



# Ecohome

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## 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention

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October 28-29, 2020

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to present a brief review on situation in Belarus, as well as about perspectives in implementation of the provisions of Convention in this country.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the European EcoForum, GUTA Association, European Environmental Bureau, NGO Arnika, the Secretariat of Convention, as well as personally to Mr Andriy Andrusevich, Mr Jonas Ebbesson, Mme Magdi Toth-Nagy and Mr Jan Haverkamp for the support provided to Belarusian activists - this is what we are now discuss about Rapid Response Mechanism.

As you all probably know, Belarus is now going through deep political crisis. The August 9 presidential elections became the point where people could no longer tolerate the authorities' hypocrisy and start street protests. I should note, that the protests are exclusively peaceful in nature.

The authorities' reaction turned out to be inadequate brutal. According to human rights defenders, about 500 people a criminal prosecution started, about 16,000 people were detained in administrative cases. Many detainees were tortured, abused and feel inhuman treatment, were beaten and wounded. A more detailed report of the human rights organization can be found here:

in Russian: <https://belhelcom.org/sites/default/files/katavanni-daklad-2020.pdf>

in English:

[https://belhelcom.org/sites/default/files/belarus\\_after\\_election\\_report\\_2020\\_en.pdf](https://belhelcom.org/sites/default/files/belarus_after_election_report_2020_en.pdf)

The UN Human Rights Council General Assembly at its 45th session on 17 September 2020 also adopted a resolution on numerous violations of human rights in Belarus: <http://undocs.org/A/HRC/45/L.1>

Concerning environmental activists, as for October 27, the following were persecuted:

Ms Irina Sukhy - arrest for 5 days

Marina Dubina (director of the NGO "Ecohome") - arrest for 13 days

Ms Anna Dapseviciute – house searched

Mr Denis Kobrusev (urbanist) - arrest for 15 days

Ms Anora Langar (employee of the UN Office in Belarus, previously activist of the Green Network) - detained for 72 hours

Ms Ksenia Malyukova – house searched

Ms Nasta Zakharevich (journalist of the Green Portal) - arrest for 7 days  
Ms Alena Dubovik (Green Telephone Hotline operator) - arrest for 15 days  
Ms Veronika Yanovich (activist) - detained.

Searches were carried out in the homes of most of the detainees. During the interrogations, the police officers paid special attention to the activities of the NGO "Ecohome", therefore we assume that the authorities may take repressive actions or provocations against the organization.

In a situation where unjustified violence against civilians has become a state policy, we do not consider it possible to cooperate with state bodies of the Republic of Belarus. Previously country's judicial authorities, denying the public protecting their right to a healthy environment, according to the Convention, hid behind a mask of incompetence, now the judicial system has completely discredited itself, making unfair decisions in politically motivated cases. In view of this, we should state that Belarus is in non-compliance with the Convention due to the lack of effective institutions of judicial protection and the impossibility to exercise the rights under the Convention when basic human rights are violated in the country.

We are grateful for the support of our Aarhus community, for the prompt address of the Convention bodies to the government of Belarus. We suppose that in order to prevent cases of persecution of activists in the future, to protect their rights, health and lives within the framework of the Rapid Response Mechanism it would be relevant to create a position of the Special Rapporteur for rapid protection of environmental activists. To make the work of the special rapporteur more efficient, a volunteer group can be established, which would assist to collect information, check it, make translations and so on.

In conclusion, I would like to wish all of us health and a peaceful sky over our heads - I never thought that these would be not just nice words, but really relevant wishes.

On behalf of Ecohome NGO –

Siarhei Mahonau,  
Legal advisor