

MONITORING REPORT ON DEVELOPMENTS IN BELARUS

NOVEMBER 2008 – SEPTEMBER 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

On October 13, 2008, the Council of the European Union decided to suspend existing restrictive measures in place against prominent Belarusian officials and initiate a Dialogue Process with the regime to bring changes in the human rights situation of the country. In October 2010, the EU will once again review the issue and its further relations with Belarusian government. Since the beginning of the Dialogue Process over fifty Belarusian and international organizations¹ have joined efforts to regularly inform policymakers about the human rights situation in Belarus by preparing reports² on key developments in the country. **This report, the seventh in a series, presents recommendations for EU policy towards Belarus, tailored to the present day situation with human rights in the country, the details of which are provided in the second part of the report. Criteria of progress measurement and summary of the events during the entire Dialogue Period constitute Annex 1 and 2 to the report respectively.**

The change in the EU policy has inspired some cosmetic improvements in the situation with human rights in the country. Certain symbolic steps of the Belarusian government towards liberalization during the first year of the dialogue suggested the possibility for further development of Belarusian institutes, legislature and practices in respect of human rights. But at the end of year 2009 and in 2010 the situation of the segment of Belarusian society that could actively participate in the forthcoming election campaign has deteriorated. Seeking to solve present short-term domestic political problems, the Belarusian government was willing to make isolated concessions to the political opposition and civil society to earn EU acclaim in 2009, but failed to demonstrate the political will for genuine pro-democratic reforms in light of the upcoming presidential election of 2010.

One of the aspects which negatively impacts the effectiveness of the flexible EU policy towards Belarus is its inconsistency. Defining EU priorities in its relationship with Belarus, developing a step-by-step roadmap and making the dialogue process more transparent by providing feedback from the side of the EU could positively influence relations with Belarus and improve the image of the Dialogue Period among Belarusian citizens. A broader review of the situation rather than concentrating on symbolic travel restrictions, addressing the repressive apparatus as a whole and demand for accountability of subjective judicial practices could further contribute to the efficiency of the EU policy.

We offer EU officials the following five recommendations to promote more tangible and systematic change towards an open and free society in Belarus:

1. **No progress on lifting restrictive measures in place against certain officials of Belarus should be made without significant progress in securing the access to human rights for people of Belarus.**
2. **The observation of the situation in Belarus with the suspension of travel restrictions should be extended by six months to cover the presidential campaign and the possible repression afterwards.**
3. **A more comprehensive instrument should be developed for applying restrictive measures, which could include expanding the list of Belarusian officials, continuously violating human rights, to whom restrictive measures apply, and limiting political contacts on the higher level.**
4. **The EU should produce a comprehensive public progress report on developments in Belarus during the Dialogue Period and an evaluation of its own policies. The review should be based on concrete criteria and include the opportunity for civil society input at all stages of the process.**
5. **The country's poor human rights record should be taken into consideration when deciding on financial or material support, economic cooperation, investments and credits to the Belarusian government more substantially. No repressive institutions, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Committee for State Security, the Prosecutor general, local election commissions, and judiciary institutions should receive support, which would enable them to expand their repressive practices.**

¹ Compiled by the Assembly of Belarusian Prodemocratic NGOs, Belarusian Association of Journalists, Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Committee for Defense of the Repressed „Salidarnasc“, Human Rights Center “Viasna” in cooperation with the Belarusian Robert Schuman Society and the Belarusian International Implementers (BIIM) group.

² To request an electronic copy of any of the reports, please contact us at tavarystva.schumana@gmail.com.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The present conditions in the country will not allow Belarusian media to provide voters with objective and up-to-date information and to become a platform for open discussion of election programs of different candidates.

