

Human Rights Center **Viasna**

# **Review–Chronicle**

**of the Human Rights Violations in Belarus in 2005**

Minsk 2006



## **INTRODUCTION: main trends and generalizations**

The year of 2005 was marked by a considerable aggravation of the general situation in the field of human rights in Belarus. It was not only political rights that were violated but social, economic and cultural rights as well. These violations are constant and conditioned by the authority's voluntary policy, with Lukashenka at its head. At the same time, human rights violations are not merely a side-effect of the authoritarian state control; they are deliberately used as a means of eradicating political opponents and creating an atmosphere of intimidation in the society.

The negative dynamics is characterized by the growth of the number of victims of human rights violations and discrimination. Under these circumstances, with a high level of latent violations and concealed facts, with great obstacles to human rights activity and overall fear in the society, the growth points to drastic stiffening of the regime's methods.

Apart from the growing number of registered violations, one should mention the increase of their new forms, caused in most cases by the development of the state oppressive machine, the expansion of legal restrictions and administrative control over social life and individuals. The period was marked by further development of the conflict between the state and the individual, by the state's growing interference in the people's private life and pressure put upon its political opponents. The authorities were particular about meddling into the sphere of freedom of opinions, including the liberty of speech and the right to peaceful assembly and association. There was a considerable diversity of violations, connected to political, national and religious discrimination, characterized by violence, tortures and other inhuman and degrading treatment.

The problem of the missing people remained unsettled. The country still resorts to capital punishment.

Belarusian society experienced considerable negative affection of human rights violations, due to the absence of efficient means of legal rehabilitation – Belarus lacks independent and fair justice, guided solely by the law; the inde-

pendent media are on the brink of eradication; there is neither special human rights commissioner post nor any other institutions of a constitutional state. The principle of legality is not followed by the national legal system – the decrees issued by the president have more legal force than the law. This diverts the administration from the sphere of the law, helps to legitimize any unlawful measures against the citizen and stimulates autocracy.

It should be observed that the Belarusian government turned to complete negation of the human rights values. For the authorities, they are no longer the aspect to be taken into consideration in the process of forming the state policy. Human rights activists' criticism on the national level is not perceived by the state, meanwhile the former ones are constantly persecuted. The criticism on the international level (from international institutions, NGOs and other countries) is received as an attempt of political pressure on Lukashenka's regime and an element of political war against Belarus. In its turn, together with accusations of the policy of 'double standards', on the international level the regime uses human rights rhetoric to accuse the USA and European countries of human rights violations in their home countries. Under the condition of the international isolation such policy brings Belarus to an alliance with other outlaw dictatorships.

The isolation tendencies are a logical result of such events. As far as the international human rights system is concerned, international regulations and standards, together with interstate means of human rights protection are neglected. Belarus systematically fails to follow the obligations assumed by the ratification of the appropriate international agreements. It also tends to neglect the conclusions of the UN Commission for Human Rights and the Committee on Human Rights. Belarus' reluctance to follow the standards of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, its inability to consider the verdicts of the UN Commission for Human Rights on Belarusian citizens' appeals, and to produce regular reviews on the fulfilment of the Convent point to the fact that Belarus does not match the UN international human rights protection system.

### **The development of legislation for political persecution**

The year of 2005 Belarusian legislation experienced a number of changes, which aggravated the situation of human rights and freedoms. The laws regulating the work of political parties, NGOs and foundations, together with educational legislation, were also changed. The state limited the youth's ability to receive education abroad or leave the country for any other private reasons. The scope of the law machinery's competence was legally enlarged, especially that of the KGB, as well as the limits of the usage of truncheons, tear gas and other weapons. Special police forces were allowed to penetrate a citizen's

home or an organization's office (even international) without a warrant. Disclosure of information on the KGB agents' activity in organizations, associations and institutions is punished by the law.

The most essential change to the Criminal Code is connected with the legal persecution for political and social activity. On 25 November during the first reading, and on 2 December after the second reading the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus passed amendments to the Criminal Code and the Criminal Process Code, which increased the responsibility for 'activity directed against man and social security.' The bill marked 'urgent' was introduced by the president; it was considered with compact procedure and accompanied by mass resonance both in Belarus and abroad.

The criminal Code was complemented with a number of new articles. Article #193-1 provides for fines or imprisonment up to 2 years for organizing or participating in the work of organizations or foundations, which have been legally liquidated. Under such circumstances, when most NGOs were not granted registration permissions and it is almost impossible for an independent institution to obtain official status, the regulation declares criminals thousands of Belarusian citizens. A person who on one's own free will stops participating in such activities and informs the governmental bodies about this is freed from responsibility if he or she has not committed any other crime. Article #193 (Organizing or managing an organization or religious association menacing the citizens' personalities, rights and obligations) has a provision, which increases responsibility for such offence, if it is committed in the framework of an unregistered civil organization.

The new regulation of article #293 of the Criminal Code provides for imprisonment up to 3 years for educating or other training of people to participate in mass riots or financing or other material assistance to such activity. Taking into consideration that the article already included similar regulations on mass riots (part 1), the novelty will lead to the criminalization of the activity which is neither a mass riot nor disturbance of public order. It is highly probable that the regulation will be used against any educational activity which, according to the authorities, may undermine the regime. The language of the article ('educating or other training of people', 'financing or other material assistance') makes several interpretations possible and admits of legal persecution without any material elements of offence.

Article #342 of the Criminal Code contains a new provision, according to which educating or other training of people to participate in group activity violating the public order (connected with civil disobedience or causing interruption of the work of public transport, enterprises or organizations), as well as financing or other material assistance to such activity without any evidence of a more serious crime entails imprisonment up to 2 years. Apparently, the novelty is similar to the previous regulation of article #293 and enables the state to legally persecute the people who carry out educational activity in the field of

civil relations. Political and civil activity which has nothing to do with rioting – peaceful resistance actions, strikes, transport routes’ blockades, flash-mobs, hunger-strikes etc. – also falls under this regulation.

According to the redrafted Criminal Code, riotous statements will receive a more serious punishment (article #361). It provides for imprisonment up to 3 years. At the same time, the object protected by the article was considerably expanded, as well as the scope of possible means of circulating such statements: Riotous statements or calls for treason, terrorism, sabotage or other activity in prejudice of the external security of the Republic of Belarus, its sovereignty, territorial integrity, national security and defense capacity, or distributing materials containing such appeals. The most serious punishment is carried by such calls if they are directed to a foreign state, foreign or international organizations – imprisonment up to 3 years, or if circulated through mass media – up to 5 years. It is perfectly clear that defining of crime without concretizing the possible means of its committing helps to turn the article into an effective means of eradicating the freedom of speech and political opponents. In reality, any manifestation of dissatisfaction with the existing regime and an appeal for altering the situation may be treated as a crime.

Another innovation to the Criminal Code is article #369-1 – Discrediting of the Republic of Belarus. Discrediting stands for ‘providing a foreign state, foreign or international organization with knowingly false information on the political, economical, social, military or international situation of the Republic of Belarus, on the legal position of the citizens of the Republic of Belarus or its governing bodies’. Such activity carries imprisonment up to 2 years. With general responsibility for defamation in the Criminal Code, the new regulation can be used solely against political opponents.

The human rights activists of Belarus view these amendments as a ‘legal’ ground for exercising criminal persecution of the existing regime’s political opponents, a carte blanche to police forces and an open road to mass repressions in Belarus.

The bill *On counteracting extremism*, drafted and introduced for consideration by the KGB, which was passed by the House of Representatives after the first reading in 2005 and is being prepared for the second reading, contains even more severe measures that can be taken against dissentients. According to the bill, preventive activity against extremism will be carried out by the prosecutor’s office, the Ministry of Justice, the KGB and other bodies. They will issue official warnings of the inadmissibility of ‘extremist activity’ to organizations and citizens.

At the same time, corruption was legally decriminalized – the law provides for discharging from liability the people who committed economical crimes, but made amends. In 2005 the case of H.Zhuraukova, ex-head of the presidential administration, was followed by many repercussions. She was found guilty of plundering over USD 1 million from the state. For this offence Zhuraukova was

sentenced to 4 years of imprisonment and forfeiture of estate, but A.Lukashenka pardoned her after the verdict had gone into effect.

Thus, in 2005 the oppressive device was developed; on the eve of major political campaigns new legal grounds for political persecution and criminal imprisonment of the state's opponents were introduced. At the same time, the loyal elite were given possibility to escape punishment for committed crimes, provided that they keep on signaling their loyalty to the regime.

### **Persecution of dissentients and political opponents**

The year of 2005 was marked by the increasing number of political prisoners in Belarus. Both M.Marynich and V.Levaneuski, convicted in 2004, remained in prison. In 2005 S.Skrabets was sent to prison, M.Statkevich, P.Seviarynets and A.Klimau were sentenced to detention in distant regions. Iu.Bandazheuski and A.Vasilieu were amnestied.

In July 2005 Iu.Bandazheuski, ex-rector of Homel Medical University, who had previously been sentenced to 8 years for bribery, was freed from detention. According to human rights watch experts, persecution of the scientist was provoked by the fact that the results of his research on the aftermath of Chernobyl disaster contradicted to with those of the official medical science.

Another detainee A.Vasilieu, one of the leaders of the trade union movement, who had been previously sentenced (together with V.Levaneuski) to 28 months of imprisonment for an insult of the president, was also released from detention. At the same time, Levaneuski was not amnestied and is still serving his term.

M.Marynich, ex-Minister of Foreign Economic Affairs and Belarus' ambassador to Lithuania, is still in prison. On 30 December 2004 he was sentenced to 5 years of imprisonment and forfeiture of estate for illegal taking of the US embassy's computers. In spite of the fact that the US embassy renounced all claims to Mr.Marynich (it became known during a prejudicial inquiry and reasserted in court in a special statement of the US State Department), the court found Marynich guilty of breaking of article #210, part 4, of the Criminal Code 'Grand larceny through jobbery'. Both the investigation procedure and the judicial inquiry pointed to the fact that the legal persecution and conviction of M.Marynich are a result of his civil views and active political activity. Minsk Regional Court Board of Appeals commuted his sentence to 3.5 years, taking into consideration his previous state merits, his age and state of health. In March M.Marynich had a stroke in Orsha high-security Prison. But for Belarusian and international public demands, the detainee had not been taken to the National Prison Hospital in Minsk and later sent to serve his sentence in Minsk prison UZh 15/1.

Another example of political persecution is the case of S.Skrabets, mem-

ber of the House of Representatives of the 2<sup>nd</sup> convocation and head of *Respublika* parliamentary fraction. Suffering from persecution, Skrabets addressed the Russian president V.Putin asking for political asylum, but his appeal received a negative reply. In May S.Skrabets was charged with organizing a crime (article #13, part 1) and bribery (article #431, part 2) – he was said to have intended to bribe several prosecutor's office and court clerks for justification in the case of one of his friends. During the prejudicial inquiry S.Skrabets announced his intention to participate in 2006 presidential election – his election agents were registered by the Central Commission for Elections and Referendums, but failed to canvass the necessary amount of signatures. Belarusian human rights watch specialists have a strong belief that the actual reason of Skrabets' isolation is purely political.

In June 2005 businessman A.Klimau, member of the Supreme Soviet of the 13<sup>th</sup> convocation and one of the initiators of Lukashenka's impeachment, was sentenced to 18 months of imprisonment for organizing a demonstration requesting Lukashenka's resignation on 25 March. He was also charged with slander against the president, but the case was eventually closed.

In May Minsk Tsentralny District Court sentenced M.Statkevich (ex-leader of Belarusian Social-Democratic Party *Narodnaia Hramada*' and P.Seviarynets (ex-head of *Young Front*) to 3 years of imprisonment. They were found guilty of organizing illegitimate mass protest rallies against the fabricated results of the parliamentary election and referendum on 18 and 19 October 2004 in Minsk. M.Statkevich and P.Seviarynets had previously been sentenced to 15 and 10 days of detention for the same rally; but after a criminal case had been initiated they found themselves in the dock.

The absence of an objective and independent judicial system (all the judges in the country are appointed and removed by the president only) contributes to the usage of similar oppressive device against the political opponents of the regime. Criminal persecution for such offences, especially for Defamation of the president (article #367), Insult of the president (article #368) and Insult of a state official (article #369), is used against the critics of the regime – human rights watch specialists, journalists and opposition politicians. In 2005 a number of similar cases were registered.

One of the most scandalous cases of the kind in 2005 was the legal persecution of the creators of animation satirizing the Belarusian dictator. Members of the public initiative *Third Way* created an animation club and distributed their works in the Internet. Minsk prosecutor's office initiated a case for insulting A.Lukashenka. KGB officers searched several members' flats in Minsk and Hrodna, confiscated a dozen computers and all the media. By the end of the year the case had not been yet finished, still some of the creators of the animation received political asylum abroad.

The democratically elected leaders of the Union of Poles in Belarus were also legally persecuted under a vain pretext. Among them were the head of the



Union Anzhalika Borys, vice-head Veslau Keuliak, editor-in-chief of the *Gios z nad Niemna* newspaper Andzhei Piscalnik and editor-in-chief of *Magazyn Polski* Andrei Pachobut.

Another scandalous case with many repercussions was the persecution of a Hrodna businessman Mikalai Autukhovich, which is apparently connected with his activity as the leader of the entrepreneurs' movement in Hrodna region. He is accused of tax evasion with grand damage to the state budget. In protest against false accusations, M. Autukhovich was on hunger-strike in prison for 72 days.

In 2005 a number of cases connected with political graffiti were initiated. Such cases are not only a kind of legal persecution of the opposition youth, but also a formal ground for searches in the civil activists' flats and offices of civil organizations, interrogations and other investigational activity.

The current Belarusian authorities resort to various means of administrative persecution of their political opponents, including arrests, violence and usage of weapons. The largest amounts of peaceful demonstrationist were arrested during the action on Freedom Day, 25 March and during *Chernobyl Way* on 26 April in Minsk. On 26 April the police detained not only Belarusian citizens but Ukrainians and Russians as well. Such cases usually followed by short terms of imprisonment or large fines; courts do not issue warnings or stop cases in the absence of corpus delicti any more – such trials are often a mere formality.

During peaceful demonstrations the police usually use extremely violent means, tortures and battery of demonstrationists and detainees, with no punishment for such actions. Sviatlana Zavadzkaia was beaten by a riot police squad officer Davidovich during the action in remembrance of her missing husband. In spite of the fact that the battery was filmed, both the prosecutor's office and the court refused to bring the officer to responsibility.

6 participants of the rally on 16 September sustained traumas of different severity. The youth activist Mikita Sasim was taken to hospital with a craniocerebral injury. After a medical treatment he sent complaints of the police unlawful actions to the prosecutor's office and court, but none of them was brought to responsibility.

There are some cases that arouse especial concern – several people experienced administrative persecution for holding meetings indoors, e.g. in flats. S. Antonchyk, member of the Supreme Soviet of the 12<sup>th</sup> convocation, was put to prison for 15 days. A. Novik, member of the Belarusian Communists' Party, was fined around USD 500 for holding 'an illegitimate meeting' in the backyard of his own house.

Members of various religious communities, mainly Protestant one, were also administratively persecuted. Masses were viewed as illegitimate meetings, with subsequent big fines. V. Iurevich, administrative officer of the church *New Life*, and its pastor V. Hancharenka were repeatedly punished with huge fines.

There were numerous arrests and punishments of the people who distributed alternative media, both registered (*Narodnaia volia*, *Vremya*, etc.) and unregistered ones. A considerable part of them were youth activists.

Violent arrests and detentions of political activists became a rule for Belarus – hundreds of such cases were registered in 2005. Moreover, administrative and judicial rules are not always followed – the maximum period of detention and arrest report procedures are neglected, there were cases of illegitimate confiscations. Unwarranted searches by the police and KGB officers also became customary all over the country.

### **Dismissals and pressure on employees and students**

Apart from criminal and administrative persecution of political opponents, the authorities use threatening and discrimination of employees and students. In 2005 there were numerous cases of dismissals of political activists or threatening with dismissal. The contract system of employing civil servants (80% of employees work at state-owned enterprises) affords ground for political persecution at work. This is buttressed up by numerous facts of dismissals – V.Dukhomenka (head of the Belarusian Free Trade Union's office at Navapolatsk heat and power plant), I.Abukhou and I.Haichanka (members of the Council of the Belarusian Free Trade Union), V.Rybychanka (head of the Belarusian Communists' Party Zhlobin office), M.Bahdanovich (member of the civil movement *Razam (Together)*), I.Darashenka (head of radio-electronic industry trade union organization), U.Feaktystau (head of the Belarusian Free Trade Union's office at *Zaslauieburvod* enterprise), L.Haravy (schoolmaster of a Horki school), P.Usau (teacher in political studies at Mahiliou State University) etc.

A number of major scientists with alternative views on the state policy in science were disemployed from the National Academy of Sciences. The administration of the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences refused to continue contracts with famous historians H.Sahanovich, U.Anishchanka and A.Kishtumatau. There were numerous cases of pressure on disloyal teachers. With the beginning of the presidential campaign at the end of 2005 the state intensified the pressure on the employees who act as agents of alternative candidates.

Another oppressive device is sending down of students for their civil activity and beliefs. In 2005 such persecution acquired legal power in A.Radzkou's (Minister of Education) decree *On measures against attempts of involving students in unlawful political activity*. The decree issued for official use only, deals with the procedure of ideological activities with students and provides for personal responsibility of the heads of educational departments and institutions for 'the facts of students' participation in illegitimate rallies and unlawful actions.' The essential part of the document is compulsory administrative inves-

tigations into such actions held by oppositional organizations. Another compulsory measure is educational reaction including dismissal of students for 'taking part in unlawful activities and committing unlawful offences in a public place'. After this document was issued, Belarusian educational institutions began developing their own regulations, carrying open political discrimination. Meanwhile, those students who cooperate with the state youth organization Belarusian National Republican Youth Union (BRSM) were granted benefits. According to the president's decree #369 *On making amendments to president's decree #382 of 25 September 1996* such students are provided with higher scholarships.

There was a considerable amount of pressure on students (including expulsion) for dissidence this year. Iryna Toustsiuk, a senior student of Minsk Pedagogical University and a member of the youth movement *Zubr*, was expelled by the University's administration. A number of students of the journalists' faculty of the Belarusian State University had to give up their studies because of ideological pressure, including the journalist Volha Klaskouskaia. Tatsiana Khoma, a student of the Belarusian State Economic University, was expelled for missing three days of classes without the official permission and participating in an ESIB meeting, a major European organization for students' rights. Other victims of persecution who were sent down from higher education institutions include I.Shchakarevich, A.Kursevich, Ia.Skrabutan, A.Zarembiuk, S.Savich, I.Valkavets, P.Krasouski, A.Finkevich, Z.Chartkou and other students.

Some teenagers cannot even obtain secondary education because of political reasons – they are sent down from schools and colleges. S.Murashka was sent down from Zhodzina Polytechnics College, K.Shymanovich – from Minsk College of Law, P.Karaniukhin – from Pleshchanitsy State Sports College, A.Smolski – from Suvorau Military College. N.Maksimava and V.Halubets, students of Zhodzina Single-sex School, were threatened with sending down for expressing solidarity with the excluded activists. A youth hunger-strike in protest against political oppression was held in Zhodzina.

Several students experienced active pressure from the KGB, including recruiting.

I.Toustsiuk, coordinator of *Zubr* human rights watch department, was not allowed to obtain a permissive seal for leaving the country. In the passport department, she was told that she had 'certain problems with the KGB'.

The KGB tried to recruit a *Zubr* member V.Lazouskaia. On 22 March she was asked to come to Minsk Frunzenski District KGB Department 'for a talk'. She refused to turn up without a summons. Her father who decided to go instead of her was shown a floppy disk with 'information on the girl'. A KGB officer said that Lazouskaia would have to collaborate with the KGB in order not to have problems while entering a university.

There were several recorded cases when special police services put pressure upon young activists' parents. The father of the head of Baranavichy *Young*

Front office Siarhei Marchyk received a telephone call from Baranavichy KGB vice-head. He was threatened that his son would be expelled from the university if he did not stop his political activity.

Thus, in 2005 administrative persecution and pressure on employees and students became a custom means of eradicating dissentients, among which the young appeared to be the most unprotected ones.

### **Restraint of freedom of speech, censorship and persecution of independent media**

According to the Ministry of Information at the beginning of 2006 there were 1 222 periodicals (751 newspapers, 434 magazines and journals, 33 bulletins, 2 catalogues, 2 almanacs and 8 news agencies), 54 TV channels and 154 radio channels (156 of them are state owned and 52 are private) in Belarus. Experts say that there are only 20 newspapers in Belarus dealing with social and political issues, which are not controlled by the state. There are no independent TV and radio channels in Belarus – all the private media have to submit the broadcast data to the government's approval (the news contents are approved in advance), there is constant monitoring of information and the political set of independent radio channels is always checked.

In 2005 the authorities used the following means of eradicating freedom of speech: closures or suspensions of media, pre-censorship and other ways of violating the professional independence of the editorial staff, legal persecution for publications, arrests of journalists and warnings connected with their professional activity, economic pressure on media, obstruction in creating and distributing media, groundless judicial suits, limited accreditation facilities. The government was especially particular about restraining foreign journalists and distributing foreign media.

