

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Human Rights Council
Forty-Sixth Regular Session

February 25, 2021

Human Rights Council

46th regular session of the Human Rights Council

Item 2: Enhanced Interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner report on the situation of human rights in Belarus (HRC res. 45/1)

Statement delivered by Olga Salomatova on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR)

Helsinki Foundation for human rights would like to emphasise the monumental crisis of the rule of law and human rights in Belarus and the intensification of political repressions. In particular, in January 2021, during a criminal investigation, lawyer and human rights defender Leonid Sudalenko was arrested. He has been representing victims of human rights violations before the UN Human Rights Committee for many years.

At the beginning of February 2021, human rights defenders Sergey Drozdovsky and Oleg Grablevsky from the Office for human rights of persons with disabilities, an organisation that initiated the process of ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by Belarus, were as well arrested.

The international community must effectively react to the concerning events of the recent weeks, including the wide-spread searches across the country, unfair trials, and illegal sentences.

The increased practice of disbarment of lawyers, including by requiring them to sign nondisclosure agreements in almost all politically motivated criminal cases, is deeply concerning. Lawyers with active professional and civil standing are being persecuted. On 19 February 2021, four advocates were disbarred: Liudmila Kazak, Konstantin Mikhel, Maxim Konon, Mikhail Kirilyuk. In fact, it is a punishment in the form of deprivation of the right to the profession for the protection of clients who are persecuted for political reasons and the right to the expression of opinions. Such sanctions form a pattern, an administrative practice. Earlier, Alexander Pylchenko and Yulia Levanchuk were disbarred for the same reasons. Also, the criminal cases against advocates Maxim Znak and Ilia Saley are ongoing for six months (Znak is detained, Saley's house arrest has recently been extended).

It is crucial to demand from Belarus an immediate end to all types of persecution and repression.