New Laws

Decree No. 60, which took force on 1 July 2010, covers “a wide range of spheres dealing with the Internet”³. It regulates e-commerce and e-services provided by companies based in Belarus, sets common standards for state institutions’ websites, and contains a number of clauses, aimed at copyright protection and prevention of Internet ‘piracy’. However, the Decree also provides for new possibilities to restrict user privacy. According to the decree⁴ all online access devices (computers and mobile phones), as well as all internet café users, are to be identified and registered with Internet Service Providers. The providers are obliged to store the data on the Internet use of individuals for a full year and to hand that information over to law-enforcement agencies upon request. It also requires Internet service providers to block access to any website within 24 hours of being asked to do so by government regulators. The President’s signing the Decree was described by Lutz Guellner, spokesman for the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton as “a significant step in the wrong direction.”⁵

Registration of publications and free dissemination of information

The much-feared process of re-registration of media outlets, as required by the new Law on Mass Media, finished on 8 February 2010 and has not resulted in any politically motivated non-registrations. At the same time, at least eight new non-state newspapers were refused registration since February as the Ministry of Information introduced additional restrictions for registration of new media outlets, which are not provided for in the Media Law. Ten independent publications still have no possibility to be distributed through *Belsayuzdruk*, the state monopoly retail press distribution system, and the *Belposhita* subscription catalogue. Moreover, prominent independent newspapers “Narodnaya Volya”, “Nasha Niva”, “Salidarnasc” and “Novy Chas” received several spurious warnings from the Ministry of Information, thus putting them at risk of being closed down or their production suspended at any moment, once their outlets are seen as inconvenient during the upcoming election campaign.

Foreign accreditation

On 11 November 2009 the Belarusian MFA registered the European Radio for Belarus and allowed it to open its office in Minsk for one year. At the same time, on 8 December, the Belarusian MFA turned down the application for registration from BelSat, a Polish Television satellite channel broadcasting in Belarusian for the second time, justifying its decision by the fact that its correspondents had previously reported from Belarus without official registration and accreditation.

Impediments for independent journalists

The police conducted a series of searches and interrogations of journalists in connection with the legal investigation of a defamation suit, filed by ex-Head of KGB Department for Homiel region, on 31 December 2009 against militia officers who have provided journalists with false information. The professional equipment of journalists from Charter97, “Narodnaya Volya” and “Novaya Gazeta”, who are only witnesses in the case, has been confiscated. Repressive measures were also applied to Ivan Shulha, who served a 10-day administrative sentence for alleged petty hooliganism in February 2010. All of the aforementioned journalists are members of the Belarusian Association of Journalists, the only legal independent entity of journalists, which, on 13 January 2010 received a warning from the Ministry of Justice, upheld by the Supreme Court, putting the Association at risk of being closed down for any alleged misconduct. The Ministry warned BAJ about the inadmissibility of including the word “Press” on its membership IDs, the incompatibility of the activity of its Legal Center for Media Protection with “the statutes of the organization” and the discrepancy between BAJ objectives as presented on its website and in its statute.

³ Chavusau, Y. (2010). Soon there will be less privacy in Belarusian Internet. *BelarusInfo Letter*, 3, 1-2.

⁴ [BAJ analysis of Decree 60](#)

⁵ [Radio Free Europe](#), February 4, 2010.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The government continues to regularly harass and hinder public meetings organized by or including civil society and political opposition figures. During the reporting period there were at least ninety cases of detentions, at least ten cases of administrative arrests for participation in unauthorized street actions and at least forty-five cases of administrative fines imposed. But out of fifteen applications to conduct a demonstration, only four have been granted permission. Ten out of eleven unauthorized demonstrations have been “forcefully disrupted by Belarusian security forces, many of whom refused to identify themselves, and demonstrators were harassed, man-handled, arrested and detained. Moreover, there were deliberate attempts to block media coverage of the actions, in violation of Belarusian laws”, as noted in the statement on the freedom of assembly in Belarus by Political Counselor Casey Christensen from the United States Mission to the OSCE. Two meetings, organized by potential Presidential candidate Yaraslau Ramanchuk were prevented and even disrupted by militia, which constitute worrying precedents of interference in election campaigning.

AMENDMENTS TO ELECTORAL LEGISLATION

The new electoral code came into force on January 4, 2010. In their joint opinion on the amendments published on June 4, 2010, the European Commission for Democracy through Law and OSCE/ODIHR note that “the Amendments represent a step towards removing some flaws in Belarus’ election legislation, although they are unlikely to resolve the underlying concern that the legislative framework for elections in Belarus continues to fall short of providing a basis for genuinely democratic elections”⁶. In particular, the Amendments did not address certain key concerns, including ensuring the transparency of the vote count and providing the possibility for meaningful observation of the voting, counting and tabulation of results.