On 18 October 2005 Vasil Hrodnikau, journalist of the *Narodnaia volia* newspaper, was found dead in his house in Zaslaue (Minsk region). According to the medical experts, he died of a craniocerebral injury. His personal things remained intact. In his publications V.Hrodnikau criticized the regime and its anti-democratic policy. His colleagues think that an assassination must not be ruled out. The police stopped the case saying it was a fatal accident.

Belarusian police have not found the murderer of Veranika Charkasava, a journalist of *Salidarnasts* newspaper, who was murdered with a knife in October 2004. The police refused to treat the case as murder connected with the journalist's professional activity, including journalistic inquiries. The investigation is constantly delayed, while the attention is focused on the version of a domestic crime. The police view Charkasava's teenage son as the main suspect in this case. Later, he was detained and charged with counterfeiting.

In 2005 several newspapers were closed, including *Den*, *Navinki*, *Novaya gazeta Smorgoni* and *Maladziozhny prasppekt*. Many newspapers, including

the biggest independent newspaper *Narodnaia volia*, were warned by the Ministry of Information.

Following the president's decree, a number of newspapers were forced to change their names, leaving out the words 'Belarusian' and 'national': *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta* had to change its name to '*BDG.Delovaya gazeta*', *Belorusskiy rynok* – to *Belorusy i rynek*, *Belorusskaya gazeta* – to *Belgazeta*, *Natsionalnaya ekonomicheskaya gazeta* – to *Ekonomicheskaya gazeta*.

Most of the periodical press faced refusals from publishing houses – both single issues and the whole newspaper. Such were the cases with *Gios znad Niemna* (the newspaper of the Union of Poles in Belarus), Pinsk newspapers *Miastovyy chas* and *Zhivaia voda*, Hrodna newspaper *Birzha informatsii*. Being unable to be published in Belarus, several major newspapers are printed in Russia: *Narodnaia volia*, *BDG.Delovaya Gazeta*, *Tovarishch* etc. The newspapers' circulations printed abroad go through the customs examination; they are very often unlawfully confiscated either by the customs officer or by the police.

The hardest blow to independent press was made by the prohibition to be distributed through *Belsaiuzdruk's* system. The 2006 subscription index did not include over 20 private newspapers, both republican and regional ones: *Nasha niva*, *Narodnaia volia*, *Salidarnasts*, *Zgoda*, *Rehiianalnaia hazeta* (Mahladechna), *Hazeta Slonimskaia*, *Volnaie Hlybokaie*, *Brestski kuryer*, *Borisovskiy novosti*, *Birzha informatsii* (Hrodna), *Vitsebskiy kurier*, *Liakhavitski chas*, *Niasvizhski chas*, *Hantsavitki chas*, *Mestnaya gazeta* (Smarhon) and others. By doing this, *Belposhta* violated the law *On Postal Service*. Earlier in 2004, a new procedure of licensed postal delivery was initiated – only state-owned enterprises received such license. At the same time, distribution of independent newspapers through *Belsaiuzdruk* system was practically banned. Private distributors are also persecuted: there were numerous cases of arrests and fines for distributing independent media.

Moral damage suits remained one of the basic means of economic persecution of media. Such suits were normally brought by civil servants and were apparently meant to bankrupt independent newspapers. Minsk Tsentralny District Court resolved to exact 30 million roubles from the editorial board of *Pressbol* newspaper and 10 million roubles from its editor-in-chief U.Berazhkov in favour of M.Korbut, Minister of Finance and head of Belarusian Gymnastics Association. Minsk Kastychnitski District Court resolved to exact 50 million roubles from *BDG.Delovaya gazeta* and 5 million from one of its journalists S.Satsuk in favour of ex-special police squad officer S.Biadrytski.

The biggest sum of money in the history of Belarusian independent media was exacted from *Narodnaia volia*. Minsk Leninski Borough Court resolved to exact 100 million roubles (over USD 45 000) in favour of S.Haidukevich, the leader of Belarusian Liberal-Democratic Party. I.Siaredzich, editor-in-chief, had to ask readers for assistance, and as a result of active public support *Narod-*

*naia volia* managed to pay off the damage. At the same time, the newspaper was bound over to pay huge sums of money to six people who had sued *Narodnaia volia* for publishing their names among the supporters of *Will of the People* movement. It is indicative that all the suits were identical.

Such cases point to the authorities' bias, who always meet claims brought against independent media. Meanwhile, apparently false information in the state press cannot be disproved in court – even if there is indubitable evidence, courts would not sustain such claims.

Thus, the year of 2005 was marked by further attempts of violating freedom of speech and opinions, and restraint of independent media, which resulted in nearly complete eradicating of alternative information sources.

### **Restraint of freedom of associations and persecution of NGOs**

Throughout 2005 Belarusian NGOs, political parties and independent trade unions were subjected to numerous persecutions and restraints.

There occurred several fundamental changes to the legislation on NGOs. The parliament passed redrafted versions of the laws *On public associations* and *On political parties*. The president's decree crucially changed the legal status of funds – the scope of their activity was considerably narrowed. NGOs' ability to receive donations and international technical assistance was also limited.

Belarusian legislation in this sphere is one of the harshest in the CIS and in other neighboring countries. The Civil Code provides for the existence of several forms of non-commercial organizations – public associations, religious associations, funds, establishments and unions. Civil associations are the most popular type of NGOs. Their activity is controlled by a special law *On Public Associations* of 1994, which was considerably altered in 2005. These changes were made in haste, neglecting the parliamentary procedures. As a result, the restraint of NGOs which had previously been used unlawfully was finally legitimated – the number of liquidation occasions increased; any activity of an unregistered NGO was declared illegal and subject to legal punishment; registration procedures were made even more complicated and formalistic. The new regulations include: possibility of closing an NGO, obligation to produce reports on their activity to the Ministry of Justice till 1 March annually, ban for NGOs' business activity. NGOs' statute terms were also changed. All the NGOs were to change their statutes in accordance with the new legislation within 2005 and 2006. Thus, NGOs faced new obstacles connected with the government's increasing control over their activity.

These requirements also include a high duty (over USD 220 for a national NGO and some USD 100 for a local NGO), and legal address specifications (it is to be situated in non-residential premises, which is difficult to be followed

under existing conditions with the state's total control over real estate). A number of national and local NGOs were closed down in 2005 on the grounds of not having a legal address.

It was the local NGOs' offices that suffered most from the new regulations on the legal address – hundreds of them were liquidated because of this. The most striking is that Homel branch of the Belarusian Association of Journalists only managed to find 3 m<sup>2</sup> premises under the stairs of a block of flats. Later, the organization was asked to produce official permissions of the sanitary inspection and Emergency Control Ministry, while these issues had previously been settled in a contact approved by the utility service. Some of NGOs and political parties tried to assert their rights in court, but none of the claims (F.Skaryna Belarusian Language Society, Belarusian People's Front *Adradzhenne*, the Communist Party of Belarus, the United Civil Party, etc.) was met by the Supreme Court.

Several religious organizations also faced similar problems in 2005 – a number of them were liquidated, while the believers were put pressure upon.

The history of NGOs' registrations points to the fact that their applications are considered from the political point of view. NGOs that are not politically linked to the existing power are not granted registration. Claims do not appear to be an effective means of protest – courts never take sides of NGOs and never overturn the official decisions. They are never guided by the law regulating the grounds for such decisions, but take into consideration by-laws and experts' decisions, which are not always based on the law. The work of international NGOs and their representative offices is also considerably restrained and presents severe financial difficulties.

In the next example we will see the authorities' treatment of the principles of freedom of associations. As early as 2002 the public initiative *Partnership* specializing in electoral observing was not granted registration permission. The members of the organization intended to hold a new constituent assembly in October 2005. The congress was stopped by the police, who accused its participants of holding an illegitimate meeting and took some 70 people to the police station. M.Astreika, the organization's leader, and his assistants E.Branitskaia and A.Bondarau were sentenced to 15 days of imprisonment; S.Konava was fined around USD 350.

According to the official data, 61 civil associations were registered in 2005 (3 international, 13 national and 45 local ones). All in all, against the beginning of 2006 there were 17 political parties, 41 trade unions, 2 247 civil associations (239 international, 724 national and 1 284 local ones) and 16 unions of civil associations. The majority of civil associations and initiatives (over 2 000) work without registration, which is subject to criminal persecution of their participants.

Apart from the problems that parties and NGOs face, one should mention the changes in the legal regulations of the funds' activity. Their work is not

regulated by any law – it is controlled by the presidential decrees. On 1 July 2005 the president's decree *On certain measures on regulating the funds' activity* initiated their re-registration, which was a hard blow for the organizations that had been liquidated and later registered as funds. According to the decree, a person that has previously been a member of the executing council of a liquidated organization cannot act as the founder of a fund for three years. Like civil associations, funds should be registered and controlled by the Ministry of Justice. A new notion of the territory of the funds' activity was introduced – they are subdivided into international, local and republican ones. The number of liquidation occasions, and the statutory fund fees were increased. In order to create an international or a national fund one should bring in more than USD 14 000, for a local fund the sum should not be less than USD 1 500. All the registered funds must be re-registered by 1 February 2006.

The possibilities of receiving donations were considerably limited by the president's decree #300 of 1 July 2005 *On granting and utilizing free assistance (sponsorship)*. Donations other than described in the decree are accomplished by the presidential decision only.

Inspections are one of the basic means of control over the associations' activity – every check-up may entail serious punitive sanctions. Liquidations and legal persecution of organizations are absolutely unlawful and violent – any minor violation of by-laws and regulations may be viewed as a serious offence by the court and end up in their liquidation.

Many major NGOs were liquidated by the court in 2005. In April the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies was closed down at the suit by the Ministry of Justice. The grounds for that decision were usual – the Institute was not situated at its legal address, besides it failed to send a report to the Ministry of Justice (it did not produce one of the questionnaires). Thus, according to the state, the Institute violated the legislation and its own statute. Meanwhile, the actual reason for the decision was well known – disseminating information on the results of the referendum and election in October 2004. The liquidation was a means of preventing similar research in future electoral campaigns.

All in all, 68 NGOs were liquidated in 2005 (17 republican and 51 international). Among them were the women's movement *Revival of Motherland*, the public association *Usiaslau Charadzei*, the international public association *Belarusian perspectives*, Belarusian Scout Association and other NGOs. There were no recorded cases of rehabilitation in court. 43 NGOs decided stop their work because of the pressure put on them by the state. In 2005 NGOs received 425 written warnings (as compared with 264 in 2004). Political parties were warned 32 times.

2005 was marked by the Ministry of Justice's violent interference in the affairs of the Union of Poles in Belarus (UPB). The Ministry did not renounce the results of the Union's March congress, and willing to have control over the



organization started mass persecutions of its leaders. With the help of the state the loyal part of the UPB held a new congress, as a result of which the organization appeared to be practically split. The conflict had many repercussions on the international level, since it was viewed as an attempt of oppressing the Polish minority in Belarus.

Thus, from a country with unfavorable civil climate Belarus turned into a real zone of danger to NGOs. Probability of legal persecution, detention or forced labor, confiscation of property, disemployment, the unsettled legal status of any commercial enterprise – all this makes Belarus an extreme zone for NGOs.

### **Belarus still resorts to capital punishment**

Two capital sentences were executed in Belarus in 2005 (according to the head of the Supreme Court V.Sukala). Belarus is the only European country that uses capital punishment. European and international organizations criticize Belarus for using capital punishment. The criticism is not only based on the existence of such punishment, but on a lack of information on its execution.

### **Pressure on human rights activists and organizations**

Human rights activists and organizations also experienced persecution from the side of the regime. The case of Hary Pahaniailla (defamation of the president), vice-head of Belarusian Helsinki Committee, was suspended and then resumed. In his interview to a Swedish TV channel H.Pahaniailla spoke of the existing power's possible connection with the kidnapping and murder of famous politicians, a businessman and a journalist – I.Zakharanka, V.Hanchar, A.Krasouski and D.Zavadzki.

After the Supreme Economic Court reversed all the previous decisions on the case of the Committee, the risk of criminal persecution of the organization's head T.Protska and accountant T.Radkevich became too momentous. The case, initiated as early as 2004 on the grounds of the Committee's failure to pay the taxes on the EU's financial assistance, was later stopped. Under the tax department's decision, the organization is to pay some USD 75 000 of taxes and penalty fees.

The case of U.Malei, a human rights watch expert and a member of Maryta District Deputy Soviet, who is charged with libel upon the head of Maryta District Executive Committee, is still under investigation. It had previously been stopped in the absence of corpus delicti, but soon resumed.

In October a window in the flat of Aliaksei and Sviatlana Lapitskis, human rights activists from Zhodzina, was shot at with a pneumatic gun. The next

night the window was stained with paint. In spite of the fact that Zhodzina City Board of Internal Affairs initiated a criminal case, the culprits have not been found yet.

Belarusian authorities do not allow the UN special reporter on human rights in Belarus A. Severin to enter the country, saying that his coming to Belarus in this capacity is inappropriate.

It should be stated that human rights violations in Belarus turned into one of the main means of the dictatorship state policy. The oppressive system created by the state was developed and legitimated in 2005. The problem of human rights violations cannot be solved under these circumstances unless the existing regime is changed.

## 1. Legal acts and restrictive amendments to them

**On 25 January** it became known that the draft law *On national state-public associations* was included into the agenda of the spring session of the Chamber of Representatives. The draft which was elaborated on Lukashenka's errand provides establishment of pseudo-public structures, controlled and financed by the authorities. The adversaries of the law stated the authorities wanted to revive the public structures of the totalitarian period of Belarusian history. The head of the parliamentary commission on human rights, national relations and mass media Aliaksandr Sviryd confessed there hadn't been such a law in Belarus before, but state-public associations already existed and were a hybrid of state and public property. The law proposes to confess such organizations as a peculiar kind of non-commercial organizations that are established and liquidated by the supreme organs of state power. The conditions for their establishment are to be defined by president or the parliament, depending on the tasks which the state gives to them, pointed Sviryd. Among the existing organizations of this kind we can mention Belarusian National Youth Union (BRSM), women's and veterans' unions that execute the official orders and actively delegate their members to election commissions. The human rights activist Ales Bialiatski thinks that this draft law witnesses the intention of the authorities to return to the former soviet system of pseudo-public associations.

**On 1 February** there were enforced the amendments to the law *On internal military forces of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus* that were adopted by the Chamber of Representatives on the initiative of the presidential administration. Now internal military forces can use special truncheons, gases, equipment and weapons on presidential order. In fact, these norms set aside the notion of 'criminal order', according to which military forces have the right to refuse, for instance, from shooting peaceful citizens or pressing them with tanks. Analysts think it was done not to let a color revolution happen in Belarus. The lawyer Valiantsin Stefanovich commented: 'Lukashenka doesn't trust secret services and wants them to increase the control of the society. He tries not to admit any manifestations of the oppositional activity. These are alarming tendencies. As a result of the amendments to the law *On internal military forces* the article that regulates the use of special means and firearms was supplied with the words 'and in other cases that are defined by the president of the Republic of Belarus'. At the same time, the article doesn't define in which cases the president can decide that it is necessary to use firearms and doesn't specify the form of his order, oral or written. These amendments pose a threat to one of the main human rights, the right to life.'

**On 3 February** it became known that a person who joins such organs of the law machinery as KGB, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Security Soviet, prosecutor's office or presidential guard, must fill the following note: Due to receiving access to state secrets I agree to check-up measures related to me by the state security organs of the Republic of Belarus and also to temporary limitation of the immunity of personal life... It is necessary to fill this paper during the acceptance to the aforementioned organs and prolongation of the contracts there. The right to immunity of personal life is one of the fundamental rights and is mentioned in the Constitution and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was ratified by Belarus.

**On 15 February** the information minister of Belarus Uladzimir Rusakevich gave interview to *Interfax* informational agency. There he said it was too early to set aside the articles of the criminal code according to which journalists could be punished for insulting the honor and dignity of state officials: 'Someday, when the level of the political culture of the society is much higher, this norm will become unnecessary, but it won't happen quickly'. U.Rusakevich emphasized that the laws of the majority of European countries provided punishments to journalists for libel: 'I am very anxious about human dignity and when somebody resorts to shameless insults, it must bring punishment.' The minister didn't agree with the statement that journalists must criticize the state: 'It is a good and safe business to criticize the state, but a journalist's work must be creative, first of all', he said.

**On 21 April** it became known that according to the new order issued by the justice minister Viktor Halavanau, the organization structures of the public associations and political parties would have to re-register their legal addresses by 1 June of this year. Aleh Slizheuski, the head of the public associations department, said the justice department issued a commission requiring that this issue be closed by the indicated date. This means that the structures of the parties and public associations that will fail to submit documents for changing the legal address will be deregistered. In October 2004 the Ministry of Justice addressed all national public associations and political parties, which have organization structures registered apartments of multi-storied residential buildings, proposing that they move such structures to the legal addresses on non-residential premises or in one-apartment (detached) houses by 1 February 2005. However, according to a statement by Mr Slizheuski, quite a few public associations and political parties did not get their organization structures re-registered to new legal addresses. As a result, the Ministry of Justice issued several dozens of written warnings for this violation. However, because the inability to meet this deadline set by the Ministry of Justice became obvious, the Ministry decided to extend the re-registration deadline to 1 June.

**On 12 May** the BPF Party directed to the Constitutional Court the request to check the constitutionality of Lukashenka's decree of 7 May, in which he ordered to rename Frantsysk Skaryna Av to Nezalezhnasti Av, Masherau Av – to Peramozhtsau Av, Ierusalimskaia, Drozd and Varvashenia streets – to Masherau Av and Starabarysauski Tract – to Frantsysk Skaryna Av. According to Uladzimir Labkovich, chair of the organization-legal commission of Belarusian People's Front, the decree about renaming of three large streets in the center of Minsk that was signed by Aliaksandr Lukashenka, violates Belarusian legislation, according to which only local Deputy Soviets have the powers to rename streets.

**On 25 May** there was introduced the new version of the bill *On state security services* that gives broader powers to secret services. Now they can enter a person's place or any (even foreign) organization's office without the prosecutor's office sanction. The prosecutor's permission is not necessary at all, informing the prosecutor within 24 hours of the entry necessitated by operative reasons will do. Another important innovation of the law is the right of the special service to implant its secret agents into any organization. A person disclosing the identity of a secret agent will be criminally persecuted under the law. The punishment is up to 5 years in prison. The one who makes public a state secret will be imprisoned for the same term...

**On 31 May** Aliaksandr Lukashenka signed the order regulating the use of the words 'national' and 'Belarusian' in the names of commercial and non-commercial organizations of the country. State organizations, organizations with the state form of property and the mass media that were established by the state are permitted to use both these words in their names. Political parties, national public associations, trade unions and banks can use only the word 'Belarusian', but have no right to use the word 'national'. Non-state independent mass media have no right to use any of these words. The order also obliged the organizations and the mass media whose names didn't correspond to these conditions to re-register within three-month term. It concerned first of all such influential independent editions as *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta*, *Belorusskiy rynok* and *Belorusskaya gazeta*. Mikhail Pastukhou, the chair of BAJ Center of Legal Defense of Mass Media, stated the order limited the constitutional rights of citizens: 'In this case there takes place groundless limitation of the freedom of expression, the right to use words and terms. I speak here of limitation due to the fact that article #23 of the Constitution defines the cases in which the constitutional rights and liberties can be limited. In this case limitation is groundless – there are no serious reasons for it. And one more thing: why is there such a difference between state and non-state structures? It is an evident form of discrimination of the rights of certain structures. This limitation creates problems to those who had the words 'national' and 'Belaru-

sian' in their names. For instance, why must *Belorusskiy rynok* undergo re-registration?'

**On 3 June** the deputy of the Chamber of Representatives Siarhei Kastsian demanded forcible sterilization for the persons who lead anti-social way of life. It happened during the discussion of who was to compensate the loss which the state incurred upbringing the children whose parents were deprived of the parental rights.

**On 7 June** the leadership of the BPF Party received the negative answer from the Constitutional Court to its request for finding unconstitutional Lukashenka's order for renaming of a number of streets and avenues in the center of Minsk. The Constitutional Court refused to consider the application concerning the legality of the order referring to the fact parties didn't have the right to initiate proceedings at the Constitutional Court and the court refused to initiate them on its own initiative.

**On 7 June** Human Rights Center *Viasna* obtained a copy of the letter of the Ministry of Education #03-24/28, restricted publication *About non-admission of the attempts of involvement of pupils and students in unlawful political activity*, signed by the minister Aliaksandr Radzkou and addressed to the education departments of regional executive committees and heads of secondary and higher educational establishments. This document confirmed the practice of political persecution of students that has existed for several years already. The letter offered to enhance the ideological work with pupils and students for 'neutralization of the attempts to involve students in lawless activity of political kind'. For instance, it was proposed to widen the practice of creation of commissions on lawless and addictive behavior of students in educational establishments, organize registration and individual work with the pupils and students that had inclination to such activity. It means that publicly and politically active persons are watched with especial attention, which contradicts to the Constitution, violates basic human rights and liberties. The letter also advises to teachers and lecturers to do everything possible to leave no place for anti-state rhetoric and criticism in the classrooms and introduce courses and programs oriented on upbringing of law-obedient citizens. Meanwhile, article #33 of the Constitution guarantees to each citizen of Belarus freedom of opinions, convictions and the right to express them and article #34 guarantees the right to receive, save and distribute complete, true and timely information about activity of state organs, public associations, political, economical, cultural and international life and the situation of the environment. The mentioned letter actually introduced censorship in educational establishments, as a result of which it would be possible to distribute there only 'ideologically correct' information, which again contradicts to article #33 of the Constitution. The letter

also made the administration of educational establishments responsible for participation of students and pupils in unauthorized measures that are held by oppositional organizations. It was recommended to them to expel pupils and students, though neither the law on education, nor the rulings of the Ministry of Education on secondary and higher educational establishments contained such reason for expulsion as 'participation in unauthorized measures held by opposition'. The human rights activist A.Bialiatski said the measures proposed by the education minister would inescapably lead to fascist totalitarian order at educational establishments: 'Belarusians were expelled from the universities of the Russian Empire, Polish gymnasiums and Soviet institutes for their political views and public position. Now they will be deprived of the right to education in Belarus. It is a crying shame from which the present education minister and the direct implementers of the letter won't wash clean till death.' Members of HRC *Viasna* urged teachers and administration of higher educational establishments not to follow the urges of the non-constitutional letter of the education minister, stay real intellectuals and defend the rights of the students and pupils irrespective of their political views and convictions.

