and impartial investigations into all allegations of human rights violations.

We also emphasize the importance of upholding the role of lawyers, as outlined in the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers adopted by the United Nations.

The ECBA stands in solidarity with these imprisoned lawyers and calls for their immediate release, as their unjust incarceration is a violation of fundamental human rights and the rule of law.

We continue to monitor this situation closely and urge the international community to join us in advocating for the release of these brave lawyers and the protection of the principles they represent.