The application of the amendments during the April Local Council Elections signified little change in practice from previous elections in Belarus. Domestic observers⁷ noted that:

- The composition of the local commissions remained largely unchanged, despite the introduction of legislative changes to ensure political diversity and civic representation.
- No appeal on the composition of the election commissions was satisfied.
- The meetings of election commissions were conducted in a non-transparent and at times secret manner.
- The parties reported incidents of pressure and repression against them and their activists/candidates.⁸
- The state media devoted minimal time to election coverage.
- Printed campaign materials and pre-recorded speeches were censored by local authorities and local mass media.
- No meaningful observation of the vote count was possible.
- Flaws, irregularities and at times crude violations were committed during the vote count.

As the joint opinion of OSCE/ODIHR and the European Commission for Democracy through Law stressed, “the quality of future elections in Belarus will depend not only on the quality of the legislation but also on its good faith implementation.”

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND THE SITUATION OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

On 12 May 2010, during a Session of the Human Rights Council within the UN Universal Periodic Review, the Belarusian delegation presented a report maintaining that there are no problems with freedom of association and “the number of civic organizations is growing”⁹. Though the government consulted the representatives of civil society while preparing the report, its conclusions contradict the findings of the civil society. For instance, the number of newly registered organizations, in fact, remains the same. The amendments to the Law on Political Parties and the Law on Civic Associations, which came into force on 5 February 2010, create wider possibilities for denying registration on spurious grounds. On 6 January 2010 the President issued a decree, under which the government should develop a Law on Non-commercial

⁶ [OSCE Press Release, 4 June 2010](#)

⁷ “Monitoring Report on the 2010 Local Elections” of Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections.

⁸ The Press conference of Belarusian Christian Democracy party on 12 March 2010.

⁹ [National Report, submitted by Belarus to Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review](#)

organizations¹⁰. While the concept of the Law remains unknown, there is a danger that on the eve of Presidential elections it could worsen the conditions of the relatively unregulated forms of legal entities, like business associations and non-commercial institutions, which have been used by civic activists as the last resort for legalizing their activity.

Oversight of registered organizations

On 18-19 May 2010, searches were conducted in the private apartments and offices of civic activists in more than 20 towns and cities of Belarus. Dozens of people were subjected to arbitrary detention and the equipment, documents and money of the institution “Rukh Napierad”, charitable fund “Shchyrasc” and civic campaign “Govori Pravdu” (“Tell the Truth”) were confiscated. Civic campaign “Govori Pravdu” activists Andrei Dzmitryeu, Uladzimir Niakliayeu and Siarhei Vazniak, were detained as suspects in a criminal case under Article 250, ‘dissemination of false information about goods and services’. All of them remain suspects in the case. The campaign “Govori Pravdu” was initiated by a registered institution, “Rukh Napierad”. On 28 July 2010 Economic court found the placement of the office and legal address of the institution illegal, which will most likely lead to the liquidation of the institution. Deprived of the registration status, the activists of the campaign would face threat of being accused of acting in the name of unregistered organization, under Article 193.1 of the Criminal Code.

In accordance with Presidential Decree 510 as of 16 October 2009, every six months the Committee of State Control needs to prepare a plan of oversight activities of various institutions, to be exercised by different state bodies. According to the plan for the second half of the year, published on 14 June 2010, over twenty large civic organizations¹¹ are to undergo such inspections, mainly from the Ministry of Taxes. Most inspections are scheduled for October and November, the probable time of the Presidential campaign. Notably, only one such inspection took place in the first half of the year. The organizations “Ekadom”, “Zialionaya Setka” and Belarusian Committee “Children of Chernobyl” have already undergone inspections, by which the later organization might face extensive financial fines.