**On 29 June** the Chamber of Representatives adopted the Law *On amendments to the law of the Republic of Belarus on public associations*. The main part of the amendments to the law concerned the reinforcement of the by-laws and practices that have already existed in the Belarusian law (presidential decrees, documents approved by the Ministry of Justice). However, the new edition also provided for a number of new grounds that can be used to liquidate public associations. For example, the public association may be suspended following violation of the law committed. Earlier, this measure did not exist. The law increased the possibilities of the state interference with the activity of associations, broadened the list of monitoring agencies and areas where public associations would be monitored. At the same time the law didn't provide for the possibility of cooperation between the government and public associations. For example, it didn't contain social order provisions that exist in all neighboring countries. The new edition stipulated that all public associations would have to file with the registration authority a complete report on its activity every year. A new article was added, which provided for up to six months of suspension of public organizations following a court ruling. Business activity may be performed only through specially created designated commercial structures. Some of the crucial loopholes of the Belarusian legislation on NGOs have not been eliminated by the new law. Thus, the law does not regulate the activity of the Committee for registration (re-registration) of public associations and political parties, whose conclusions are required before a public association can be registered. Iury Chavusau, coordinator for the system of collective defense of Belarusian NGOs, commented on the adoption of the new edition of the law: 'Now it is too early to say how the new provisions will affect the

Belarusian third sector. I see it as a great danger that as a result public associations will be required to go through re-registration again. Because, the new edition of the law places some new demands on the contents of the mission statements of public associations (the mission has to include 'the subject of activity', a procedure for registration of the organization's members, etc.). Judging from the text available, I can say that a number of restrictions on the right of assembly contained in the new edition of the law do not meet international standards of human rights – first of all, this concerns the ban on the activity of unregistered associations of people, interference of the government into the activity of associations and restrictions imposed on the activity of organizations.'

**On 19 July** the decree issued by Aliaksandr Lukashenka granted the Federation of Trade Unions in Belarus the right to exercise public control over the execution of the labor legislation by organizations and individual entrepreneurs. According to the new decree the trade unions have the right to control the execution of the labor legislation in any economic entity. The chair of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions Aliaksandr Iarashuk commented: 'By the way, the government views the Federation of the Trade Unions of Belarus as a part of the governmental system, a governmental agency'. Earlier, official trade unions could only control organizations that employed FTB members, and primary trade union branches. Now they have the right to control individual entrepreneurs, and companies of any property type.

**On 21 July** the National Register of Legal Acts of Belarus included the law '*On amendments to the law of the Republic of Belarus On public associations* signed by Lukashenka on 19 July. Article #12 of this law says that the names of public associations and their organizational structures can no longer have the words 'Republic of Belarus', 'Belarus', 'Belarusian', 'national', 'people's' 'unless otherwise specified by the President of the Republic of Belarus'. The document specifies that all public organizations and unions must before 1 March submit to registration agencies information about their numerical makeup, organization structures and events conducted during the year.

**On 21 July** the Ministry of Labor and Welfare worked out a draft law that would officially limit the unemployment status registration term to no more than three years. The officials explained this by the need to harmonize the Belarusian law with the Russian law that had this provision. The ministry stated that many people who were registered as unemployed with the employment agency conscientiously did not want to work. The head of the ministerial department Mikalai Kokhanau said that there were people who were registered as unemployed for up to nine years. He said the country had 74 000 registered unemployed persons, and the number of available jobs was 45 000. Inde-



pendent analysts called the proposals by the Ministry of Labor an attempt to artificially reduce the problem of unemployment. The draft law was brought before the Chamber of Representatives.

**On 28 July** the United Civil Party addressed the Constitutional Court, requesting that it consider the decrees issued by the Presidents and regulations adopted by the Government regarding business operations. According to the UCP members, they largely contradict the Constitution. The statement made by the political council of the UCP says: 'The Belarusian authorities pursue a goal-oriented policy of eliminating the national private enterprise. The creative potential of the most active citizens of the country is blocked by officials'. The actions of the authorities, in the opinion of the UCP, are 'immoral and inflict direct damage to Belarus' because government 'does not get new jobs, investments or innovations'. The position of the businessmen got still worse after the presidential decree #285 of 18 June *On some measures to regulate the business operations* took effect,' says the document.

**On 2 August** we obtained information that 30 000 children from Homel region had been deprived of the possibility to receive free health care, provided by the law. The change is connected with a governmental decree. According to it, 48 villages and towns, including Zhlobin and Rahachou, were declared radiation-free. The region authorities were going to enhance the rest of people in summer camps. Except the 24 older camps, 8 new camps were opened on the basis of a number of rest-homes. These camps could accept up to 55 000 children. Many parents didn't approve of the decision, due to a high level of radioactive contamination in the region.

**On 17 August** a new version of the presidential decree *On international technical aid* was issued, which bans receipt and use of international technical assistance for 'anti-constitutional purposes'. International technical aid with a view to 'seizing or overthrowing the state power, interfering into the internal affairs of Belarus, whipping up social, national and religious hostility' is banned. Also, aid can not be used for preparation and conduct of elections, referenda, mass actions, or production of agitation materials. The press service of Lukashenka informed that the decree also views as international technical assistance organization and conduct of seminars, conferences and other public events. The organizers of such events that receive international technical aid should submit information about these events to the international technical cooperation committee. Representatives of the Belarusian third sector said that the new decree would influence the situation neither positively nor negatively: receiving funds from international donors will be just as complicated.

**On 23 August** Aliaksandr Lukashenka signed a decree that relaxed the

contract-based employment system. According to the press service of Aliaksandr Lukashenka, the decree aims to limit the subjectivism of the employers with respect to the conclusion and closure of contracts. Now the term of the contract should not be less than a year. The term of contract concluded with pregnant women and those on maternity leave should cover this period. With respect to 53-year-old women and 58-year-old men, the contracts offered should not last less than two years. The Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions has been struggling against the contract-based employment system launched by Aliaksandr Lukashenka's decree #29. Though the new decree issued by Lukashenka relaxes the negative consequences of the contract-based system, it does not change the situation much, argues Mr Iarashuk: 'I can responsibly say: this is the same as refining serfdom or slavery. In essence, these steps do not cancel the enforced nature of the contract system that exists in the country now'.

**On 12 September** A. Lukashenka's press-service announced that the president had issued a decree regulating the procedure of pardoning the people who have committed crimes connected with the damage to the state property. According to the document, a citizen may be pardoned in the case she/she admits the guilt, repays the damage and reveals the means of committing the crime, together with the property obtained through criminal activities. The change was said to be stimulating people's penitence and contributing to crime prevention. Some lawyers and politicians said the decree has a different purpose. According to BHC Executive Director, A. Hulak, the new decree is a step towards the personification of justice. 'Such decrees speak of the president's further attempts to monopolize power, including the judicial one. He undertakes the responsibilities for sentencing and granting pardon. On the other hand, the decree is primarily directed at civil servants. It is a means of keeping them underfoot – give everything back and I can pardon you. Only I can punish or free, I am God and Master. It is a personification of the judicial power.'

**On 19 September** the Constitutional Court started to consider the 'permissive' stamp issue. The case was initiated by the Constitutional Court in 2002 after the opposition group *Respublika* of the Chamber of Representatives had tabled such a proposal. However, none of the group members were elected to the new Chamber, so Iury Kulakouski, the chair of the deputy commission for human rights, appeared in the proceedings. He said that the governmental agencies have virtually done nothing to implement the court ruling: 'I see that this issue is basically at the same level as three years ago. So I proposed the term be continued.' In his speech the representative of the Secretariat of the Soviet of the Republic Aliaksandr Filanovich reminded that in 2004 almost 350 000 people received a stamp in the passport and paid a total of more than 9 billion rubles. According to Mr Filanovich, this money is a third more than was

required for a registration system. What we have as a result is that the government sells the right to go abroad, and sells this right at a price that is three times as high as is economically justified. This is economic limitation of the citizens' rights.

**On 21 September** the Ministry of Justice adopted the ruling that demands the state registration of blocs of political parties and trade unions, movements, initiatives and coalitions and bans the activity of unregistered civil structures on the territory of Belarus. The lawyer Uladzimir Labkovich explained that the Civil Code doesn't require registration of civil initiatives, while election blocs of political parties are registered by the Central Election Committee: 'I am afraid that acting on behalf of such initiatives will be treated as activity on behalf of an unregistered organization with all consequences. For the mass media this can be a reason for liquidation, and for individuals – a reason for administrative punishment, a fine or even administrative arrest. This continues preparations for the presidential campaign. Because the main entities will be informal associations, because all civil associations have already been eliminated, they are now delivering a final blow.'

**On 4 October** the Constitutional Court of Belarus issued its verdict on the case that was initiated on 5 September on proposal of the Soviet of Ministers of Belarus, who asked the court to change the term of fulfilment of the court decision that was declared on 27 September 2002. By the latter decision the court proposed the authorities to establish the system that would allow refusing from usage of the seal in passports that permits travelling abroad. The Constitutional Court confessed that the responsible officials haven't taken any appropriate measures for implementation of the decision. However, taking into account the proposals of the government that were upheld by the Chamber of Representatives (the case initiator), the court prolonged the term for implementation of the decision for unknown term.

**On 17 October** Aliaksandr Lukashenka signed the decree to change the order for release of subjects of economy from economic responsibility. According to the decree, the decision to release any subject of economy from economic responsibility, including the penalties imposed by courts, can be taken only by the head of the state. The article provides the possibility of release from economic sanctions for tax violations and violations in the spheres of building, customs, trade and banking.

**On 27 October** the law *On counteraction to extremism* passed its first reading at the House of Representatives. The law puts the political opponents of the current regime in an extremely difficult position. In principle, all their actions have the potential of falling under the proposed law. The human rights

activist Ales Bialiatski commented: 'The proposed law does not introduce anything particularly new and is barely in supplement to anything. So there is no serious cause for alarm. It consolidates the current laws serving as basis for the government's current actions against associations, parties and individuals. What matters though is the change in the vocabulary and the labels that could be potentially attached to NGOs. Now things could be categorized as 'extremism'. This relays a higher degree of nervousness and, to a certain degree, danger, which, in the government's opinion, certain organizations and individuals presumably pose. The current law on NGOs already provides for the types of punishment being set by the new law (written warning, suspension of activity, termination or liquidation of NGO). It has successfully served as legal basis for retaliation against public opponents of the regime. The Ministry of Justice liquidated more than 150 organizations over the course of three years. The same applies to political parties. The law *On mass media* contains all limitations provided for by the law *On counteraction to extremism*, but it doesn't use the term 'extremism'. We are moving on to another level of political vocabulary. The new law serves as a means of propaganda and ideological pressure.'

**On 14 November** the Soviet of Ministers of Belarus passed the decision which essentially signifies an even more severe state control over the public opinion polls on social and political topics and publishing their results. The decision is that all sociologic researches of political nature will be controlled by the Commission on Public Opinion Polls of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. The commission will be accrediting judicial persons who apply for running public opinion polls connected to referenda, elections of the president, elections of the Chamber of Representatives and the Soviet of Republic deputies, social and political situation in the country as well as publishing the results of the researches in mass media. The commission has the authority to control the activity of social services at any stage of running a poll and in a case when the violations are found the Commission can terminate the accreditation.

**On 25 November** the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus adopted in the first reading the draft law *On introduction of amendments to some legal acts of the Republic of Belarus with the aim to increase the punishment for actions against individuals and public security*'. This draft was submitted by A.Lukashenka for urgent consideration. It provides introduction of changes and amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus. In particular, according to this draft law, a number of new articles (such as illegal organization of activity of a public association or fund and participation in their activity, discrediting of the Republic of Belarus) were to be introduced. These amendments provide up to six months of arrest or two years of jail for participation in the organizations which weren't regis-

tered or were deprived of the state organization and also for presenting to foreign organizations or citizens 'knowingly false information about the political, economical, social, military or international situation of the Republic of Belarus'. Human rights activists of Belarus stood against the introduction of the political articles to the criminal legislation. In their protest note they stated: 'The proposed amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus contradict not only to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, but also to the international acts in the field of human rights that were ratified by the Republic of Belarus, including the Convent on Civil and Political Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fundamental principles of the OSCE. These amendments violate such fundamental human rights as the freedom of opinion and conviction, the right to receive and distribute information, the liberty of word, the right to association, etc. We are deeply convinced of the solely repressive nature of this draft and think it is aimed at the intimidation of the country's citizens on the eve of the upcoming presidential election. Against the background of the general deterioration of the situation of human rights in the country, the liquidation of independent mass media, these amendments will bring on yet further aggravation of the political repression and will return Belarus to the worst times of the Soviet totalitarianism'.

**In November** Aliaksandr Lukashenka issued a decree to introduce amendments to his decree *On some measures for counteraction of human trafficking*. In the new decree #15 it is stated that the organizations that provide to Belarusian students the possibility to work abroad during the summer vacations, have to receive the appropriate state license with the previous approval of the Ministry of Education. In the previous decree the necessity of the ministry's agreement for studying abroad was mentioned as well. The new decree requires such agreement of the ministry or the local authorities even for short trips of students to foreign countries for participation in cultural and sportive events. 'There's no doubt that the Belarusian authorities continue the policy of self-isolation. They try to limit the educational and public contacts of youth. The Belarusian authorities are afraid of democratic influences the students can naturally bring from foreign countries after comparing the situation in Belarus with that of the countries they visit', commented the human rights activist Ales Bialiatki.

**On 1 December** the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint program of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) expressed their deepest concern about the adoption in first reading, on 25 November 2005, of amendments to the Belarusian Criminal Code by the Low Chamber of Parliament, which strengthen penal responsibility concerning 'acts against people and public security'. The Observatory stated its preoccupation with these new amend-

ments, which 'put at serious risk the very activities of independent human rights defenders in Belarus and constitute an additional tool for the authorities to crackdown on the independent civil society', pointed they constitute a blatant violation of international human rights instruments and called upon the Belarusian authorities to stop the adoption process of these amendments, to put an end to any kind of harassment against human rights organizations and their members, and to put Belarusian legislation in conformity with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and international standards relative to freedoms of association and expression.

**On 2 December** the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights and Belarusian Helsinki Committee expressed their deep concern with the new draft law that 'would destabilize the work of human rights activists and other segments of the Belarusian civil society'. 'Impreciseness of formulations in the proposed amendments to the Criminal and the Criminal-Process Code provides the authorities with the possibility to consider legal human rights activity as illegal attempts to discredit the Belarusian state or damage its image', said the statement. IHF and BHC condemned the proposed repressive amendments to the legislation and stated they were an evident attempt to further limit the space in which people could publicly voice their opinions.

**On 2 December** the deputies of the Chamber of Representatives adopted in the second reading amendments to the Criminal Code, introduced on behalf of Lukashenka by Stsiapan Sukharenka, the KGB chief. During the vote the bill was supported by 97 deputies, with only four voting against. The total number of the deputies in the Chamber of Representatives is 110. The amendments made provide for criminal punishment for discrediting the country, passing deceitful information about the situation in Belarus to the foreign and international organizations – from fines to a six month arrest or even imprisonment of up to 2 years.

**On 3 December** the chair of the OSCE office in Minsk, the Ambassador ?ke Peterson expressed his deep concern with the adoption of the amendments to the Criminal and the Criminal-Process of Belarus that 'can become a hard blow on the civil society on the whole as well as particular individuals'. Mr Peterson stated the enforcement of such amendments could lead to gross violations of a number of principles and undertakings of Belarus to OSCE. The Ambassador expressed the especial anxiety with the article 'discrediting of the Republic of Belarus' that provided punishment for providing foreign organizations with knowingly false information about the situation in the country. The OSCE mission in Minsk considered it could negative consequences for the cooperation between the OSCE and the civil society and undermine the mission's efforts aimed at execution of its mandate.

**On 8 December** the Soviet of the Republic once again demonstrated his being only a tool of the presidential power and unanimously adopted the amendments to the Criminal and the Criminal-process Code that were introduced by the KGB head on behalf of Lukashenka on 2 December. The amendments provide criminal punishment for 'discrediting of the country, passing false information about the situation in Belarus to foreign and international organizations' – from fine and 6-months' arrest to 5 years of jail. The specialist in criminal legislation, representative of the expert-legal group the Soviet of the Republic Vasil Tsimoshchanka said he had no principal remarks concerning the article 'discrediting of the Republic of Belarus'. The proposed punishment, up to five years of jail, was left as well. Mr Tsimoshchanka said in the case of adequate and strict following to the norms this draft law couldn't lead to human rights violations: 'I think this norm is close to the legal norms of many European countries and much depends on the practice. The law is quite concrete and I think violations are not likely to happen.'

**On 8 December** the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus adopted in the second reading the draft law on introduction of the changes to the Criminal and Criminal-Process Code according to which the persons who inflicted economical harm to the state had to be freed from criminal responsibility in the case they returned the means and repented. During the discussion of this draft law it was stated it was elaborated in connection with the issue of a presidential decree that would come into force after the introduction of the changes. The presidential administration explained that according to the decree the decision about the release from criminal punishment could be taken only by the head of the state. It was also said that on A.Lukashenka's decision parole could be also granted to for other crimes including the crimes committed in the fields of building, customs and bank activity and trade.

**On 9 December** the Council of the Belarusian People's Republic adopted a statement concerning the voting of the amendments to the Criminal Code. The Council considered it as another step in legalizing of the terror against all kinds of political religious, public and cultural initiative that couldn't be controlled by the authorities. According to the statement, the criminalization of citizens for the so-called 'discrediting of the Republic in Belarus' and their participation in the public life destroyed the civil right to liberty of speech and freedom of association and returned Belarus to the corrupt practice of Stalin's times. The Council of BPR also reminded that any attempts to usurp the power in Belarus, limit the civil rights and actions against the state sovereignty would inescapably bring the present head of the state to criminal and moral responsibility.

**On 9 December** the international organization *Article 19* issued an official

statement in connection with the adoption of the 'draconic' amendments to the Criminal Code by both chambers of the Belarusian Parliament. *Article 19* declared the amendments incompatible with the right to free expression that was guaranteed by the Belarusian constitution and article 19 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights that was ratified by Belarus and urged Aliaksandr Lukashenka to abstain from signing the law and refuse from this very legislative initiative on the whole.

**On 16 December** at its special session the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus unanimously voted for the appointment of the presidential election of 19 March. According to the Constitution it is the parliament that fixes the date of presidential elections. The session took place in the presence of the vice-head of the presidential administration Natallia Piatkevich and the chair of Central Committee for Elections and Republican Referenda Lidziia Iarmoshyna. Uladzimir Kanapliou, who presided the session, stated that according to the experts in holding of elections spring was the best time for such campaigns. The former chair of the Supreme Soviet, lawyer Miachyslau Hryb stated that in this case the election would take place before the end of the presidential powers of Aliaksandr Lukashenka. According to him, pre-term election could be held only in the case the presidential seat became vacant. On the other hand, the procedure of the appointment of the Election Day was defined neither in the Constitution, nor in other legal acts. According to Mr Hryb, the Chamber of Representatives gave quite a loose explanation to the Constitution instead of adoption of the appropriate law. Miachyslau Hryb stated that in the case of early election the country could get in the situation of double presidency.

**On 20 December** the law *On amendments to the Criminal Code* that provided up to five years of jail for 'discrediting of the Republic of Belarus and the state organs, urges that could inflict harm to the country, destabilization of the situation, etc.' was introduced in the National register of legal acts. Lukashenka signed the law on 15 December, but his press-service didn't give publicity to this information. The amendments come into effect 10 days after the official publication.

## 2. Capital punishment

At his press-conference of **24 January**, the head of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus Valiantsin Sukala informed journalists that the authorities sentenced two citizens to capital punishment. According to him, it wit-



nesses that 'Belarus really came up to the introduction of moratorium on death punishment'. The head of the Supreme Court believes that the alternative to the capital punishment is the life sentence, introduced by the new Criminal code. In 2004 twelve persons were sentenced to it for especially hard felonies.

**On 5 April** in its report for 2004 Amnesty International stated that more and more countries refused from death penalty. However, during the last year the number of the people to which it was applied was the greatest for the last 25 years. Meanwhile, Belarus is the only country that uses death penalty. In 2004 five people were executed. According to Amnesty International, among CIS countries only Belarus and Uzbekistan use this kind of punishment and both of them conceal some of the cases.

