

STATEMENT REGARDING THE SITUATION IN BELARUS

We, the participants of the 7th ECPM General Assembly in Bucharest, Romania, express our deep concerns regarding the situation with human rights, freedom and democracy in Belarus.

On 19 December 2010, after the highly disputed outcome of the presidential elections in Belarus, over 50,000 supporters of democracy dared to stand for their choice by coming to the peaceful protest actions in the centre of Minsk. The demonstration was brutally dispersed by the riot police. Around 700 people were arrested, including seven presidential candidates. Afterwards the country sank into a whirlwind of arrests and interrogations of democratic activists, human rights defenders, independent journalists, lawyers, etc. The court cases against the persons accused of organising and participating in mass riots ended up in long imprisonment for more than 30 political activists. Many of them suffered from abuse, mistreatment and inhuman conditions because of overcrowded cells, lack of medical care and a ban on receiving letters and visits from relatives and lawyers.

Among the accused were the Belarusian Christian Democracy Party (BCD) co-chairmen, Paval Sieviarynets and Vital Rymasheuski. Paval Sieviarynets spent over five months in the KGB prison; he requested ten times a meeting with a priest, which was denied each time. Now Paval awaits the court decision on his complaint to the unlawful sentence of three years in a forced labour camp. Vital Rymasheuski, who ran for president, after having spent several weeks in the KGB prison, has received a suspended sentence of two years imprisonment for organising and active participation in the activities that breached public order. Dozens of BCD activists were accused and served short sentences in prison.

We demand from the Belarusian authorities to release all political prisoners arrested in the aftermath of the demonstrations of December 19, 2010 and to stop the persecution of democratic leaders and activists!

We are greatly concerned about the situation of freedom of religion and conscience in Belarus and call upon the leaders of democratic governments in Europe as well as the European Parliament to condemn these court decisions concerning Paval Sieviarynets and Vital Rymasheuski and to increase the political pressure on the Belarusian authorities.

EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN POLITICAL MOVEMENT, 24 June 2011.