As the result of the official inspection of a popular opposition party Belarusian Popular Front in June-August 2010, the nomination of their party member Ryhor Kastusiou as Presidential candidate was found invalid. The party and its public organization have also received an official warning from the Ministry of Justice, which has also initiated insight of Mahiliou and Homel branches of the party. Such actions create obvious obstacles for political campaigning on the eve of the Presidential elections.

The requirement of a legal address in a non-residential building with a commercial rent rate continues to be problematic for new and established associations alike; in a number of cases it has even forced organizations to close down. For example, the Borisov branch of the "Children in Need" NGO was forced to cease its activities in April 2009 after it could no longer pay its rent. Since April 2009, the Belarusian Popular Front, one of Belarus’ leading opposition political parties, has been struggling to renew the lease on its Minsk headquarters. The organizations have appealed several times to the local authorities without success for subsidized rent, with the latest denial issued in August 2010.

Denial of registration

Despite the upcoming elections, in the first half of 2010 sixty eight new civic associations and ten funds received official registration, which statistically is an average registration rate in Belarus. However, legal status still remains an inaccessible luxury for political and human rights organizations. The civic organizations, whose applications for registration were turned down during the reporting period, are youth organization Malady Front (1 April 2010, third denial), the Assembly of Pro-Democratic Non-Governmental Organizations (12 February 2010, third denial), an independent trade union “Razam” (25 January 2010, third denial) and “Brestskaya Viasna” (August 2010, seventh denial). Registration was also denied to civic youth association “Maladaya Backaushchyna” and the Belarusian branch of the International Helsinki Association of Human Rights. The Belarusian Christian Democracy Party, civic association “Spadchyna”, civic association “Zalaty Leu”, human rights organization “Berasciejskaya Viasna”, the Assembly of Pro-democratic Non-Governmental Organizations and youth organization “Malady Front” appealed to the Supreme Court, but the decisions of the Ministry of Justice have been upheld in all the cases.

¹⁰ [The official website of the President of Belarus](#)

¹¹ Belarusian Association of Journalists, Ekadom, Human Rights Centre, Centre for Legal Transformation and other members of the Assembly of Pro-Democratic Non-governmental Organizations.

On 30 May 2010 youth organization “Malady Front” held another founding assembly and intended to apply for registration for the fourth time, as well as youth party organization “Moladz BHD”, which held its assembly on 22 May 2010. However, “Malady Front” was not able to find premises to rent for a legal address so therefore could not file an application. Homel branch of the organization “For Freedom” applied for registration in July 2010.

Article 193-1 and persecution of unregistered organizations

Governmental declarations in Autumn 2009 about the possibility of reviewing Article 193-1 of the Criminal Code, which criminalizes activities on behalf of a non-registered organization, have not resulted in any concrete steps. Since 2006, 17 persons have been convicted under this Article. During the reporting period the authorities’ enforcement of the Article remained arbitrary and selective, and it continues to be used to intimidate civic activists, particularly youth, and dissuade citizens from participating in unsanctioned events. In the latest case, the Prosecutor issued an official warning to Ivan Stasiuk for possible criminal responsibility for acting in the name of unregistered youth organization “Malady Front”.

Starting from the end of April, a wave of searches and confiscations at offices and private apartments of journalists, human rights defenders, civic and political activists swept across the country. Activists involved in the election observation activities of unregistered human rights organization “Nasha Viasna” had their apartments searched and equipment confiscated in Navapolatska and Rechytsa.

OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS

The acquittal of two activists charged with evasion of military service and the discharge from the army of two young activists for health reasons is welcomed. Nonetheless they can only be considered as isolated cases of good will, as restrictions on fundamental freedoms and political reprisals against young political and civic activists, as well as religious and ethnic minorities, continue to cause concern.

Ethnic minorities

In January 2010 the conflict between the representatives of the unrecognized Union of Poles, supported by the Polish authorities, and their officially recognized counterparts over the Union’s premises in the village Ivianets in Minsk region resulted in massive detentions and the confiscation of the premises in favor of the officially recognized branch. The criminal case against Teresa Sobol, former head of the Polish House in Ivianets, after having been suspended twice, has been reopened in 5 August 2010.