**On 10 October** the world celebrated the date of abolition of death penalty. Belarus and Uzbekistan remain the last countries that still use this kind of punishment. The OSCE head Rene Van Der Linden pointed it in his speech. The UN also has pretensions to Belarus concerning the process of execution. Its special memorandum states that in Belarus it is equal to torture. According to the death penalty department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 126 death verdicts have been pronounced since 1997. According to the department, their number decreases: in the end of 1990-ies some 30-40 verdicts were issued each year, in 2003 there were only four of them and in 2004 – 2. Minsk isolator is the only place in Belarus where the executions take place. Usually at least a year passes before the issue of the verdict and its execution. The convicts have the right to complain against the verdict to the Supreme Court. Their last hope is the presidential commission on paroles. Each decision of this commission is signed by Lukashenka in person.

### 3. Concealment of truth about the fate of the missing persons

At the press-conference of **12 January** Uladzimir Navumau, chair of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, stated MIA was making everything it could to find the missing Belarusian citizens. He emphasized he didn't single out Iury Zakharanka, Viktor Hanchar, Anatol Krasouski and Dzmitry Zavadski from all others and said that about 1 000 Belarusian citizens were missing, which, according to him, was the smallest number in the former CIS countries. About 100 Belarusian citizens were wanted abroad, Belarusian MIA searched for 1/3 of the Belarusian citizens on the request of the Ministries of the Internal Affairs of the EU.

**On 17 January** the human rights activist Aleh Volchak passed to Minsk Prosecutor's Office some documents related to the circumstances of the disappearance of the former Minister of Interior of Belarus Iury Zakharenka in 1999. Mr Volchak said about it at the presentation of the public association *Defenders of Fatherland* that was established with the aim to unite the democratically-minded former workers of the law machinery and military organs. According to Volchak, he received the documents from the former workers of the prosecutor's office Dzmitry Petrushkevich and Aleh Sluchak, who in 2001 received political asylum in the US. The documents are related to the history of the establishment of 'death squadrons', their staff and administration, the details of the kidnap of Iury Zakharenka and the place of his burial. Besides, there's the list of 30 persons who, according to Petrushkevich and Sluchak, knew about the existence of the 'death squadron'. Among the enlisted persons there were workers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, KGB and the prosecutor's Office. According to Aleh Volchak, some of the documents were passed to the investigators after the retirement of the KGB head Leanid Ieryn.

**On 19 January** Zinaida Hanchar submitted the letters with the request to investigate the kidnap of her husband, vice-speaker of the Supreme Soviet of Belarus of the 13<sup>th</sup> Convocation Viktor Hanchar to the Russian Federal Security Service and the Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation. In these letters she referred to statements of the highest duty officials of Belarus that Russian secret services were engaged in the kidnap and that from time to time Belarusian state mass media distributed such information. Zinaida Hanchar asked the administration of RFSS to use the convention of legal assistance, signed by Russia and Belarus and conduct the investigation.

**On 30 March** the human rights activist Ales Bialiatki who took part in the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, passed to the special reporter on Belarus Adrian Severin the appeal of Zinaida Hanchar, wife of the missing politician Viktor Hanchar. Zinaida Hanchar expressed there her regret with the fact that Mr Severin was deprived of the possibility to meet with the relatives of the kidnapped politicians and journalists because of the position of the Belarusian authorities. She also stated that none of the demands of the previous UN resolution on Belarus were executed by the authorities, including the demand of exhausting, objective and independent investigation of the politically motivated kidnaps and punishment of the persons guilty. She also urged the commission to adopt one more resolution in Belarus and condemn there the position of the Belarusian authorities who concealed true information. Zinaida Hanchar said she was sure that under the present regime it was impossible to investigate the political kidnaps.

Russian TV channel ORT Dzmitry Zavadski, received a notice from the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Belarus, which concerned 'the resumption of the preliminary investigation in compliance with part 3 of article #249 of the Code of Criminal Procedures of the Republic of Belarus', and said 'the preliminary investigation into the criminal case 980159 initiated because of the disappearance of your son Dzmitry Zavadski on 7 July 2000 was resumed on 4 April 2005 in view of the needed investigation measures in this case'.

**On 30 April** members of different human rights organizations visited Uliana Zakharanka, lury Zakharanka's mother who lives in the town of Vasilievi- chy in Homel region. They congratulated her with the Victory Day. Among the guests there were also Volha Zavadskaia, mother of the missing cameraman Dzmitry Zavadski and Zinaida Hanchar, wife of the missing politician Viktor Hanchar. The authorities still haven't answered the question where are lury Zakharanka, Viktor Hanchar, Anatol Krasouski and Dzmitry Zavadski. Uliana Zakharanka is still waiting for her son.

**On 4 May** the active investigative measures were renewed on the case of the disappearance of Dzmitry Zavadski, cameraman of the Russian ORT TV channel. On the solicitation of Hary Pahaniaila, defense lawyer for Zavadski's relatives, the investigators checked the information about the body of the unknown man, who in 2000 was taken there from Krupki and re-buried. The court found that Ihnatovich's gang had relation to his disappearance. Ihatovich was born in Krupki. People saw him near Krupki, in Malinauka area, when Zavadski disappeared. Later the bodies of two killed men were found there. The investigative group on Zavadski's case is still headed by Ivan Branchel, investigator of the cases of especial importance. In 2001 he and his assistants found that Zavadski was kidnapped by Ihnatovich's gang, but the body still hasn't been found. The General Prosecutor's Office of Belarus tells nothing about the details of this search, referring to the secret of investigation.

**On 6 May** in Kastychnitskaia Square of Minsk there was an attempt to hold the Chain of Concerned People, devoted to the sixth anniversary of Zakharanka's disappearance, but in several minutes its participants were pushed out of the square by riot squad police. The people held portraits of lury Zakharanka in general's parade uniform, hoping the police would understand the aim of the action and pay at list a little respect to the former minister of internal affairs.

**At 1 p.m. on 7 May** 10 people with white-red-white scarves and portraits of lury Zakharanka came out to the Svobody Square and filed along the Art Museum. Valery Shchukin and activists of United Civil Party managed to stand there for about twenty minutes. Suddenly the police arrived. There were twice

more of them than the picket participants. Aliaksei Shakhovich, vice-chair of Vitsebsk Kastychnitski Borough Board of Internal Affairs, demanded from them to disperse threatening to detain them otherwise. He reminded to one of the picket participants, Alena Zaleskaia that a police report had been composed on her for participation in Chernobyl Way on 26 April and for the repeated violation she could receive a severe punishment, such as 15 days of jail, irrespective to her state of health and old age. Under the police pressure the picket dispersed. However, UCP members held another action – they laid a crown with white-red-white stripes to the Victory monument in Peramohi Square. The police watched them all the time, but didn't touch the crown.

**On 7 May** near *lubileiny* market in Brest there was held another commemorative action. It also lasted for about twenty minutes. The action participants held portraits of the missing persons, which immediately turned the attention of the police, who demanded from them to stop the unauthorized action. Several minutes later the chair of Brest regional UCP organization Stsiapan Navaselchan and his son Andrei were detained and taken to a police station. They also tried to detain Zinaida Mikhniuk, chair of the trade union of radio-electronic industry, but other participants of the action didn't let them do it. However, the police managed to put down her passport data. At the police station they drew reports for organization of unauthorized assembly on Stsiapan and Andrei Navaselchans.

**On 5 May** in Hrodna the civil movement *We Remember* organized an unauthorized picket devoted to the anniversary of Zakharanka's disappearance. It lasted from 2 to 3 p.m. Seven people took part in it and six of them were detained at taken to Hrodna Kastychnitski Borough Board of Internal Affairs.

**On 7 May** in Warsaw there was also held a picket devoted to the anniversary of Zakharanka's disappearance. About fifteen people handed out to passers by fly-sheets with information about the case. They also held white-red-white flags and posters with such inscriptions 'We remember the victims of Lukashenka's regime'. They also held a performance there, featuring a man resembling Lukashenka, dressed in military uniform.

**On 7 May** a similar picket was held in the town of Landshut, not far from München, by the political refugee from Belarus Iuhien Murashka. The participants held the poster 'Iury Zakharanka became a victim of the dictatorial regime in Belarus'.

**On 20 May** Russia's Prosecutor's Office sent a letter to Zinaida Hanchar, the wife of the politician Viktor Hanchar who had been kidnapped six years

ago. The letter says 'As it can be understood from you appeal, your husband was kidnapped on the territory of the Republic of Belarus, and the case of his abduction is being investigated by the prosecutor's office of Minsk. If legal assistance on the territory of another country is needed, the prosecutor's office of Minsk may make an appropriate petition'. The press-secretary of the General Prosecutor's Office of Belarus Iury Azaronak refused to say whether the Belarusian side has made any petitions to the Russian office about legal assistance. According to him, these were procedural issues whose publication could hinder the investigation.

**On 31 May** with the assistance of diplomats Volha Zakharanka passed a letter to the US president George Bush. In this letter the wife of the former Minister of Interior Iury Zakharanka (missing since May 1997) expressed gratitude to the American president for the moral support to the families of the missing politicians. According to Volha Zakharanka, the Belarusian authorities not only didn't take any action to search the persons guilty of the political disappearances, but also refuse to give any information concerning the investigation. In the letter to Mr Bush Volha Zakharanka wrote: 'I have no illusions that under the rule of the present authorities the criminal case will be objectively and comprehensively investigated. The only way out, to our mind, is that one of the European countries can bring a criminal case on the forced kidnap of Iury Zakharanka.' After the disappearance of her husband Volha Zakharanka was given political asylum in Germany and lives there with her daughters Iulia and Alena and five-year old grandson.

**On 1 June** Aleh Volchak, representative of the family of the missing examiner of interior Iury Zakharanka, stated that German lawyers were preparing the case on disappearance of Belarusian politicians for passing to the court of one of the European countries. According to A. Volchak, Volha Zakharanka informed him about this in her letter.

**On 7 July** on the fifth anniversary of the ORT cameraman's disappearance Dzmitry Zavadzki Reporters without Borders and the Belarusian Association of Journalists made a joint statement that expressed their concern about the inactivity of the Belarusian authorities as they conduct investigation into complete disappearance of Dzmitry Zavadzki. The journalist organizations called on the authorities to allow foreign experts to take part in the investigation resumed on 4 April 2005, a year after the case closure.

**On 7 July** BAJ conducted a Day of Remembrance in commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the ORT cameraman disappearance Dzmitry Zavadzki, a member of the organization. Those who took part in the event also recalled Veranika Charkasava, a *Salidarnasts* journalist violently murdered in October

2004. About 40 journalists gathered in Kurapaty memorial. Both colleagues of Veranika and Dzmitry, and their relations attended the Day of Commemoration event. Those present there held candles and portraits of Charkasava and Zavadzki. According to the vice-chair of Belarusian Association of Journalists Eduard Melnikau, the location for the event was not accidental, because 'murders and disappearances of the journalists and common people are a sign of all totalitarian communities, with Kurapaty being vivid evidence. After short speeches the people lit candles near the Great Kurapaty Cross. The event was closely watched by unidentified people in plain clothes and several uniformed police. At 6 p.m. in Kastychnitskaia Square in Minsk a Chain of Concerned People dedicated to the fifth anniversary of the tragic disappearance of Dzmitry Zavadzki was to have taken place. But the people had hardly formed a line at the square and unfolded posters with the photo of the disappeared journalist when the riot police appeared and started driving the people off to the Svislach River. Sviatlana, Dzmitry Zavadzki's wife, who walked alongside her son Iury, received a powerful punch right on the face.

**On 16 September** in Kastychnitskaia square of Minsk the police dispersed the action *We Remember*. At 6 p.m. there gathered about 100 people to express their solidarity with the families of the missing politicians and political prisoners and demand the cessation of the political harassment of Belarus. The action participants filed in line and unrolled photos of Viktor Hanchar, Anatol Krasouski, Iury Zakharanka and Dzmitry Zavadzki. In several minutes the riot police broke the line into parts and started pushing the people out to Kamalnoskaia St. Activists of the *Zubr* and the *Young Front* filed in a small column and went to Kastychnitskaia square, but several dozens of riot police ringed them and started pulling out of the square, accompanying it with four-letter words, beating and threats. The police tore clothes to some *Zubr* members and inflicted to them bodily injuries. They tore out of the people's hands the photos and flags. Then the *Zubr* activist Mikita Sasim took off his jeans coat, put it on the flagstick and started waving it. The action participants chanted 'Long Live Belarus!' Several times they returned to the square and filed in line and the police again dispersed them.

**On 21 September** in Dësseldorf, where an international event *Disappeared People – Crimes Against Humanity* was held the names of Viktor Hanchar, Anatol Krasouski, Iury Zakharanka and Dzmitry Zavadzki were recalled. The main reports and discussions centered on the organization of politically motivated disappearances in Belarus and Chechnya.

**On 8 November** Zinaida Hanchar, wife of the missing politician Viktor Hanchar, sent open letter to the deputy of the Chamber of Representatives Anatol Salauiou who presented to the Assembly of the Inter-parliamentary Union

of Russia and Belarus false information about the process of investigation of Hanchar's kidnapping. In private, she wrote: 'Anatol Mikhailavich, if you as a man who personally has known Viktor Hanchar since the times of the Supreme Soviet of the 13<sup>th</sup> Convocation were really interested in this case, you would surely have known that during the last two years the case hasn't been suspended. That's why I'm even more surprised to hear about the 'constant control' of the Parliament over the investigation of the kidnap of your colleague. I am sure that you simply protect your own image in the international community and purposefully misinform them. You have also been a deputy of the Chamber of Representatives of all previous convocations and doubtlessly received from public and from me in person the requests to raise the question about the progress of the investigation of my husband's case. Unlike few of our colleagues, you didn't even consider it necessary to answer my request. You are an officer and it is unforgivable for you to abuse the name of Viktor Hanchar and the family grief to defend yourself, your helplessness and inaction.'

#### 4. Politically motivated criminal cases

**At night on 8 January** the police detained the activist of the youth movement *Zubr* Mikita Sasim on the suspicion that he had written *Freedom to Maryn-ich!* on the walls of several houses in the center of Minsk. He was detained for almost three days in a temporary isolator. The police brought against him a criminal case for purposeful defilement or destruction of property (part 1 of article #218 of the Criminal code. This case was investigated by Minsk Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. If found guilty, Mikita Sasim could be fined, sentenced up to two years of personal restraint or up to three months of arrest.

**On 11 January**, after a long course of medical treatment, the professor Iury Bandazheuski was again directed to the corrective colony-settlement in Dziatlau district of Homel region. By 6 December 2005 he served one third of his prison term and, according to the Belarusian legislation, had the right to parole. However, it depended on the decision of the colony commission. The international community repeatedly urged the Belarusian authorities to discharge Mr Bandazheuski, former rector of Homel Medical University, who had been arrested in 1999 and sentenced to 8 years of jail. Human rights activists believe the professor was imprisoned for his research of the influence of small doses of radiation on human body, the results of which contradicted to the position of the official medicine.

**On 11 January** Mikita Sasim, a coordinator of the *Zubr* movement, was released from the isolator after signing a written undertaking not to leave the city.

**On 11 January** Hrodna City Prosecutor's Office officially warned the head of Minsk regional organization of the United Civil Party Maryia Bahdanovich. The reason was her radio speech as a candidate to the Parliament at Hrodna regional radio. The prosecutor's office decided that in her speech Maryia Bahdanovich defamed the head of the state. The prosecutors found features of violation of article #367 of the Criminal Code in her expressions about possible relation of the president to illegal trade of arms and use of the financial means that were received from such operations. Hrodna Leninski Borough Prosecutor's Office warned Maryia Bahdanovich about inadmissibility of violations and explained that in the case it repeated she would be punished. Minsk Prosecutor's Office conducted similar check-ups concerning the speeches of the opposition activists Aleh Volchak and Aliaksandr Tsynkevich.

**On 12 January** Homel Tsentralny Borough Court started the administrative trial against Iryna Makavetskaia, correspondent of *Narodnaia volia* in Homel region. The journalist was charged with disrespect to the court. The matter is that at 10 a.m. on 2 December at Homel Chyhunachny Borough Court there started the open trial against the director of the foreign publishing house *Iosif & Adzet*. The journalist wanted to report about it. In the very beginning of the trial the head of the court Tatsiana Ardybets ordered Makavetskaia to leave the court hall. The journalist refused to do it saying she would obey only to lawful demands of the court. As a result, Ardybets had to call the police, who detained Makavetskaia, took her to Homel Chyhunachny Borough Board of Internal Affairs and composed a report for violation of article #166 of the Code of Administrative Violations. This article provides fine or up to 15 days of jail as punishment. According to the journalist, among the witnesses of the incident there was Iulia Marchanka, daughter of the well-known Homel businesswoman, head of the Belarusian Free Trade Union of private entrepreneurs of Homel Tatsiana Marchanka. She was a defendant at the trial to which Makavetskaia wanted to get on 2 December 2004. The incident was also witnessed by Iulia's defense lawyer. However, the police report mentions as witness a representative of the opposite side of the trial, the head of the juridical department of Homel Chyhunachny borough tax inspection Andrei Krautsou. The judge on administrative cases of Homel Tsentralny Borough Court Iaroslau Paremski rejected the solicitation of Iryna Makavetskaia to interrogate judge Ardybets and also refused to question the main witness Iulia Marchanka who was on the leave of absence at the time. 'The law doesn't free judges from the functions of witnesses and the time allows waiting till Iulia Marchanka returns. That's why I can speak of biased attitude of judge Paremski to me,' said Iryna Makavetskaia.



**On 13 January** Mikhail Marynich, a leader of the Belarusian opposition who was sentenced to 5 years of jail, was transferred from the investigative isolator of KGB to the investigative isolator in Valadarski St.

**On 13 January**, during the first sitting of the Regular Council of OSCE in 2005, Eberhard Heiken discussed a number of questions related to Belarus with the new chairman of the organization. The sitting was attended by chairs and delegations of OSCE offices from 55 member countries. Much attention was paid to the trial of the political activist Mikhail Marynich, who was sentenced to five years of jail. The office presented to the OSCE Secretariat a detailed report on this situation. The chair of the OSCE office in Minsk invited the OSCE chairman to visit Belarus and discussed with him the possibility to invite there Miklos Haraszti, the OSCE representative on freedom of mass media.

**On 20 January** Siarhei Kukharonak, the investigator of especially important cases of Minsk City Prosecutor's Office, interrogated Maryia Bahdanovich, chair of Minsk city organization of the United Civil Party, as a witness in the criminal case, initiated after holding of the oppositional press-conference on 14 October 2004. At this press-conference Anatol Liabedzka, chair of the United Civil Party, informed journalists about the exclusion of the candidate to the Chamber of Representatives Maryia Bahdanovich from the electoral race for alleged defamation of the president. 'The interrogation lasted for an hour, the investigator was interested why I run in Lida electoral circuit, where I worked in Lida, what was my position in the party, why I concluded that our country was selling arms to foreign countries and Lukashenka received the profits', said Maryia Bahdanovich. 'In the talk with the investigator I also said that as soon as I found my candidate's registration was annulled, I phoned to the UCP chair Anatol Liabedzka and submitted to the executive committee of the party an excerpt from the decision of the election commission concerning my exclusion. That's why Liabedzka gave publicity to these facts that were proved by documents.

**On 25 January** the US Ambassador George Krol met with relatives of the political prisoners Valery Levaneuski and Aliaksandr Vasiliou. At the meeting that took place at a hotel they discussed the political repressions in Belarus, lawless actions of KGB agents and numerous law violations, committed by courts and prosecutors' offices. The relatives informed the US Ambassador about new facts in the prisoners' cases. He promised to do everything possible for their release and said he spoke about it at all official meetings with the Belarusian authorities.

**On 27 January** the chief editor of the non-state public and political week-

ly *Borisovskiye novosti* Anatol Bukas was accused of violation of two articles of the Criminal Code. If found guilty, he could be sentenced up to three years of jail or up to two years of personal restraint. After the consideration of the materials of the criminal case the investigator of the department of preliminary investigation of Barysau City Board of Internal Affairs Siarhei Kazlou concluded that A.Bukas violated part 2 of article #188 (defamation in mass media) and part 2 of article #189 (deliberate insult of honor and dignity of a person, expressed in obscene form). The reason for the case was the article by A.Bukas *Silence of the lambs*, published in #12 (18-24 March 2004) of *Borisovskiye novosti*. The publication was about the editor of the newspaper of Barysau City Executive Committee *Adzinstva Vera* Pratasevich. In particular, the investigator considered as defaming such expressions as 'to cover the faceless pages of her newspaper', 'having the level of a stenographer at a factory newspaper', etc. and insults – in 'took the role of the defender of the officials who go to extremes', etc. According to Bukas, these articles were an answer to the three publications of the newspaper of Barysau CEC *Adzinstva* in which Vera Pratasevich called him 'ill-bread editor', compared him to foolish cock, etc. Barysau CBIA refused to conduct the linguistic expertise of those publications. The chief editor of *Borisovskiye novosti* is sure that the case was brought on the initiative of the local executive committee: 'They use cruel methods to liquidate the concurrent of the official newspaper, the circulation and popularity of which are far from our one. Our edition publishes materials, which are not very pleasant for the executive committee,' stated Bukas.