Forced conscription

Ivan Mikhailau and Dzmitry Smyk are the first two Belarusian civic activists who have been accused of avoiding military service and found innocent on 9 March 2010 and on 31 May 2010 respectively. However, on 4 June 2010 Yauhen Yakavenka, an activist of the unregistered Belarusian Christian Democracy Party, has been sentenced to one year of restricted freedom by Homel Central District court, the same court which acquitted Dzmitry Smyk, for refusing to serve in the army until receiving the notice in Belarusian language. This decision has been upheld by Homel regional court on 22 July 2010.

Ivan Shila and Franak Vyachorka, young activists who were drafted into the army on political grounds, were discharged from the military service for health reasons on 3 December 2009 and on 14 April 2010. Dmitry Fedaruk, Andrew Tsanyatyuta, Ales Krauchenya and Eugen Skrabets, who were drafted under similar circumstances, are still serving in the army. Another activist, Stanislau Ramanovich, has been drafted into the army on 28 July 2010 on political motives.

Political prisoners

After keeping Vaukavysk businessmen Uladzimir Asipenka, Mikalai Autukhovich, Mikhail Kazlou and Aliaksandr Laryn in custody for more than a year, on 6 May 2010 the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus found Mr. Asipienka, Autukhovich and Laryn guilty of “illegal actions with explosives, firearms and ammunition” and Mr. Kazlou – of “failure to act”. Aliaksandr Laryn, Uladzimir Asipenka and Mikalai Autukhovich were sentenced to 5, 3 and 3 years of imprisonment respectively, and Mikhail Kazlou – to 2 years

¹² The definition ‘political prisoners’ according to CE document SG\Inf(2001) 34\24 October 2001.

. The case was tried by the Supreme Court as the court of the first instance, which deprived the accused of the right to appeal, in contradiction of Articles 2 and 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The analysis of the evidence gives no reasons to consider it as a sufficient basis for a guilty verdict¹³. As stated by Human Rights Watch, “the three activists’ imprisonment is more likely in connection with their civil society activism”¹⁴.

Among other opposition activists accused on political grounds are Aleg Surgan (sentenced by the Oktiabrskiy Court of Vitebsk on 19 February 2010 to 6 months’ detention for resisting arrest for hanging a white-red-white flag) and Siarhei Kavalenka, an activist of the Belarusian Popular Front party (sentenced by the Kastychnitski District Court of Vitsebsk on 14 May 2010 to three years of restricted freedom for hanging a white-red-white flag on the city’s Christmas tree).

In April 2010 a criminal fraud case was brought against well-known politician Ales Zarembyuk, who was standing as a candidate in the local elections. Siarhei Panamarou, the initiator and coordinator of regional Kletsk website and an independent newspaper “Bojkij Kleck”, was accused of defamation of an official on Article 369 of the Criminal Code. Aliaksei Bondar, Mikhail Kryvau and Tatsiana Tsishkevich, who were sentenced to restricted freedom for participation in a peaceful action of entrepreneurs in January 2009, still have not been granted parole and must remain abroad for fear of criminal prosecution. Prisoner of conscience Maksim Dashuk continues to serve a sentence of restricted freedom for participation in unsanctioned demonstrations in May 2008 after his sentence was extended by 10 months until September 2010 because of an alleged violation of the terms of his restricted freedom penalty.

Capital punishment

Belarus continues to exercise the death penalty. The execution of Andrei Zhuk and Vasil Uzepchuk, sentenced last year, took place in March 2010, despite the fact that the UN Human Rights Committee sent requests for interim measures of protection. Two more death penalty verdicts have been announced by the Hrodna Regional Court to Andrei Burdyka and Aleh Hryshkautsou¹⁵. In response, on 29 April 2010 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe decided to suspend its activities involving high-level contacts with the Belarusian Parliament and government authorities, having noted a “lack of progress” towards Council of Europe standards and a “lack of political will” on the part of the authorities to adhere to the Organization’s values¹⁶.

Conclusions

Fundamental civil and political rights remain seriously restricted. The persecution of civil activists, non-governmental organizations, independent journalists and pro-democratic politicians will most likely intensify on the eve of the Presidential elections. Discriminatory economic conditions, laws restricting access to information, nontransparent and discriminatory decisions on accrediting journalists, and flawed legislation on defamation and extremism continue to hinder the development of independent and pluralistic media in Belarus. Influential NGOs continue to be denied registration, independent trade unionists still suffer discrimination, excessive force is regularly used against peaceful demonstrators, young activists continue to be targeted, and civil society remains marginalized. The representatives of civil society condemn this repressive government’s practices, call for the European Union to consider the Belarusian government’s disrespect for the democratic values that are at the core of the EU while formulating policy towards the country, and insist that the opposition and civil society is included in the European Union’s dialogue with Belarus.

Please refer to pages 1 for recommendations on the EU policy towards Belarus and to Annex 1 for the list of criteria to measure the progress towards genuine democratic reform.

To request an electronic copy of any of the previous reports, please contact us at tavarystva.schumana@gmail.com.

¹³ [Joint Statement by the International Federation for Human Rights \(FIDH\) and the Human Rights Center ‘Viasna’](#)

¹⁴ [Human Rights Watch, retrieved on 12.06.2010](#)

¹⁵ [Amnesty International, Belarusian Helsinki Committee and Human Rights Centre Viasna condemn new death convictions](#)

¹⁶ *Assembly debate* on 29 April 2010 (16thSitting) (see [Doc. 12223](#), [Doc. 12224](#).)

CRITERIA OF PROGRESS MEASUREMENT

Since the beginning of the dialogue the Belarusian government has done little to improve the situation with human rights in the country. The government has highlighted consultations, meetings, advisory bodies and promises of reform at the expense of implementing tangible reforms. Before the EU improves relations with Belarus, the government must demonstrate real progress in the areas of concern elaborated by Brussels: electoral legislation, the freedom of expression, the freedom of assembly, and the freedom of association, and the situation of civil society. Civil society representatives, contributing to the monitoring, have identified concrete criteria with which the progress during the dialogue in the above mentioned areas could be measured.

Regarding freedom of expression¹⁷:

- Ensuring equal economic conditions for media outlets with different forms of ownership;
- Returning all independent newspapers to the system of Belsayuzdruk, Belposhta state subscription catalogue and Belarusian printing houses.
- Abolishing articles of the Belarus' Law «On State Service» and provisions of other legislation acts that limit the journalists' right to access information about the authorities' activities;
- Stopping practices of refusals by state officials to provide journalists with information.
- Guaranteeing the freedom of accreditation of correspondents and the opening of offices of foreign media and introducing the system of accreditation upon request;
- Bringing the Law «On the Media», Decree “On Internet” and the Law «On Counteraction to Extremism» and its implementation in line with international standards;
- Abolishing Article 367 «Defamation of the President of the Republic of Belarus», Article 368 «Insult of the President of the Republic of Belarus», Article 369 «Insult of the representative of the authorities» and Article 369–1 «Discredit of the Republic of Belarus» of the Criminal Code.

Regarding freedom of assembly:

- Enacting changes to the Electoral Code to bring it in line with OSCE standards;
- Ending the use of force against peaceful civil society and political demonstrations;
- Bringing the Law “On Mass Actions” into accordance with international standards;
- Bringing the Law “On Religion” into accordance with international standards and ceasing the repression of all believers and denominations.

Regarding freedom of association:

- Registering all political parties, NGOs, trade unions, and media outlets seeking to participate in Belarusian civil society;
- Abolishing Article 193.1 of the Criminal Code, which criminalizes activities on behalf of unregistered organizations;
- Avoiding the introduction of restrictive provisions into the developing Law “On Non-commercial Organizations” by preparing it in a transparent manner, in cooperation with the OSCE and the Council of Europe;
- Simplifying the registration procedures of independent civil society organizations;
- Eliminating any administrative and economic pressure on registered organizations.