**On 28 January** Hrodna Regional Court left in force the sentence to Ramuald Ulan, founder of *Novaya gazeta Smorgoni*. The matter is that on 6 December 2004 R.Ulan drove his car and happened to knock down a woman who drove a bicycle. The woman received bodily injures. Mr Ulan paid for the material and moral harm done. During the trial the woman asked the court not to punish him severely. Smarhon District Court sentenced him to one year of imprisonment in a colony-settlement.

**On 30 January** more than 300 members of the Committee for defense of prisoners' rights of the English bureau of the PEN-club signed the petition to Aliaksandr Lukashenka, asking him to release the professor Iury Bandazheuski, former rector of Homel State Medical University, before the end of his prison term. The scientist is a honored member of the English bureau of the PEN-club. The authors of the petition urged Lukashenka to do everything possible for Bandazheuski's release for humanistic reasons.

**On 31 January** Dyiana Charkasava, mother of the stabbed to death journalist Veranika Charkasava, directed a letter to prosecutor general of the Re-

public of Belarus Piatro Miklashevich where she expressed her own vision of the investigation and evaluation of its methods. She emphasized that though the investigators had no evidence of guilt of the son and the stepfather of the killed journalist in the murder these relatives were still suspects on the case. Dyiana Charkasava also wrote she feared of the possible falsifications during the investigation which could lead to punishment of innocent people (the main suspects were Veranika's son 15-year-old son Anton Filimonau and her stepfather) and asked the prosecutor to prevent it.

**On 31 January** it became known that the political prisoner Valery Levaneuski faced health problems after the hunger-strike of protest against violations of his rights by the administration of the prison where he was kept. According to his son Uladzimir Levaneuski, after the transfer to a new colony on 28 December Valery Levaneuski was kept in the quarantine cell till 4 January and on 6 January was taken to the penal isolator where he was kept for fifteen days, up to 21 January. His relatives didn't know why he was taken to the isolator and the colony administration refused to explain it. He hungered on 9-14 January, but then had to stop because of acute heartache. Then he was transferred to the national hospital in Minsk for medical examination. According to his son, Valery Levaneuski was quite pessimistic about his early release and said the colony administration did everything possible to make him look as a 'malicious violator' of the regime. His family also stated they didn't receive some of the letters Valery Levaneuski sent to them.

**On 1 February** the investigators of Minsk Prosecutor's Office with Uladzimir Chumachenka at the head tried to forcibly take Anton Filimonau to stationary psychiatric expertise. Anton is the son of the journalist Veranika Charkasava, who was killed in October 2004. The group of investigators suddenly burst into school #88 where 15-year-old Anton learns. They allowed him to phone home – that's how the relatives found about it and ran to school to stop the investigators. The relatives were indignant at such actions of the investigation. They are sure that the nervous breakdown after the murder of his mother as a result of which Anton Filimonau was hospitalized could be a consequence of the methods, used by the investigators of the prosecutor's office.

**On 1 February** the member of the United Civil Party Aliaksandr Tsynkevich was summonsed to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Prosecutor's Office for explanations. The reason was that during the parliamentary electoral campaign the UCP activist called some Lukashenka's decrees 'unwise' and promised to struggle for their abolishment. 'I was told that in my fly-sheets it was stated that I would struggle for setting aside unwise decrees and rulings and it was well-known that decrees were signed by the president and it meant I insulted and defamed the president', said Aliaksandr Tsynkevich. He called such preten-

sions absurd and lawless and refused to give any explanations to the investigators of the prosecutor's office, who, to his mind, fail to defend the law and civil rights.

**On 2 February** Dyiana Charkasava had an audience with Mikola Staravoitau, vice-prosecutor of Minsk. She wanted him to refuse from conducting the stationary psychiatric expertise of Anton Filimonau, 15-year-old son of Veranika Charkasava, the warrant for which was signed on 31 January by Uladzimir Chumachenka, senior investigator of Minsk and sanctioned by Mikalia Staravoitau. The necessity of the expertise was explained with the fact that after the violent murder of his mother Anton Filimonau was registered at the city children's psycho-neurological dispenser and in the end of November received stationary treatment at the national clinical psychiatric hospital. The experts of the State service of medical court expertise were charged to conduct the expertise. According to Dyiana Charkasava, they spoke about everything. M. Staravoitau hinted they had no suspects except for Anton, but promised to think about refusing from the expertise. He also asked her not to interfere with the expertise and calm down the journalists.

**On 4 February**, after the end of the three-day visit of the Working group of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE on Belarus with Uta Zapf at the head, the group members expressed their concern with new actions of the Belarusian authorities that were aimed at liquidation of independent public organizations and also with the legal persecution of Mikhail Marynich, Valery Levaneuski, Aliaksandr Vasilieu and with the refusal to grant parole to Iury Bandazheuski. The working group also stated the National Assembly couldn't represent the real will of the Belarusian people. On the other hand, Uta Zapf said the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE intended to 'resume the dialogue between the Belarusian authorities and the political opposition'.

**On 4 February** Anton Filimonau's father took him to Moscow to save him from the one-month stationary psychiatric expertise that Minsk City Prosecutor's Office intended to conduct. The prosecutor's office could ask the Russian side for extradition of Anton Filimonau as a suspect in the murder.

**On 7 February** it became known the administration of colony #19 in Mahiljou, where the leader of Hrodna entrepreneurs Valery Levaneuski was kept, pressurized him. He informed his family about it in a letter. 'They accused me of several violations and now I am a malignant offender. According to the legislation, I will be considered as such for at least a year. Corrective labor, conditional early release and amnesty don't concern malignant offenders. I will try to apply to court to remove these violations. Hope dies last. When in the penal isolator, I composed more than 40 complaints and statements on different is-

sues. I can't sit calmly, through I try to. I simply can't let them insult or degrade me. That's how conflicts appear,' wrote Valery Levaneuski.

**On 7 February** the president of the World Association of Newspapers Gavin O'Reilly and the president of the Universal Forum of Editors George Brock sent appeals to a number of the duty officials of Belarus, urging them to provide the objective investigation of the murder of the journalist Veranika Charakasava and stop the persecution of her family. The letters were addressed to Aliaksandr Lukashenka, Uladzimir Navumau and Piatro Miklashevich. Copies were sent to the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and the UNESCO Secretary General Koichiro Matsuura.

**On 18 February** the defense lawyer for the convicted leaders of businessmen Valery Levaneuski and Aliaksandr Vasilieu filed with the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus a review complaint against the verdict passed by Hrodna Leninski Borough Court. 'Two appeals have been filed, one for Vasilieu and one for Levaneuski. We ask the Supreme Court to cancel the verdict. Numerous procedural violations were committed during the litigation in Hrodna. Expert examinations were not considered, and witnesses who had testified in favor of the defendants were not called up to take part in the proceedings. The evidence allowed in the courtroom was treated almost like expert conclusions, though the linguistic examination has to be provided by experts,' said Aliaksandr Biryiau, who appeared for the defendants in court.

**On 18 February** Minsk Regional Court considered the cassation complaint of the ex-ambassador, public and political activist Mikhail Marynich and decreased his prison term to 3,5 years.

**On 23 February** Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court declined the complaint of Anatol Kulikou, the defense lawyer of Anton Filimonau against the decision of Minsk City Prosecutor's Office to conduct the stationary psychiatric expertise of the teenager. The court sitting was closed and lasted for 40 minutes – only the defense lawyer, the journalist's mother Dyiana Charkasava and a representative of the prosecutor's office were admitted. They had to sign the undertaking not to publicize the case materials. Anton Filimonau wasn't summonsed to the court, he stayed with his father in Moscow.

**On 24 February** the member of the United Civil Party, former candidate to deputy position Aliaksandr Tsynkevich was summonsed to the prosecutor's office. The investigator A.Mikalaiueu tried to interrogate Tsynkevich as witness. The matter is that witnesses, unlike the accused, can't refuse from testifying, which the investigator warned Tsynkevich about. However, Aliaksandr Tsynkevich refused to testify, referring to article #27 of the Constitution that guaran-

tees the right not to testify against oneself. On 1 February the prosecutor of Tsentralny borough of Minsk V.Khadatovich considered the materials that came from the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus on holding elections and national referenda and decided to bring a criminal case under part 2 of article #367 of the Criminal Code (defamation of the president) against several candidates to the parliament for the agitation fly-sheets they distributed.

**On 24 February** the leader of the BPF Party Vintsuk Viachorka was summonsed to the prosecutor's office to testify about the organization of the election-related press-conference of the leaders of the People's Coalition 5+ on 15 October 2004. During the press-conference the leaders of the oppositional parties stated there could be falsifications during the voting and demonstrated to journalists the filled protocols of polling station commissions with the ready numbers and the tables for circuit election commissions with the percentage of votes for the candidates. In the beginning of the interrogation Vintsuk Viachorka demanded from the investigator Kukharonak to formulate his questions in Belarusian. The investigator agreed. Then Vintsuk Viachorka refused to answer to a number of questions, referring to article #27 of the Constitution that gave him the right not to testify against himself.

**On 4 March** it became known that the prosecutor's office brought a criminal case under article #342 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (organization of group actions that violate the public order or active participation in them). The case was brought on the fact of the 'violations of the public order' by stopping the traffic in the center of Hrodna during the 3 May protest action of businessmen. Article #342 of the Criminal Code provides such punishments as fine, up to six months of arrest, up to three years of personal restraint or jail. It's worth mentioning that it's the second criminal case that has been brought under this article for the last six months.

**On 4 March** the PACE deputy Christos Pourgourides stated that on 3 March in Paris there was adopted the declaration of the PACE committee on legal affairs and human rights concerning the imprisonment of Mikhail Marynich. In the statement it was said that PACE 'expressed its deep concern in connection with the recent trial and imprisonment of Mikhail Marynich'. PACE urged the Belarusian authorities to immediately release Mikhail Marynich.

**On 9 March** judge I.Krot set aside the decision concerning the necessary psychiatric expertise of Anton Filimonau, son of the murdered journalist Veranika Charkasava. The cassation complaint that was considered by the judge was filed by Charkasava's defense lawyer V.Kulikou. However, A.Filimonau remained a suspect in the murder.

**On 9 March** Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Court received a case against the former businessman Andrei Klimau. Klimau was accused of defaming the president of the Republic of Belarus (part 2 of article #367 of the Criminal Code) and degrading the President of the Republic of Belarus (part 1 of article #368 of the Criminal Code). The decision on the transfer of the case to court indicated that A.Klimau, who actively resisted the current regime of the Republic of Belarus and employed provocative methods of creating an appearance of opposition activity, wrote and organized printing and distribution of books and flyers that contained statements degrading the President of the Republic of Belarus, and accusations implicating him in grievous offences. The investigation referred to Klimau's books *Revolt 2005*, *Obvious Truths*, and *I Made My Choice*.

**On 11 March** the long-term meeting of the political prisoner Valery Levaneuski with his relatives came to an end. It took place in the penal colony that was situated in Ivatsevichy district of Brest region. The prisoner was given the possibility to meet with his family only after he threatened to start a hunger-strike of protest. His son, Uladzimir Levaneuski, said that during the five months of the imprisonment the colony administration suddenly cancelled such meetings.

**On 11 March** after Anatol Shumchanka served 10 days of arrest for alleged violation of part 2 article #167.1 of the Code of Administrative Violations by organization of the unauthorized meeting of entrepreneurs in Kastrychnitskaia Square of Minsk on 1 March, instead of being released he was taken from the detention center to the prison of the Main Department of Internal Affairs of Minsk City Executive Committee to be accused of beating a cellmate. Article #339 of the Criminal Code (hooliganism), on which the charges brought were based, provides for public works or a fine, or an arrest for a term of up to 6 months, or imprisonment for up to 2 years.

**On 12 March**, during the concert that took place at *Chinese Pilot Jao Dah* club Amnesty International and Russian rock-musicians organized collection of signatures in support of the Belarusian prisoners of conscience Valery Levaneuski and Aliaksandr Vasilieou. The first signatures were put by participants of *Tequilajazzz* rock band. By the end of the concert many other individuals also put their signatures in support of the prisoners. All members planned to pass them to Aliaksandr Lukashenka.

**On 12 March** the leader of the national public association *Perspective* Anatol Shumchanka was taken for interrogation to Minsk Maskouski Borough Board of Internal Affairs to testify concerning the criminal case that was brought against him there. The interrogation was conducted in the presence of his

defense lawyer. The investigation didn't give official charges to Shumchanka, so he remained a suspect. A. Shumchanka called it a provocation with the aim to deprive him of the possibility to take part in further protest actions, such as the Freedom Day on 25 March.

**On 14 March** about 40 *Zubr* activists took part in the action in support of Mikhail Marynich that was held at 6 – 6.30 p.m. in Kastychnitskaia Square in Minsk. Pavel Lukhnevich said the action would take place everyday that week and its participants would gather at 6 p.m. in Kastychnitskaia Square and demand from the authorities to release Marynich. None of the action participants were detained.

**On 14 March** the influential international human rights organization Amnesty International declared an action in support of the Belarusian prisoner of conscience Mikhail Marynich. The organization urged people to submit the letters in support of Mikhail Marynich to the Belarusian authorities.

**On 14 March** the chair of the delegation of European Parliament on relations with Belarus Bogdan Klich and its vice-chair Aldis Kushkis urged the Belarusian authorities to release the political prisoner Mikhail Marynich and give him urgent medical treatment. 'The delegation of the European Parliament seriously fears that the Belarusian authorities are going to physically liquidate Mikhail Marynich', runs the delegation statement.

**On 14 March** Anatol Shumchanka, leader of the national public association *Perspective* was interrogated at Minsk Maskouski Borough Board of Internal Affairs one more time. Shumchanka didn't receive any charges, but the prosecutor of Maskouski Borough sanctioned his detention for a week.

**On 15 March** Natallia Vasilieva, wife of the political prisoner Aliaksandr Vasilieu, submitted to the prosecutor general, minister of internal affairs and other state organs complaints against the illegal actions of the administration of the colony where her husband was kept. According to her, they made him work hard despite his health problems and exacted from his pension 60-100 thousand roubles a month for his keeping at the colony.

**On 16 March** Halina Bandazheuskaia, wife of the imprisoned professor lury Bandazheuski, received an answer of the head of the punishment execution department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In her letter to him she complained against the refusal to conditionally release her husband before the end of his prison term. In the answer it was said: The department sees no law violations in the terms of consideration of the question about the conditional release of the professor' and considers the refusal of the commission of colo-



ny-settlement #26 justified and well-grounded'. The department accused professor that, having received the permission to go home for 7 days in autumn 2004 he returned only in January 2005. However, during that time he had a course medical treatment at one of Minsk hospitals. The department also stated the professor was at home, not at a hospital, for five days, which was a gross violation of the punishment conditions and colony #26 demonstrated its humanity, having decided not to apply any punitive measures to him.

**On 17 March** Ihar and Pavel Marynichs, sons of Mikhail Marynich, received one more refusal to their request to meet with their father at the prison hospital. The doctors that cured M.Marynich didn't come out to speak with them either. According to Ihar and Pavel, the administration of Minsk colony and the prisoner's doctors didn't keep to their promise to present detailed information about the state of his state. The press-service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs called Marynich's health 'satisfactory'.

**On 18 March** the leader of the association of businessmen *Perspective* Anatol Shumchanka was accused of hooliganism (part 1 of article #339 of the Criminal Code) and his detention was prolonged for the term for the quest stage.

**On 18 March** Mikhail Marynich's defense lawyer wasn't allowed to meet with his client. The administration of Minsk colony said it was better not to disturb the patient. Pavel Marynich, his son, said the real reason could be the deterioration of his father's health.

**On 22 March** the Investigative Committee of the Main Department of Internal Affairs of Minsk City Executive Committee issued to Mikola Statkevich the investigator's statement that officially brings charges by terms of article #342 of the Criminal Code – 'organization of group actions that disrupt public order, or active involvement in such actions'. Mr Statkevich had to give written undertaking not to leave the city. He said he had no intention of taking part in this farce, give any evidence or familiarize with the case materials.

**On 22 March** it became known that the political prisoner Valery Levaneuski faced provocations at penal colony #22, situated in the settlement of Damanava in Ivatsevichy district of Brest region. The administration representatives issued impossible and illegal orders and took him to the penal isolator for their non-execution. Besides, the started to send to him provocateurs who wrote letters to the colony administration, stating Levaneuski called them to disobey the administration.

**On 22 March** Pavel Seviarynets and Mikola Statkevich were charged with

organizing mass disorders on 18-19 October 2004 in Minsk, when about 5 000 people came to Kastychnitskaia Square to protest against the falsification of the parliamentary election and the referendum. The case was based on article #342 of the Criminal Code (organization of or active involvement with group actions that disrupt public order), providing up to three years of jail as punishment. Pavel Seviarynets gave written undertaking not to leave Vitsebsk.

**On 25 March** the Supreme Court refused to revise the verdict to the leaders of the unregistered national strike committee of entrepreneurs Valery Levaneuski and Aliaksandr Vasileiu. The vice-chair of the court Kalinkovich stated there were no reasons to protest against the verdict and left the decision of Hrodna Leninski Borough Court in force.

**On 25 March** there was initiated a criminal case on the fact of celebration of the 87<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Belarusian People's Republic. The case was brought under article #342 of the Criminal Code – organization of group actions that violate public order or active participation in them.

**On 28 March** Viachaslau Siuchyuk informed the public that during the three days of preliminary detention the action participants were interrogated by the investigative committee of the main board of internal affairs of Minsk City Executive Committee concerning the criminal case that was brought on the events of 25 March.

**On 28 March** the former businessman, deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the 13<sup>th</sup> Convocation Andrei Klimau received the ruling about the beginning of the investigation of the criminal case that was brought against him under part 2 of article #367 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (defamation of president) and part 1 of article #368 of the Criminal Code (insult of president). In the ruling about passing the case to court it was specified that A.Klimau wrote and organized distribution of books and flyers that contained insulting remarks about the president of the Republic of Belarus and accusations of felonies. The first hearings at Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Court were appointed on 6 April 2005. Judge Alena Ananich asked to inform her in advance whether the defendant had a defense lawyer.

**On 31 March** the investigator of case of the leader of *Perspective* association Anatol Shumchanka changed the restraint to the suspect 'due to new circumstances'. A.Shumchanka had to give written undertaking not to leave the city.

**On 4 April** it became known that the Belarusian authorities cheated Lenla Zerrougui, Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Deten-

tion of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. In August 2005 she visited Belarus within the framework of the mission Civil and political rights including the questions of torture and detention. The human rights activist Ales Bialiatski met with L.Zerrougui in Geneva. She was very surprised to find that Professor Bandazheuski was still kept in jail. 'Belarusian authorities promised to me to release him in January 2005', said Lenla Zerrougui to A.Bialiatski.

**On 5 April** Mikita Sasim was informed at Minsk Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs that the criminal case against him was stopped because of the insignificance of the done harm. Sasim was detained by the police on 8 January and charged with having written 'Freedom to Marynich' on the buildings in Frantsysk Skaryna Av and Valadarski St. He was kept at an isolator for three days. After this he was charged with violation of part 1 of article #218 of the Criminal Code (purposeful destruction or defilement of property).

**On 5 April** the political prisoner Aliaksandr Vasilieu was transferred from the penal colony where he was kept to the national hospital for prisoners. This information was spread by Pavel Marynich, son of Mikhail Marynich, who came there to meet with his father and saw Vasilieu.

**On 6 April** Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Court appointed the beginning of the trial of Andrei Klimau, former political prisoner, deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the 13<sup>th</sup> Convocation and businessman. He was charged with defamation and insult of Aliaksandr Lukashenka. Judge Ananich declared the trial would be closed, but didn't explain the reasons. The acting chair of Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Court didn't answer to journalists either. Even the head of the court chancellery said: 'The acting chair of the court ordered us to give no information'. There's still no information about who will represent Lukashenka. Meanwhile, Klimau's friend Leanid Malakhau was also summoned to this trial. During the investigation of the criminal case against Klimau he was interrogated as a witness. In his turn Andrei Klimau said he refused from advocacy services. He stated that he would go to the court to prove that Belarus had people who weren't afraid of the court self-will or other pressurization of Lukashenka on opposition.

**On 7 April** the lawyer of the political prisoner Aliaksandr Vasilieu Aliaksandr Birylyau said the prisoner would stay in the national hospital for prisoners in Minsk for a month and would go through thorough medical examination. The administration of the correctional facility had to agree with that because Aliaksandr Vasilieu complained that because of the state of his health he could not do the work he was made to do.