Regarding the improvement of the situation of civil society:

- Halting the criminal and administrative persecution of civil society activists;
- Ceasing all politically motivated expulsions or exclusions of activists from places of study and work;
- Abolishing forced military conscription and establishing a system of alternative military service;
- Declaring an immediate moratorium on the death penalty;
- Re-open the case of sentenced entrepreneurs and activists Messrs. Autukhovich, Asipenka, Kazlou and Laryn, permitting an independent investigation and open trial;
- Declaring amnesty, pardon or parole for all the political prisoners

¹⁷ For a more comprehensive list of criteria regarding the freedom of expression please refer to [Evaluation of the situation with media and the freedom of expression in Belarus by the Belarusian Association of Journalists](#)

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENTS SINCE OCTOBER 2008

Several positive trends could be noted during the Dialogue process, among them:

- Allowing independent newspapers “Nasha Niva” and “Narodnaya Volya” to return to national, and newspapers “Babrujski Kurier” and “Gantsavitski Chas” to local official circulation and distribution lists.
- Smooth re-registration of media outlets provided in the new Media Law. ;
- Introducing several amendments into the Belarusian Electoral Code in line with the OSCE ODIHR recommendations;
- Registration of some NGOs as “institutions” and one political association “For Freedom” and several non-political associations as organizations;
- Holding several roundtables with certain representatives of civil society and governmental officials under the auspices of the OSCE;
- Establishment of Inter-agency Working Group on Development of the Country Marketing, Coordination Council on the Media, and Public Advisory Council at the Presidential Administration. These advisory public councils include certain representatives of independent civil society and/or the political opposition.
- Approving an Action Plan for implementing the ILO's trade union recommendations.
- Allowing the unobstructed convention of several prominent national meetings by independent organizations and political parties;

Unfortunately, a number of negative trends continued to be noted, including:

- Independent newspapers, “Nasha Niva”, “Narodnaya Volya” and “Novy Chas” have received at least two spurious warnings, putting them at risk of being closed down at any moment. At least eight applications for registering a new media outlet were turned down. Six officially registered independent newspapers continue to face partial limitations in possibilities for distribution and six more continue to be unavailable through the state distribution system altogether.
- At least twenty journalists received warnings for working for foreign media without accreditation;
- Security forces continue the practices of brutal prevention of journalists' reporting on public demonstrations and confiscation of equipment in the offices and at homes of independent journalists;
- The government's persistent refusal to register independent public associations and political parties based on spurious grounds¹⁸;
- Criminal cases were brought against twenty-two opposition activists, in particular youth and small entrepreneurs. Court judgments against paroled political prisoners were never cancelled, therefore depriving them of important citizenship rights, including the right to run for elections.
- No steps have been taken to abolish the death penalty in Belarus. Four death verdicts have been announced, and two executed, during the Dialogue Period.
- Applications for public gatherings and demonstrations were refused on a regular basis; over twenty un-sanctioned peaceful meetings have been forcefully disrupted with numerous detentions preceding;
- At least fifty nine cases of administrative arrests and at least one hundred thirty eight cases of administrative fines on political grounds have been noted;
- The rare Councils' meetings have not produced any tangible results in establishing a dialogue between the government and civil society or improving the situation with human rights in the country;
- The government increased pressure on independent trade unions and failed to implement promises made in 2009 for implementation of ILO's recommendations;
- The government failed to address key OSCE ODIHR recommendations on amendments to electoral legislation;
- Registered civic organizations and media outlets experience excessive administrative oversight on the eve of the Presidential elections;
- No steps have been taken to reconsider controversial articles of the Criminal Code that severely limit basic freedoms in Belarus; despite wide international criticism, the law “On Mass Media and the decree “On Internet” were ratified and came into force; and the Parliament is developing a law on non-commercial organizations, which could furthermore limit freedom of association in Belarus.

¹⁸ Belarusian Christian Democracy Political Party, Party of Freedom and Progress, Belarusian Labor Party, Assembly of Pro-democratic Nongovernmental Organizations, Human Rights Center “Naša Viasna”, Human Rights Center “Bresckaja viasna”, Youth Association “MODES”, Youth Christian Social Union, Association “Young Social Democrats”, Cultural-educational Association “Spadčyna”, Youth Association “New Course”, youth organizations “Malady Front” and “Maladaya Backaushchyna”, an independent trade union “Razam” and other.