**On 13 April** at the international scientific symposium in Lyons CRIIRAD

stated its proposal to Belarusian authorities to establish a scientific laboratory for the political prisoner Iury Bandazheuski so that he could continue his research in radiation medicine. Halina Bandazheuskaia, the professor's wife, took part in the symposium. The proposal to establish the scientific center was upheld by the authorities of the Lyons region of France. Belarusian authorities didn't react to the proposal, but CRIIRAD intended to take all measures possible to create the conditions for the professor's work. Professor Bandazheuski treated the idea positively. According to Halina Bandazheuskaia, the laboratory would be of biological nature and would be established and financed by the French side:

**On 15 April** the criminal case against Pavel Seviarynets and Mikola Statkevich was passed to Minsk Leninski Borough Court. They were charged with organization of mass street actions of protest against the falsification of the parliamentary election and referendum on 18-19 October 2004. Mikola Statkevich refused from advocatory services and said he wouldn't testify at court and participate in the interrogation of witnesses. According to him, the criminal case was politically motivated and aimed at neutralization of the activists of street actions. Therefore, he said, the authorities could choose any punishment they wanted. The activist of *Young Front* Pavel Seviarynets had to give the written undertaking not to leave Vitsebsk before the end of the investigation. He spent a week trying to get the permission of the prosecutor's office to go to Minsk and meet with his lawyer. According to the Criminal-Process Code, he had the right to the necessary number of meetings with his defense lawyer. 'There wasn't anything criminal in the actions that took place on 18-19 October. The state order is to withhold the people who could organize active political protest. There's no doubt the result of the trial will be predefined by the decision of the authorities. The decision will be dictated by the political situation. Of course, I prepare myself to the worst variant, imprisonment. I take it easy,' said Pavel Seviarynets.

**On 19 April** Dyiana Charkasava and Uladzimir Mialeshka (mother and stepfather of the murdered journalist Veranika Charkasava) held a press-conference. They stated the investigation didn't react to the urges of international human rights organizations to consider the version of murder connected with the professional activity of the journalist. According to the version of V.Charkasava's colleagues, the murder could have political motivation, because the journalist could possess secret information about the arms trade between Belarus and Iraq. The journalist of *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta* Siarhei Satsuk found that the month before her death Veranika Charkasava started collecting information about the Belarusian *Infobank* that had relation to the contacts of Belarus with Iraq. Aliaksandr Starykevich, editor of *Salidarnasts*, the newspaper where V.Charkasava worked, also spoke in favor of the

political version. The international organization *Reporters Without Borders* urged the Belarusian authorities to investigate the political version of the murder.

**On 22 April** the well-known prisoner of conscience and politician Andrei Klimau was detained in a car park in Platonau St., and then was taken to 7 Sapiorau St. The investigator Ihar Prakharenkau who investigated the case of Mikola Statkevich and Pavel Seviarynets familiarized the new suspect with the statement of charges. According to the statement, Andrei Klimau is suspected of organizing 'group actions that violate the public order'. On the same day, 25 March, riot police detained several tens of people. The investigator decided to keep Andrei Klimau in the temporary detention ward for 72 hours.

**On 25 April** it became known that Andrei Klimau would remain behind the bars for another 10 days. This decision was taken by Minsk Prosecutor's Office. Andrei Klimau was accused of organizing a street demonstration on 25 March, which was under the demands of Aliaksandr Lukashenka's resignation. Minsk Perhamaïski Boroug Court had yet another criminal case against Andrei Klimau that was brought against him for alleged defamation of Aliaksandr Lukashenka. The hearing in court started on 6 April. On 25 April the hearings were to have been continued, but because Klimau had not come, the new date of the sitting was defined – 19 May. Relatives and associates of Andrei Klimau came to Minsk Pershamaïski Borough Court. At 10 a.m. yet another sitting was to have been held. The criminal case was initiated because of the books and the news bulletin by Andrei Klimau, which were distributed on the territory of Belarus. Only one court hearing was held – 6 April, on the following day the prosecutor asked for a break until 25 April to collect additional information.

**On 25 April** the ambassadors of Lithuania and Latvia Ionas Paslauskas and Maira Mora visited the former minister and ambassador of Belarus to Riga Mikhail Marynich in the hospital. He is now serving a sentence that is politically-motivated in the opinion of international human rights groups and countries of the West. Mr Marynich suffered a heart attack in prison. The ambassadors Ionas Paslauskas and Maira Mora showed Mikhail Marynich a certificate saying that the European Movement of Denmark had conferred on him the title *Person of the Year 2005*. Ms Mora noted that people in Latvia were concerned with Mikhail Marynich's fate, especially by the recent heart attack the opposition politician had in prison. Riga remembers Mikhail Marynich as a good ambassador, added Ms Mora. According to Ms Mora, the head of the prison hospital said that after 9 May they would once again invite civilian doctors to examine Mr Marynich.

**26 April** was the day of the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Chernobyl accident. The

imprisoned professor Iury Bandazheuski explained the decrease of the interest to this problem: 'Social apathy adversely affects both one's health and one's civil position. Generally, this shows the level of maturity of the whole society. I feel very upset because we are now ignoring a very important period that requires vigorous actions taken to improve the health of the people. One should be working toward this, rather than simply say we are doing something. When all of this is given little attention, when we try to eliminate the high sickness rate by an increased number of clinics – we'll never succeed. Unfortunately, we are losing time for study because in order to do something in a right way one needs to understand the reasons and consequences of the sickness rather than regularly declare slogans or launch some campaigns.'

**26 April** was also the day of the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the arrest of the former Ambassador and Minister Mikhail Marynich, who serves his prison term for the allegedly misappropriated computers of the US Embassy.

**On 12 May** Tatsiana Klimava visited her husband Andrei Klimau at the investigative isolator where he was kept since 22 April. The investigation accused the politician in organization of the street action of 25 March that allegedly led to mass riot. Another criminal case that was brought against Klimau for alleged defamation of A. Lukashenka, was at Minsk Peshamaiski Borough Court. Andrei Klimau refused from advocatory services and familiarization with the materials of the criminal case. According to him, the court and the investigation weren't impartial in political cases. During the meeting with his wife Andrei Klimau confirmed his position.

**On 15 May** the police detained the former deputy of the National Assembly Siarhei Skrabets. The detention occurred outside Skrabets's apartment in the Uruccha suburb of Minsk, from where he was taken to a temporary detention center in Brest. According to Siarhei Halahaniuk, the former deputy managed to make a phone call right after he was detained. The people who detained Siarhei Skrabets introduced themselves as officers of the organized crime department: 'At about 10 o'clock in the morning he left home for the swimming pool and got detained on the way. They must have been waiting for him outside the house entrance, they might have called the house phone that was off in his place. Skrabets asked why he was being detained. He was told he was suspected of planning to give a bribery of 30 000 dollars. Planning? Anyone could be detained for that reason. This is absolutely crazy. They have nothing against him,' said Halahaniuk. Siarhei Skrabets also managed to say that he was being taken to Brest for interrogations, because the department officers charged him with planning to bribe some official in Brest. An hour after Siarhei Skrabets was detained his apartment and his parents' apartment were searched. Mr Skrabets's wife Aliaksandra told me about that: 'They searched the parents'

place and our place. They were looking for some documents that I know nothing about, documents relating to some affair in Brest, where Siarhei had been planning to bribe someone. His old documents, letters were confiscated... My father had an archive – paper clippings, and some other materials about Siarhei – so they rummaged through them and took away selected items. The same happened at our place. They took away his notebook'. According to the ex-deputy's wife, the searches were performed by the officers of the Minsk-based organized crime department. They had been authorized to perform the search by a sanction from Brest.

**On 16 May** the authorities chose the restraint to Siarhei Skrabets, former deputy of the Chamber of Representatives. During the investigation of the criminal case he would be kept in the investigative isolator. The criminal action brought was based on two articles of the Criminal Code – preparation for a crime and bribing. The police allegedly had evidence proving that Siarhei Skrabets was talking an unemployed resident of Biaroza into giving a bribe of 30 000 US dollars to the employees of the regional prosecutor's office and court. This money would have allegedly bought a not-guilty verdict to a resident of Halshany, Stolin District, convicted to 24 years for banditry and other crimes.

**On 17 May** Ambassador Eberhard Heiken, head of the OSCE office in Minsk, paid a visit to the political prisoner Prof. Iury Bandazheuski. Ambassador Heiken visited Professor Bandazheuski in his new place of settlement, the agricultural company *Belitsa-agra*, Lida District, where he was taken several days ago.

**On 17 May** the arrested politician Siarhei Skrabets declared a hunger-strike. Skrabets' wife Aliksandra said her husband had possibly gone on hunger strike on 15 May, when he was detained.

**On 23 May** the charges were given to the former deputy of the Chamber of Representatives Siarhei Skrabets. They matched the preliminary accusation – preparation to a crime and giving a bribe. Siarhei Skrabets continued the hunger-strike of protest at the investigative isolator in Brest.

**On 23 May** Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court started the trial of the opposition activists Pavel Seviarynets and Mikola Statkevich, who were accused of organization of mass protest actions against the falsification of the parliamentary election and the referendum on 18 and 19 October 2004. At the start of the trial, Mikola Statkevich voiced his position to the court, saying that he believed the criminal case was completely politically-motivated and connected to the presidential elections due next year. Also, M. Statkevich said that he does not view the Belarusian courts as independent and refused to rise when addressed

by the judge. Judge Iesinovich, who dealt with this criminal case, viewed these actions as disrespect for the court. Judge of Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court of the Republic of Belarus Aliaksei Bychko passed a ruling to bring M. Statkevich to administrative account by terms of article #166 of the Code of Administrative Violations. According to the ruling, M. Statkevich was arrested for ten days. From the courtroom he was taken to the detention center in Akrestsin St.

**On 25 May** the trial of Pavel Seviarynets and Mikola Statkevich continued at Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court. The UCP leader Anatol Liabedzka, who was detained by riot police on 19 October, appeared in court as a witness. 'The prosecutor's office brings charges that did not exist at all. As far as I know, the case does not have a single appeal from the people who live on Skaryna Avenue and Engels Street about something that interferes with their lives. Second, blocking the street sounds absurd. Every day I find myself in a situation where I cannot access Skaryna Avenue just because Aliaksandr Lukashenka is leaving his residence at the time. But the prosecutor's office does not bring any action because the traffic was blocked for 5-10 minutes,' Liabedzka said.

**On 25 May** Valery Levaneuski stated he would declare a hunger-strike in the case his complaints against the prison administration weren't considered and Uladzimir Kouchur wasn't fired from the position of the Department of punishment execution of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Mr Levaneuski applied to Kouchur in order to appeal the punishments that were imposed on him by the administration of Ivatsevichy colony for alleged violations of the prison regime. Levaneuski considered them lawless. Any punishments negatively influence the right of a prisoner to receive a milder punishment as a result of amnesty. Earlier Levaneuski tried to appeal the punishments to court, but the judges stated it was beyond their competence. Uladzimir Kouchur didn't help the prisoner as well and Valery Levaneuski demanded his resignation and said that otherwise he would go on hunger-strike since 1 June.

**On 26 May** Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court continued the trial over Pavel Seviarynets and Mikola Statkevich. Several dozens people attended the trial to support them. The last witnesses were questioned. Then the videotape of the events of 18 and 19 October, provided by the police, was shown. Pavel Seviarynets commented: 'After watching these video materials it became clear that the criminal version of the case was beyond criticism. There were no crimes, gross violations of the public order, foul expressions and any actions hindering the life of the dwellers of the adjacent houses, which didn't correspond to the accusation. The tape was made like a political movie. Judging by the actions of the court during watching the tape and questioning of the witnesses was of accusative nature. The judge didn't hide he wanted to confirm our guilt, not innocence, that's why this case reminds of a political order.'



**On 27 May** the prosecutor Vadzim Pazniak demanded three years of personal restraint for Pavel Seviarynets and Mikola Statkevich.

**On 31 May** Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court sentenced the opposition activists Pavel Seviarynets and Mikola Statkevich to three years of personal restraint.

**On 31 May** in Minsk the police detained Aliaksandr Skrabets, the younger brother of Siarhei Skrabets, and took him to Brest. There was no information why he was detained, but the investigators confirmed the detention was connected to the criminal case brought against Siarhei Skrabets.

**On 1 June** members of the Belarusian European Association held an action of protest against the sentence to Pavel Seviarynets and Mikalai Statkevich. The action participants tried to pass the appeal to the Ambassador, in which they warned the Belarusian authorities about punishment for harassment of the opposition's activists.

**On 2 June** Valery Levaneuski went on hunger-strike. His main demand was the retirement of Uladzimir Kouchur, the head of the chair of the department of execution of punishments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Valery Levaneuski believes that his complaints and statements aren't considered properly or aren't considered at all because of the order of this official.

**On 6 June** the trial of the entrepreneur Andrei Klimau, deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the 13<sup>th</sup> Convocation, started at Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court. He was charged with the organization of the street action of 25 March, at which gross violations of the public order allegedly took place. The justice advisor Vadzim Pazniak was appointed the main accuser. The trial was led by the judge Sviatlana Hanchar. She interrogated the police witnesses and three persons who had been arrested for participation in the action. Andrei Klimau refused from advocatory services. His interests were represented by his wife Tatsiana Leanovich. Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Court holds another criminal case against Andrei Klimau that was brought for defamation of A.Lukashenka.

**On 6 June** the imprisoned leader of Hrodna entrepreneurs Valery Levaneuski was transferred to the prison's medical department, but didn't stop his hunger-strike. According to the department's medics, the state of his health was satisfactory, Levaneuski was transferred there because of the hunger-strike and the prosecutor's office was informed about it.

**On 7 June** Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court decided the fate of Mikhail

Marynich's property. Iron, veloergometer and TV-set were the only things that the judge Natalia Vaitsiakhovich decided to leave to the former wife and the sons of the political prisoner Mikhail Marynich. The relatives asked the judge to reverse the decision about confiscation due to the fact that Marynich married for the second time and took his property away. The court listened to the witnesses, who testified concerning the belonging of different items to Marynich's relatives, but only in three cases the court decided in their favor. The rest of the property was confiscated. Marynich's sons disagreed with the court verdict and intended to appeal against it.

**On 9 June** the trial of Andrei Klimau continued at Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court. Mr Klimau was charged with organization of the protest action on 25 of March, during which mass riot allegedly took place. On 8 June the judge announced a break so that Klimau's wife Tatsiana Leanovich who was his only defender could familiarize with the case materials and prepare to the debates. She didn't expect the court would allow her defend her husband and said she was glad she would have the possibility to meet with him and help him. However, the court prohibited to Tatsiana to speak with her husband. She couldn't meet with him eye-to-eye in order to elaborate the conception of defense, as it is required by the Criminal-Process Code. Moreover, she wasn't allowed even to meet with him at the investigative isolator on 8 June. The administration referred to the duty instruction that prohibited to relatives to visit those whom they defended. The license issued to Tatsiana Leanovich by the judge Sviatlana Hanchar let her meet with husband only at court. Mrs Leanovich said she had almost lost consciousness when she saw her husband in the temporary detention cell during a break. The court was situated on the ground floor of a block house. The arrested persons are kept there in the cells the area of which is 1 x 0,5 meter and the height – about 0,5 meter as well. During the whole break Andrei stood there with his legs bent. She couldn't even imagine such things are possible in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The guards prohibited to her to pass him a small bottle of water. On 9 June the court watched all the video-tapes, shot during the action by the police and secret services. Tatsiana Leanovich said she was very impressed with the video: 'It was clearly visible that demonstrators were rudely pushed out of Frantsysk Skaryna Av. and Lenin St. and there wasn't any real action'. The state accuser Vadzim Pazniak spoke for a quarter of an hour. The only evidence of Andrei Klimau's guilt was that he confessed he attempted to organize the action on 25 March. Even Pazniak confessed it didn't take place. Nevertheless, the state accuser asked to punish the accused with three years of strict regime colony and stated that the amnesty that was declared on 6 May wouldn't spread on this case.

**On 10 June** Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court sentenced Andrei Klimau, deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the 13<sup>th</sup> Convocation, to 1,5 years of personal

restraint. The two months he spent in the investigative ward of Minsk were included, that's why 16 months were left. A.Klimau was released from the court hall and had 10 days to complain against the verdict to Minsk City Court. We should remind A.Klimau was charged with violation of article #342 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (organization of group actions that grossly violate public order). According to the investigation, on 25 March 2005 A.Klimau organized unauthorized mass action in the center of Minsk. By the way, it wasn't the last trial of Klimau. He was also charged with libelling the president (part 2 of article #368 of the Criminal Code) and insult of president (part 1 of article #368 of the Criminal Code) that were allegedly found in his books and articles.

**On 10 June** in Barysau the consideration of the criminal case against the editor of the non-state newspaper *Borisovskkiye novosti* Anatol Bukas resumed at the local court. The criminal case was brought in 2004. In November the prosecutor's office informed the editor that by his article about the editor of the newspaper of Barysau City Executive Committee Vera Pratasevich Mr Bukas violated the Criminal Code. In January the prosecutor's office specified he libeled and defamed the editor of the official newspaper. Mr Bukas, in his turn, stated his article was just a response to the articles the V.Pratasevich published about him.

**On 13 June** the prosecutor asked to fine the chief editor of *Borisovskkiye novosti* Anatol Bukas under articles 188 and 189 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus.

**On 14 June** Brest City Prosecutor's Office refused to change the restraint to Siarhei Skrabets and left him behind bars. The defense lawyer Khomich said he was preparing a petition to the court. Mr Skrabets kept on hungering for the second month. His friends and relatives, Valery members of the deputy group *Respublika* Valery Fralou and Uladzimir Parfianovich and the chair of the Council of Belarusian People's Republic Ivonka Survilla and leaders of the United Civil Party several times asked him to stop the hunger-strike.

**On 15 June** Uladzimir Levaneuski said his father Valery Levaneuski stopped his hunger-strike because of health problems. U.Levaneuski found it from a letter sent by his father. According to him, V.Levaneuski stated he would conduct hunger-strikes every month, didn't refuse from any of his demands and didn't believe the promises of the colony administration he would be conditionally released in the case he didn't violate the prison discipline.

**On 15 June** Hrodna lawyer Aliaksandr Biry lau visited Valery Levaneuski in Ivatsevichy penal colony. According to the lawyer, Valery Levaneuski lost weight

but remains cheerful and in a good mood. The convict said that the good air, plentiful due to the numerous woods surrounding the facility, compensated for lack of food. The lawyer said that as a result of the hunger-strike he was visited by the head of the Brest office of prison administration and by the vice-head of the administration from Minsk. However, most of Levaneuski's grievances against the prison administration were still there. They concerned the rules of receiving and sending mail. For example, during the year that he spent in the facility, Mr Levaneuski sent about 100 different letters and complaints. However, according to his information only a tenth reached the destination. That's why the leader of the businessmen demanded that the system of registering complaints from convicted people and feedback to these complaints be improved. Because his demands weren't fulfilled, he retained the right to resume the hunger-strike.

**On 16 June** Barysau City Court found Anatol Bukas, the editor of the *Borissovskiyе novosti*, guilty of violating part 2 of article #188 of the Criminal Code of Belarus (defamation contained in a public speech or in the media) and part 2 of Article #189 of the Criminal Code of Belarus (willful undermining of the person's dignity expressed in an obscene form). Judge Alena Samtsevich imposed on him a fine of about 200 US dollars and 3 million rubles to compensate for moral damages caused to Vera Pratasevich, the editor of *Adzinstva* newspaper that belongs to Barysau City Executive Committee.

**On 20 June** the Hrodna businessman Valery Levaneuski went to the prison hospital in the Ivatsevichy penal colony after the hunger-strike. According to Levaneuski's son Uladzimir, his father felt heartache and was undergoing a course of treatment.

**On 20 June** the investigator of Brest City Prosecutor's Office Andrei Livanau said the case of Siarhei Skrabets would be investigated by another officer. According to Livanau, it was because the republic prosecutor's office required the former deputy's case.

**On 22 June** several famous people called on the former deputy Siarhei Skrabets to stop the hunger-strike, which he has kept for the 40<sup>th</sup> day. 'The political case of Siarhei Skrabets has already occurred. The current hunger-strike does not have an impact on the political process, and the importance of preserving human life should also prevail. We understand the motivation of the politician but also want him to understand that the hunger-strike should be stopped,' said the appeal. Some of the people who signed the appeal include the writers Ryhor Baradulin, Uladzimir Arlou, Leanid Dranko-Maisiuk, Valiantsin Taras, the musicians Aliaksandr Kulinkovich, Ihar Varashkevich, Liavon Volski, Siarhei Mikhalok, Aleh Khamenka, Viachaslau Koran, Dzmitry Vaitiushkevich-

ch, vice-president of the Belarusian Association of Journalists Andrei Bastunets, editor of *Abazhur* magazine Uladzimir Dziuba, the journalist Pavel Mazheika, the former judge of the Constitutional Court, Prof. Mikhail Pastukhou, etc.

**On 22 June** the prosecutor's office voiced some details of the crimes committed against the journalists. As was disclosed, the case of Dzmitry Zavadzki's disappearance really had mention of some special squad officer Rabtsevich. This man allegedly had a connection either to the car that Ihnatovich's gang had used, or to the gold mentioned in the case. But the disappeared journalist's mother does not think that the meeting of the investigators with Rabtsevich in Israel will shed additional light on her son's fate. 'He should be looked for in Belarus, visiting Israel means wasting the time and pretending something is being done. You can travel all over the world to see friends or relations of the suspects and then successfully report the continuation of the investigation,' said Volha Zavadzkaia. As regards the murder of the *Salidarnasts* journalist Veranika Charkasava, the prosecutor's office mentioned 'up to ten versions'. Dyiana Charkasava, Veranika Charkasava's mother, had reserved commentary on the statement made by the prosecutor's office about ten versions of her daughter's murder: 'I know that earlier they only had one or two versions, where do ten come from? You need to have a lot of imagination. We have neither new versions nor new facts. Whatever the case has – they know but will say nothing, I believe. It is known that among other versions was a version of Iraqi traces in the murder of the journalist. This version was based on the fact that Veranika Charkasava went on a journalist mission in Iraq and allegedly collected evidence about the sale of Belarusian arms to the regime of Saddam Hussein. The Belarusian media wrote a lot about the professional approach in the journalist's murder. Such cases, experts say, are either unraveled in the first days after the crime or remain unsolved.'

**On 22 June** the vice-prosecutor general of Belarus Mikalai Kupryianau said that one criminal case against Siarhei Skrabets was made from the two cases against him. In April 2003 the first case initiated against Siarhei Skrabets accused him of swindling the state out of credits and organizing a criminal group when he was head of the Trading Company *BelBabaieuski*. In May 2005 he was accused of preparing for a crime and bribery.

**On 28 June** Minsk City Court considered the Appeal against the verdict passed by the Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court and upheld the verdict passed to the Chair of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (*Narodnaia Hramada*), the coordinator of the European coalition Mikalai Statkevich, and one of the *Young Front* leaders Pavel Seviarynets. On 31 May the court sentenced the opposition politicians to three years of restricted freedom for organizing on 18-19 October 2004 mass protests against the official results of the parliamentary

elections and referendum. Simultaneously with the amnesty, the term of restricted freedom has been reduced by a year.

**On 1 July** Pavel, the political prisoner Mikhail Marynich's son, said that his father was transferred from Minsk prison UZh 15/1 to the republican prison hospital. According to Pavel Marynich, his father experienced problems with the eyesight. The same day he appealed to the head of Minsk Prison Iauhen Los, requesting an additional meeting with the father due to his illness, but received a negative answer.

**On 1 July** Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court considered the petition of Siarhei Skrabets, oppositional politician and former deputy of the Chamber of Representatives, and didn't find any reasons to change the restraint for him, as a result of which Skrabets was left in Brest investigative isolator. Prosecutor's Office of Belarus dealt with the criminal case against Skrabets for about two weeks before Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court was entrusted to consider the petition. The trial lasted for less than half an hour. Besides, Skrabets' defense lawyer Mikhail Khomich wasn't able to come there from Brest, so there wasn't anyone to defend the interests of the defendant, nobody could explain to the judge Alena Iliina the state of health of the man who hungered for about 40 days. In his speech the representative of the prosecutor's office said that there weren't important arguments for changing the restraint and the judge didn't satisfy the petition.

**On 7 July** the political prisoner Aliaksandr Vasilieu was released from the Minsk prison in Kalvaryiskaya St. At 8 o'clock in the evening he got back home. Several days before Mr Vasilieu was summonsed to the amnesty commission, where they told him he was entitled to amnesty as a prisoner who had served a third of his term and did not have many violations. Aliaksandr Vasilieu, 59, lieutenant colonel of the armed forces in the reserve. He was a businessman and a public activist. On 7 September 2004 he and Valery Levaneuski, both leaders of the National Strike Committee of Businessmen, received two years in prison each for publicly insulting president Lukashenka.

**On 7 July** the family of Valery Levaneuski received a letter from him kept in prison. He wrote that he was not included into the list of those entitled to amnesty declared before 9 May. He had learnt about this before the date, on 30 June the political prisoner was summonsed by the amnesty committee which told him that he had been refused amnesty because of his 'poor conduct'. The letter says that the only change in the life of the political prisoner was that he finally got the job of an orderly in the medical section of the prison, which in fact was a cleaner's position and was paid 9 000 rubles (about 4 US dollars) per month.

**On 13 July** the mother and father of the ex-deputy Siarhei Skrabets visited him in Brest investigation center, where he has been kept since the 15 May arrest. In the detention center Siarhei Skrabets held a hunger-strike which lasted about 40 days. Even after meeting her son, Nina Ryhorauna, Siarhei Skrabets's mother said: 'Judging from his look, you wouldn't say he has stopped his hunger-strike. He is very thin, skinny. You could see dark bags under the eyes'. Though Skrabets lost more than 20 kilos he looked cheerful. 'He said he takes physical exercise, does push-ups. He said: 'Don't cry, mama, I will go to the end. They arrested me for no reason.'

**On 19 July** the Ambassador of Czech Republic to Belarus Vladimir Ruml and his colleague from Slovakia Josif Maczyszek were refused meeting with the Belarusian political prisoner Mikhail Marynich who has been serving his sentence in a Minsk prison. The head of the prison administration Uladzimir Kouchur explained that the Czech and the Slovak diplomat were denied meeting with Mikhail Marynich because he wasn't Czech or Slovakian citizen.

**On 21 July** it became known that the health of the former minister, the current political prisoner Mikhail Marynich, improved and was transferred from the prison hospital to the prison. According to the lawyer Valiantsina Shakhant-sava, Mikhail Marynich expected to be conditionally released.

**On 25 July** Aliaksandr, the younger brother of the former deputy Siarhei Skrabets, said that Siarhei would stay in custody until 27 August. Investigators stated that the ex-deputy, if released, might influence the other parties to the investigation process, so they didn't want to release him on parole.

**On 27 July** the police searched the apartment owned by Siarhei Skrabets's parents, said the younger brother of the former deputy Aliaksandr Skrabets. He also said that on 26 July they searched his apartment. They took away his PC. Aliaksandr Skrabets expressed his conviction that his brother would finally be charged with swindling the state out of credits when he was in charge of *BelBabaieuski* – the Belarusian branch of the Russian Trading House *Ba-bayevskiy*. This was the reason for the search. The former deputy's brother is also in the case investigated by Viachaslau Tserakhovich, an investigator for especially important cases. This is what he says: 'Yesterday I came to the investigation committee. They took me right to the prosecutor's office employ-ee – Mr Tserakhovich. It looked like I had been arrested – they had put me in the car with the police officers blocking the way on the left and on the right. I even phoned my wife: get a sports outfit and a pair of slippers ready. They interrogated me until the evening. My wife was taken home, which they searched. They took away the PC, various documents both that have relation

to the case and are completely unrelated. And at the end of the day Tserakhovich said: we are not going to put you in detention yet'.

**On 27 July** Pavel Seviarynets was summonsed to the criminal and execution inspectorate of Pershamaiski borough of Vitsebsk, where they told him to give up his passport and his military service card. As the inspectorate staff explained the documents had been taken away because in a week Mr Seviarynets had to show up at the designated penal labor camp. Mr Seviarynets asked the police to provide him with a temporary substitute document for the rest of the week, but the police refused to do as asked.

**On 27 July** it became known that the imprisoned professor Iury Bandazheuski had his punishment reduced by one year. As a result, the professor has to spend in the correctional settlement #26 about five and a half months until 6 January 2006. It is still not known whether the authorities would parole the scholar. According to the professor's wife Mrs Bandazheuskaia, the other prisoners in this facility who had less than a year left had been paroled long ago. We would like to remind you that at the start of the year the professor could have been paroled because he had served two thirds of the term, however, they did not release him. The facility administration considered that Bandazheuski had not reformed or admitted his guilt.

**On 28 July** the place where Mikola Statkevich was to serve his 'labor' sentence was identified. It was Baranavichy. Earlier, Viktor Ivashkevich, the editor of the newspaper *Rabochiy*, had served his 'labor' sentence there.

**On 2 August** S.Skrabets was brought to Minsk. He had to spend 5 days to get here (usually it takes 5 hours to come from Brest to Minsk by train).

**On 3 August** the Ambassador of Great Britain Brian Bennett and the acting chair of the OSCE office Vagram Abadzhan came to Minsk penal colony #1 to visit Mikhail Marynich. The EU and the OSCE watch the situation of Marynich. They expressed their concern with the state of his health and urged the authorities to urgently release him.

**On 4 August** Siarhei Skrabets had a meeting with his wife and son at the investigative isolator in Valadarski St. in Minsk. The meeting lasted for about 50 minutes. Siarhei Skrabets said he was satisfied with the food in Minsk isolator – there wasn't anything fat or spicy there, only Lenten porridges. He also asked the relatives to pass to him raisins, dried apricots, nuts and vitamins. In Minsk isolator food parcels are accepted twice a month, while in Brest one could pass them daily. Mr Skrabets did physical exercises in the prison cell. He had four cellmates.



**On 9 August** Minsk City Court left in force the verdict to the oppositional politician Andrei Klimau that was issued to him by Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court.

**On 9 August** Pavel Seviarynets, who was sentenced to 2 years of jail, was still kept under police surveillance in Vitsebsk, without the passport which was taken away from him on 27 July. Twice a day he had to phone to the criminal-executive commission to ask about his future. On 9 August he also had a telephone talk. He was told to phone on Friday. Mr Seviarynets commented: 'According to the court verdict, I am to spend two years in jail. In fact, I have spent several months already waiting for execution of the verdict. I have given written undertaking not to leave the city and live without passport for several weeks. Everyday I guess to which prison I will be sent. I understand the sense of it all: it is psychological pressure.'

**On 15 August** the criminal executive inspection of Vitsebsk Pershamaiski borough informed the well-known politician Pavel Seviarynets that he was to go to the town of Vetryna in Polatsk district where he will spend the two years of personal restraint to which he has been sentenced.

**On August 15** Hrodna police launched investigation into the theft of the stamp that belongs to the Union of Poles in Belarus. On 15 August Anzhalika Borys was summonsed to be interrogated for more than 1.5 hours. Also they had planned to re-enact the events, which they however called off. It should be noted that on 10 August Anzhalika Borys had already been called to the prosecutor's office for the same reason because Tadevush Kruchkouski had sent in his 'information'. Now the police brought a criminal action.

**On 16 August** Pavel Seviarynets, who was sentenced to 2 years of personal restraint, came to the town of Vetryna, 20 kilometers away from Polatsk, closer to Hlybokaie, to serve his term. Vetryna is a small place with no large companies, but with a rather high local level of unemployment. Mr Seviarynets told the journalists who were waiting for him outside the central office, that apart from physical labor that he would be working on a new book and studying the area history and geography. Today about 150 people do their penal labor terms in Vetryna. Fights, thefts and disorderly conduct are why most are here. There are also some sentenced for failure to pay alimony. As he came to the central office on 15 August, Pavel Seviarynets found out that he will work in the forestry company as a stacker at Alioshcha station, and live in the penal labor dorms in Maloie Sitna, Polatsk District, 5 kilometers away from the station. Alioshcha is the last Belarusian station on the railway line that connects Polatsk and Nevel. It is 4 kilometers away from the Russian border and 42 kilometers away from Polatsk.

**On 16 August** KGB agents searched the apartments of the members of the civil initiative *Third Way* composed of university students, including Aliaksei Abozau and Pavel Marozau. They were summonsed by the KGB investigator Nestsiarovich for interrogation. As a result, twelve computers, dozens of disks and other media were confiscated. Criminal proceedings were instituted, the animation authors were suspected of having insulted Aliaksandr Lukashenka. The students created an Animation Club and released their short flash animations via the Internet. The animations featured caricatured images of the country's leaders, opposition activists and common people and, obviously, the animations all centered around a political topic. The students said they knew they had been watched, their mail had been read, however, the searches and then interrogations and the criminal action came quite unexpected. The club members said that in all countries animations released via the Internet are very popular, however, so far no one had thought of bringing a criminal action against the authors of numerous political cartoons. Pavel Marozau, a Club member, who gave evidence in KGB, commented: 'When the animation character that looks like Aliaksandr Lukashenka quotes parts of his speeches and acts like him and this causes people to laugh, so why then does KGB not visit the Belarusian State TV Company? They show much more to illustrate the life of the president. We all know that even without animations the people often laugh at what he says'. The possible author of the animations has submitted a written undertaking not to leave the city.

**On 16 August** KGB officers visited the apartment of Aleh Minich. They rang the doorbell and introduced themselves as television repairmen. The day before the owner of the apartment really called a television repair service, so he calmly opened the doors. Five KGB agents broke into the apartment and showed the owner a search warrant. The search was also performed in the apartment of Aleh Minich's parents, who had been called from the dacha. The search in the apartment of Aleh Minich lasted for several hours. They confiscated not only the computer equipment but also all the notebooks, papers, papers and disks. Mr Minich was taken to KGB Department in Telman St., where he was informed about criminal proceedings instituted for animations that feature a character that bear resemblance to Aliaksandr Lukashenka. Then Mr Minich had to sign an undertaking not to leave the city. Today on 22 August Aleh Minich was summonsed to KGB for interrogation. As he showed up there, they took away his passport without explaining the reasons.

**On 16 August** M. Haraszti, OSCE representative for freedom of speech, expressed concern about the possible legal persecution of the creators of flash animation featuring Lukashenka. In a special statement Haraszti said that 'satire is a common means of imparting ideas through mass media in democratic societies.' According to him, the authorities' treatment of the animation as an

insult negates the principle of the freedom of political debate. He added that for maintaining public control over the state, officials should suffer more criticism than common people. This principle was reserved in European Human Rights Court numerous decisions. He also said that Belarus is the only OSCE-member where people are put to jail for insulting the president.

**On 16 August** it was reported that amnesty had been applied to Mikhail Marynich. Valiantsina Shakhantsova, Marynich's lawyer said that the term of imprisonment was reduced by one year. The prison administration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed this information. The lawyer said that this was more than a half of the new term, and so there was a chance for release on parole. She also said that the state of Mikhail Marynich's health was ok.

**On 19 August** the lawyer A. Birylyau visited V. Levaneuski in Ivatsevichy jail and had a long talk with him. The detainee kept fighting for better conditions, writing complaints for violating his rights and the rights of other prisoners and has received few replies so far. According to him, he has not received a single reply to 15 last appeals. Levaneuski also informed the lawyer about the pressure on those who help him – administrative punishment for minor misdemeanors, including deprivation of their right to amnesty (which was applied to him also). Other methods include psychological pressure, e.g. delaying the mail. But the most inhuman one is distributing scandal, they are said to be agents of the jail administration and should not be trusted. 'Levaneuski had to pass through this himself' said Birylyau.

**On 22 August** the citizen of Hrodna Aleh Minich was summonsed to KGB for interrogation. As he showed up there, they took away his passport without explaining the reasons. The investigator interrogated Aleh Minich and his wife Halina Minich. She commented: 'I am indignant at the authorities' actions, because they have started to use pressure against the family. This is outrageous. I have nothing to do with this case, but still, they are pressurizing me. They just took away my passport. And I need it today. We filed a complaint with the prosecutor's office. They promised they would look into it. I need to borrow books, they say: 'No, you can't.' I need to get some money from the bank, they say: 'No, you can't.' The same day KGB interrogated the members of the *Third Way* initiative Andrei Abozau and Pavel Marozau and confiscated from them documents as well. The investigators can take away passports only from suspects or accused people, but the head of the investigative group Viktor Shaban reassured *Radio Liberty* that they had neither suspects nor accused people in this case and the interrogated persons were just witnesses in the case on defamation of Aliaksandr Lukashenka.

**On 23 August** the investigator for particularly important cases of the Na-

tional Prosecutor's Office Viachaslau Tserakhovich formally brought against the head of the deputy group *Respublika* of the Chamber of Representatives of the previous convocation, the renowned opposition politician Siarhei Skrabets. Mr Tserakhovich visited the prisoner at the prison hospital in Apanski St. in Minsk. Aleh Dubavets, Skrabets' lawyer, confirmed that the given charges concern swindling the state out of credits. As regards the charge of encouraged bribery, which was why Mr Skrabets was detained, it had been brought against him earlier. Aleh Dubavets said that Siarhei Skrabets refused to testify as before, claiming he was innocent.

**On 24 August** Aleh and Halina Minichs' complaint to Hrodna Regional Prosecutor's Office concerning the illegal confiscation of their passports by the KGB was turned down. For final investigation Hrodna Prosecutor's Office passed their letter to Minsk, where the decision on confiscation was supposedly taken. According to the prosecutor V.Lukianau, who is in charge of maintaining law and order within the KGB, they could use confiscation notes instead of their passports. Aleh and Halina stated it was outrage and an affront upon their dignity and common sense. Their passports were confiscated by A.Varanetski, senior investigator of the investigation department of Hrodna Regional KGB Board, 'in the framework of criminal case #05011110396.' The case was initiated for supposed insulting Lukashenka by releasing cartoons in the Internet.

**On 25 August** Aliaksandr Skrabets, the younger brother of the former deputy and the head of the deputy group *Respublika*, the opposition politician Siarhei Skrabets was called to the prosecutor's office. There he had to sign an undertaking not to leave the city. Aliaksandr Skrabets was considered to be an accomplice to the affairs of his elder brother. Just like the former deputy, he was charged by terms of three articles of the Criminal Code. The investigators stated both brothers could take part in swindling the state out of credits. On 25 August the prosecutor's office informed the younger Skrabets that they had in this way inflicted on the state damage worth 498 000 US dollars. More than that, both brothers were accused of urging their acquaintance to bribe the state prosecutor and the judge of the Brest regional court in the amount of 30 000 dollars. Siarhei Skrabets disproved the charges. He emphasized that the credits were taken from the bank after he was elected a deputy. That's why, according to the law on the deputy status, he dropped his activities as a businessman. The charges brought against him were, in the ex-deputy's opinion, revenge for his political activity. That's why he refused point-blank to give any evidence.

**On 25 August** the journalist Andzhei Piscalnik was named a suspect in a criminal case. The other suspects included the journalist Andrei Pachobut, the vice-chair of the UPB Iuzaf Pazhetski and Veslau Keuliak. Mr Piscalnik was

served an appropriate notice on 25 August in the regional office of the internal affairs. The case was brought by Shchuchyn district prosecutor's office on the basis of the Director of the Polish House in Shchuchyn Viktor Bohdan. According to the criminal case, four activists of UPB from Hrodna threatened violence unless Bohdan gave them the keys to the Polish House and resigned.

**On 30 August** the administration of the open prison of Baranavichy did not allow Mikola Statkevich to visit Minsk. According to the law, if a person imprisoned has not violated any of the internal rules, the special settlement office may allow them to visit their family for up to three days once a month. However, the law in this country does not apply to all. The prison administration showed to Mikola Statkevich two letters. The first one came from the residential office, where Mikola Statkevich was registered. It says that there were no claims to him or any delayed utilities payments. The other letter that came from Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Board of Internal Affairs said that 'because of the complicated situation in the city, the visit by Mikola Statkevich to Minsk is not appropriate'.

**On 30 August** many Internet users abroad expressed their desire to keep up the creation of cartoons about the political situation in Belarus. At the same time, the members of the civil initiative *Third Way* had a status of witness in the case of defamation of Aliaksandr Lukashenka, which was brought by Minsk City Prosecutor's Office for political cartoons on the Internet site of the mentioned organization. The members of the *Third Way* initiative Andrei Abozau and Pavel Marozau have been in Kyiv since 23 August. They met up with their Ukrainian counterparts to resume the site because all of the equipment had been confiscated by KGB. For some time the site was blocked. Pavel Marozau said that in the future the political cartoons would continue to be distributed via the Internet: 'Our Ukrainian colleagues offered us support and help – so that we could not be brought before court. Many people expressed the desire to continue with cartoons. So this will continue'.

**On 1 September** the international organization *Cartoonists Rights Network* expressed its support to Andrei Abozau, Pavel Marozau and Aleh Minich who are persecuted for creation of political cartoons. The CRN leader Robert Russel urged cartoonists to send notes to Belarusian Embassies with the demands to stop the haunting. Belarusian Embassies in the US and in the EU countries have already received a number of such notes. CRN members state that in case Belarusian authorities don't stop persecution of their Belarusian colleagues, in a week dozens of cartoons about Lukashenka and the political situation in Belarus will appear on the web. The Ukrainian cartoonist Oleh Smal, one of the organization members, commented on the situation: 'The authorities take cartoons too serious. They must be afraid of everything if they

react in such a way. When the authorities start fighting cartoonists, they would soon feel threats in other directions. One can only sympathise for them. I have drawn our politicians and Lukashenka several times. Some of our politicians (prime-minister Yulia Tymoshenko, for instance) collect my cartoons. When the authorities struggle against cartoonists, it serves as the best promotion. I hope the authorities are wise enough not to fight laughter — it will be all in vain.'

**On 1 September** the Supreme Court of Belarus turned down V. Levaneuski's claim which was filed in March. Mr Levaneuski tried to impeach the verdict according to which he was found guilty of insulting the Belarusian president and sentenced to 2 years of prison.

**On 5 September** the library at the penal colony #22 in Ivatsevichy was finally opened thanks to the efforts of the political prisoner Valery Levaneuski. Books, magazines and newspapers were sent there from all corners of Belarus. However, not all of them passed the prison censorship. Levaneuski's work on establishment of the library started in the beginning of 2005. The hardest thing was to get the permission from the administration and the room for the library. Then Levaneuski sent dozens of letters, asking people to send books to the colony. According to Levaneuski's son Uladzimir, the books that contain maps and/or describe production of firearms and explosives are banned by the prison administration. What concerns the political censorship, it was allowed to pass the newspapers that were officially sold at the kiosks.

**On 6 September** according to the decision of Minsk Prosecutor's Office, A. Minich's and his wife's passports were given back to them by an investigator of Hrodna KGB Department. For two weeks they had been attempting to return their passports taken by the investigator of Hrodna KGB board A. Varanetski. The claim was considered by the head of the investigation group V. Shaban. He urged the investigator to give back the passports.

**On 8 September** Shchuchyn District Prosecutor's Office interrogated Iuzaf Pazhetski, vice-chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus. The interrogation lasted from 6 to 7.30 p.m. The matter was that in July Viktor Bohdan, chair of Shchuchyn Polish House applied to the police because of alleged life threats by the UPB activists Iu. Pazhetski, the editor of the newspaper *Gios znad Niemna* Andzhei Piscalnik, the editor of *Magazyn Polski* Andrei Pachobut and Vieslau Keuliak. In July they came to Shchuchyn to check the activity of the Polish House there and found many violations, including financial ones. The prosecutor's office brought a criminal case on the incident. Iuzaf Pazhetski categorically rejected having threatened to Bohdan.

**On 8 September** the presentation of the book *Red on White* by Veranika

Charkasava (a journalist who was murdered) took place in Minsk. It is a collection of articles and essays published in independent newspapers from 1991 to 2004. According to the compilers, the book is a mirror of our time, a historical document written by a talented journalist. One of the compilers A.Starykevich was sorry to say that Charkasava's murderer had not been yet found. He explained that this publication was to memorize the journalist.

**On 9 September** it became known that the colony that decided on the parole commission of Minsk prison was against granting parole to the former minister and Ambassador Mikhail Marynich. His wife Tatsiana Marynich said her husband took efforts to get the commission change their mind. Mikhail Marynich disagreed with the refusal of early release from jail, because he behaved well and, in addition, needed urgent medical treatment. According to Tatsiana Marynich, on 22 September the commission was to gather for another sitting and issue a final decision on Marynich's case.

**On 9 September**, according to S.Skrabets' wife Aliaksandra, after three days of medical examination in the prison's hospital, he was again put to a cell of the prison in Valadarski St. in Minsk.

**On 12 September** the administration of the Ivatsevichy-based penal colony refused to transfer the leader of Hrodna entrepreneurs Valery Levaneuski to a settlement. According to Levaneuski's son Uladzimir, the reason was the administration considered V.Levaneuski to be a persistent violator of the prison regime. Valery Levaneuski, in his turn, complained to different instances against the penalties that were imposed by the prison administration. Let us remind Mr Levaneuski was punished four times for alleged violations of the prison discipline, once was even taken to the black hole for violation of the form of clothes. He stated it was a revenge for the complaints against the prison administration. As a result of the imposed penalties the prisoner wasn't granted parole. The courts rejected his complaints.

**On 13 September** M.Statkevich learned that 50% of his military retired pay would be transferred to the budget. The politician was fined by Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court for speaking at the businessmen's meeting on 1 March. Statkevich refused to rise in front of the judge and was fined 128 000 rubles for disrespect to the court. Thus, his total fines aggregate some 2 000 US dollars. According to the law, no more than 20% of a person's income can be taken under administrative fines. However, after 1 June when Statkevich found himself in Baranavichy prison the situation changed. The state started taking 40% of his retired pay. A bank clerk told him that they had received a letter from the Ministry of Justice, according to which they were allowed to sum up the fines. Statkevich considered it as an evidence of persecution, aimed at aggravation

of his financial position. According to him, the state worked out a system of humiliation.

**On 13 September** Pavel Seviarynets who was serving his term of personal restraint in the village of Malaie Sitna (Polatsk district) received the permission to go to church. In the end of August he submitted the appropriate request to the head of the corrective labor facility where he was kept. There he wrote that being a Christian he needed to go to church at least once a week, on Sundays. However, there are no churches closer than in 40 kilometers. Pavel Seviarynets was allowed to go to a church in Polatsk once a month, but was allowed to stay in the city for three hours only. However, the return bus to the village is seven hours then the bus that arrives to Polatsk, that's why it is hardly possible to execute the last demand. Pavel Seviarynets stated he would still demand weekly visits to church and increase of the time spent in the city at least up to 7 hours.

**On 20 December** the police informed that on 22 September he would start serving his term of personal restraint in the town of Krupki. Andrei Klimau said he would be looking for work in Krupki district and that he would like to work as a fire-fighter because he had some related experience. He also assumed the authorities sent him to the 'remotest' part of Minsk region because they had taken into account his request for a rest.

**On 22 September** the Parole Commission of Minsk prison #1 again reviewed Mikhail Marynich's case and again refused early release. Tatsiana, Mikhail Marynich's wife, said: 'Unfortunately, none of the circumstances were taken into account, neither his state of health nor his good conduct. After that I talked with the prison administration. They said that his conduct is good and they have no grievances against him. Nonetheless, that was the decision taken. In jail the former minister and Ambassador survived a heart attack and started having problems with eyesight.'

**On 27 September** it became known that Valery Levaneuski tried to get opened the believers' room at Ivatsevichy penal colony so that believers of different confessions could pray there. He also proposed to establish computer courses for prisoners. These initiatives weren't supported by the colony administration.

**On 28 September** Andrei Klimau, who was sentenced to personal restraint, started working as a janitor at the cinema of the settlement of Krupki in Minsk region.

**On 3 October** the press-service of the national prosecutor's office distributed the press release in which it was said that the investigation of the criminal



case of the oppositional politician Siarhei Skrabets was finished. The prosecutor's office accused Mr Skrabets of three crimes – cheating the state out of credits, illegal business activity and preparation to bribery. According to the prosecutor's office, despite the fact that Mr Skrabets was elected a deputy of the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly in autumn 2000, he till November 2001 continued managing the trading house *BelBabaieuskaie* both directly and with the assistance of substitutes. The prosecutor's office also stated that the former deputy together with his brother Aliaksandr Skrabets twice presented to *Belarusbank* forged documents and made it issue the credits that resulted in the loss to the state equal to 498 220 US dollars. Siarhei Skrabets answered that he stopped dealing with the affairs of the trading house when he was elected. What concerns the credits – he really received them for buying the agro-technical equipment for selling it abroad. However, the equipment was suddenly confiscated, as a result of which the appropriate firms didn't sell it and therefore didn't return the credit.

**On 4 October** Mikhail Marynich, former minister and ambassador, complained against the decision of the prison commission not to release him conditionally before the end of his prison term. He also solicited for it because of the bad state of health (the eye illness continued and the symptoms of the heart attack he had had in March didn't disappear by the time).

**On 7 October** the political prisoner Valery Levaneuski addressed the Constitutional Court of Belarus with the request to correct the situation around the complaints of Belarusian prisoners. Referring to his own example he stated that the Constitutional norm, according to which every citizen of Belarus can appeal to court against any penalty, is not implemented in Belarus. The Constitutional Court answered it couldn't consider complaints filed by individuals.

**On 7 October** Aliaksandr Skrabets was informed that the criminal case against his brother Siarhei Skrabets was passed to the Supreme Court.

**On 12 October** the relatives of the political prisoner Siarhei Skrabets weren't allowed to meet with him. His wife explained: 'The investigator refused to us. He said that we could ask the judge after the case was passed to the court. He didn't say what court and what judge, though.' The only thing left to the relatives was to pass parcels to Mr Skrabets. They put a copy of the subscription bill to *BDG.Delovaya gazeta* into the last parcel. Nina Skrabets, Siarhei's mother said there's the following rule in prison in Valadarski St where he was kept: if a prisoner is subscribed to a newspaper, he must also have a copy of the subscription bill to it. Otherwise he won't receive the periodical. It happened to the subscription to *Narodnaia volia*, for instance, which the prisoner didn't receive as long as the parents didn't know about the prison rules.

**On 13 October** the head of the OSCE Minsk office ?ke Peterson came to Hrodna for a meeting with the former prisoner of conscience Aliaksandr Vasiliou and Uladzimir Levaneuski, son of the political prisoner Valery Levaneuski. In particular, he discussed with them the conditions in which Valery Levaneuski was kept in jail.

**On 14 October** at the Committee of financial investigations there was detained the entrepreneur Mikalai Autukhovich. He came to the committee together with Iury Liavonau and didn't expect that a criminal case would be brought against him and he would be detained. He stated he was trapped. Iury Liavonau said that the investigator invited him to familiarize him with the materials of the expertise on the case of *Nika-trans* firm. What concerns Autukhovich, the investigator didn't insist on his coming, but said he could come if he wanted. Mr Autukhovich didn't expect anything bad, so he decided to come to the committee and was detained. He was accused of non-payment of taxes. Mr Autukhovich disproved these accusations and said that the Presidium of the Supreme Economic Court already abolished the 1 000 000 US dollars' fine that he had been sentenced to pay. Nevertheless, Mr Autukhovich was accused of the non-payment of a large sum of taxes that resulted in an exceptionally large loss to the budget. The criminal case against him was brought under part 2 of article #243. Late in the evening he was taken to the investigative isolator of Hrodna prison.

**On 17 October** Valery Levaneuski was transferred from Ivatsevichy penal colony to the prison hospital in Minsk. According to his relatives, after the hunger-strikes of protest against violations of his rights by the prison administration he got exacerbation of a heart disease. Mr Levaneuski started to feel aches in heart and back, he didn't know why. That's why he decided to undergo a course of medical treatment and examination.

**In the morning of 18 October** the journalist Vasil Hrodnikau was found dead in his house in Zaslaue with a cranial trauma. Mr Hrodnikau was a professional journalist. He worked at *Belarusfilm* and during the last years of his life printed many articles on different social and political topics in *Narodnaia volia*. The writer Mikalai Hrodneu, Vasil Hrodnikau's brother, described the state his brother's house was in: blood stains in different rooms, personal belongings scattered all over the place, broken items of furniture. In spring Vasil Hrodnikau had been beaten so badly that had to be taken to the hospital, said his nephew Andrei Hrodneu. He did not tell anyone what had happened to him. The forensic expertise of Minsk regional hospital examined the journalist's body and found that the reason for his death was a cranial trauma, but didn't tell whether the journalist was murdered or not. The international organization *Reporters without Borders* (RSF) urged the Belarusian authorities to conduct

and exhausting and all-sided investigation of this death and pointed it was not the first obscure death of a journalist in Belarus.

**On 18 October** the son of the murdered journalist Veranika Charkasava Anton Filimonau was summonsed to the prosecutor's office for familiarization with the results of the forensic expertise. According to these results, the blood on the bed-side table belonged to Anton. Anton Filimonau talked with the investigator in presence of his grandmother Dyiana Charkasava. He treated the fact as a mistake of the expertise. 'The same situation repeats. This nightmare returns,' he said. The investigator assured Mrs Charkasava the investigation continued working on all versions.

**On 18 October** the political prisoner Valery Levaneuski applied to Ivatsevichy District Court against the administration of the penal colony #22 where he was kept. He decided to sue the administration after the check-up conducted by Biaroza inter-district labor inspection during which he found that he was paid only for 82 hours of work in July and August. At the same time, according to Levaneuski, he worked without days off as a sweeper in the medical part of the penal colony, also executing some duties of nurse, etc. That's why in his suit he demanded to exact from the colony administration 481 000 rubles.

**On 19 October** the lawyer Nadzeia Stankevich visited the entrepreneur Mikalai Autukhovich at the investigative isolator and found that he had started a hunger-strike right after his detention, on 14 October. 'He has kept the hunger-strike since 14 October. I don't rule out that he will be taken to a hospital. We will ask the court to change the restraint to him'.

**On 25 October** the administration of Baranavichy open prison refused to provide a short-term leave of absence to the political prisoner Mikalai Statkevich. According to the legislation, if a sentenced person has not violated internal regulations and has had not admonitions, he/she should be allowed a three day leave of absence one month after the start of the punishment. But so far the politician has not been granted leave, having been twice denied a visit to Minsk. Mikola Statkevich believes that the local police execute an order from above, not allowing him to have a leave of absence.

**On 25 October** the relatives of the renowned opposition politician, the leader of the deputy faction *Respublika* in the Chamber of Representatives of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Convocation Siarhei Skrabets, who hoped to congratulate him on the 42<sup>nd</sup> birthday, were denied a meeting. So the relatives of the prisoner had to limit themselves to a food parcel. Aliaksandra Skrabets, the prisoner's wife, prepared a parcel large enough for three people in the same cell.

**On 27 October** the Belarusian Association of Journalists asked Minsk District Prosecutor's Office to clarify the circumstances of death of one of BAJ members Vasil Hrodnikau. BAJ requested to be informed of the inquiry progress and results, 'because of the public importance of the investigation'. The organization also asked to verify the information mentioning numerous bloodstains in Hrodnikau's home. The International Press Institute (IPI) also urged the Belarusian authorities to 'conduct an immediate and thorough investigation' of Hrodnikau's murder. IPI's director Johan Fritz asked the government to 'take all necessary efforts to prevent attacks on journalists'. IPI noted that Hrodnikau died almost a year after the murder of Veranika Charkasava, a journalist for the independent newspaper *Salidarnasts*. IPI stressed that the circumstances of her murder remained unclear and that the investigation concentrated on Charkasava's son, a minor, instead of paying attention to motives related to Charkasava's professional activities.

**On 28 October** the activist of the Union of Poles of Belarus, journalist Andrei Pachobut was freed from the undertaking not to leave Shchuchyn. Mr Pachobut is a suspect in the criminal case about intimidation of Viktor Bohdan, director of Shchuchyn Polish House (article #185 of the Criminal Code). At the same time, Hrodna Regional Prosecutor's Office prolonged the term of investigation for another month.

**On 29 October** the newspaper *Zgoda* in its article *Uncompromised Death* (#39 of 29 October 29 – 5 November) made the assumption that the journalist Vasil Hrodnikau could have died because of his work on the article *Cheaters-3*, which was part of a series of publications focusing on KGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to the newspaper, the two previous articles from the *Cheaters* series touched upon fraud involving apartments in Maladechna. Shortly before his death, Hrodnikau intended to visit Maladechna for a few days and collect information for the new article. According to *Zgoda*, Hrodnikau had a notebook on his desk at home, and in the notebook he had written a draft of the article with the working title *Booked Office, or a Few Straightforward Questions to the Country's President and His Subordinates*. The article's authors also question the logic of investigators who did not initiate a criminal inquiry into Hrodnikau's death based on presumptions that Hrodnikau's home had been locked from inside and the windows had not been damaged. The newspaper noted, 'The windows weren't exactly undamaged. The journalist was found in the kitchen, and that's where the inner window glass was broken. A big crack spreads in all directions. The relatives said it hadn't been there before.' Hrodnikau's colleagues visited his home and noted plenty of other details: a stool was broken, with the seat and the leg stained with blood; cereal and matches (many of which were burnt) were spilled in the kitchen; blood stains in the form of stripes were found at various locations, etc.

**On 31 October** Tatsiana Marynich, the wife of the prisoner of conscience Mikhail Marynich, announced that her husband's health had deteriorated, presumably because of low temperature in the prison cells, and that he had been taken to the prison hospital. Tatsiana said, 'The right side of his body has become numb. It's freezing where he's at.'

**On 3 November** Hrodna Leninski Borough Court refused to change the restraint for the Vaukavysk businessman Mikail Autukhovich, who by this time had already kept a hunger-strike of protest against it for 20 days.

**On 11 November** the administration of the special commandant's office transferred the political prisoner Mikola Statkevich to a domestic mode so that he could live his father in Baranavichy on the condition that he wouldn't leave the work and will be daily registering himself at the special commandant's office. According to the law, the condemned person who in the course of three months had no reprimands for braking internal schedule can be transferred to a domestic mode - in the case if his relatives will live together with him. Mikola Statkevich's father who needs care lives in Baranavichy. The administration of the special commandant's office allowed the oppositional politician to spend a night in his father's house only once. The politician listed three main reasons why that have most likely affected the authorities' decision to transfer him to a domestic mode: 'A rather energetic reaction of *Narodnaia Hramada's* Social-Democratic partners in the Western Europe began. The second reason is of a local nature. These months I felt how local special structures got 'exhausted' because they were making a lot of efforts to control me. They hope that the number of foreign visitors whom they fear for some reason will decrease. The third group of reasons is the psychological one. The authorities cannot allow creating with their actions the reputation of opposition leaders as decent people who are not afraid and who will sacrifice'. In November Mikola Statkevich was visited by the representatives of Swedish to parliament together with journalists. Earlier the ambassador of Germany Martin Heker came to visit him. The head of Swedish diplomatic mission in Belarus Stefan Ericsson has assured Belarusian politician that Swedish social democrats would cooperate henceforth with the party led by Mr Statkevich.

**On 11 November** Hrodna Regional Economic Court left in power the decision about the collection of 12 million rubles of land-tax from Vaukavysk entrepreneur Mikalai Autukhovich who was on hunger-strike of protest at the time. The appeal was submitted to the court on behalf of the entrepreneur by the lawyer Andrei Kukhtsiuk. According to him now there is still a possibility to address the Supreme Economic Court. Vaukavysk tax inspection decided that Mikalai Autukhovich supposedly occupied the land near the office and the apartment house without permission. From this reason the last year they put a ten

times larger land-tax than a usual one - 14 million rubles from which 2 million the entrepreneur has paid off. Now from him they collect the remaining sum plus one and a half million rubles of fine.

**On 13 November**, the leader of Hrodna entrepreneurs Valery Levaneuski announced going on hunger strike in Ivatsevichy settlement where he was serving his sentence. This was reported by the prisoner's lawyer Aliaksandar Biry lau. According to the lawyer, Valery Levaneuski protested against the actions of some administration members and strived for their punishment. Uladzimir Levaneuski, the son of Valery Levaneuski, told about the events that became the reason for the hunger strike: 'The vice-head of the settlement organized a search in my father's personal belongings. They found some minor violation and punished him with deprivation of the right to a long-term meeting. Father thinks that this way they took revenge upon him as he keeps appealing various instances about the violations of his rights and the rights of the prisoners in the settlement'. According to Aliaksandr Biry lau, Levaneuski declared the hunger-strike to the administration of the settlement right away and was transferred to the medical part where they observed the condition of his health. Valery Levaneuski drank water and refused only from meals. 'As far as I know, with Levaneuski they found a book that he was supposed to bring back to the library. For this minor violation he was denied meeting his wife and sons, which is very sensitive for a prisoner. Of course, this is an inadequate punishment for such trifle,' thinks the lawyer.

**On 14 November** Aliaksandra Skrabets, Siarhei Skrabets' wife, reported that her husband renewed the hunger strike in the prison. She found out about that from the letter addressed to the former deputies. Siarhei Skrabets wrote he felt bad because of regular podagra fits. Bad nourishment caused exacerbation of his illnesses.

**On 15 November** the state has cancelled a travel stamp in the passport of the vice-chairman of the Union of Poles in Belarus Iuzef Pazhetski. This stamp gives one the right to travel abroad to all the countries of the world. Iuzef Pazhetski got summonsed to the regional police by the investigator of the criminal case on financial misuses in the Union of Poles. There they asked for a passport. A worker of the passport and visa service, who was present in the room, annulled the permissive seal for foreign travels and returned the passport to the owner. The investigator explained to Mr Pazhetski he was a suspect in another criminal case, concerning intimidation of Viktor Bohdan, director of the Polish House in the town of Shchuchyn.

**On 15 November** Mikhalai Autuhovich was subjected to psychiatric examination while under arrest in Hrodna prison. The decision was taken be-

cause of his claim to the prison chief. He has written that he is ready to die in a cell and if it happens he will blame in it the head of Hrodna Regional Executive Committee Uladzimir Sauchanka and all those who have authorized and signed to start criminal case.

**On 15 November** Mikalai Alikhver, who dealt with the investigation of the criminal case of the Vaukavysk entrepreneur Mikalai Autukhovich, visited Vaukavysk and interrogated the entrepreneur's 14-year-old daughter Katsiaryna. The girl was interrogated at the office of the headmaster. The investigator asked where the girls' mother Alena Autukhovich was and whether she talked to her daughter over the phone. He wanted to find Alena Autukhovich, who went away to undergo a course of medical treatment, and interrogate her in connection with the criminal case. Mikalai Alikhver drew up the report on interrogating Katsiaryna Autukhovich and told her to sign it.

**On 16 November** Anzhalika Borys, chair of the Union of Poles unrecognized by the authorities, was served a subpoena to appear for interrogation with the investigator of Hrodna police Dzmitry Labouski, which lasted for almost three hours. Anzhalika Borys took part in confrontations attended by Kazimir Znaidzinski, one of the vice-chairs of the Unions of Poles recognized by the authorities and the legal adviser of the organization Eduard Kalosh. They argued that Anzhalika Borys handed out to the UPB members humanitarian aid brought from Poland. Ms Borys said to the investigator that as long as she was the head, the Union of Poles did not receive any humanitarian assistance. The assistance was distributed by Tadevush Kruchkouski, the then chair of the organization. Anzhalika Borys also had a meeting with the investigator of Shchuchyn police Mr Zaloha, who was in charge of the investigation into the intimidation of Viktor Bohdan, Director of the Polish House in Shchuchyn. The charges leveled against Iuzaf Pazhetski, Anzhalika Borys's deputy, and his colleagues recognized as suspects by the investigators – the other deputy to Ms Borys Veslau Keuliak, the senior editor of *Gios znad Niemna* Andzei Pisalnik and the senior editor of *Magazyn Polski* Andrei Pachobut. Mr Zaloha asked whether Anzhalika Borys had personally threatened Mr Bohdan. Coming back from the police Anzhalika Borys said that they had exerted powerful psychological pressure on her.

**On 16 November** the judge Katsiaryna Karatkevich chaired the preparatory sitting of the Supreme Economic Court regarding the case of the Vaukavysk businessman Mikalai Autukhovich, the date of the hearing was identified – 30 November. A month and a half before the Presidium of the Supreme Economic Court cancelled all of the previous court rulings regarding the fines imposed on Mikalai Autukhovich, against which he had been struggling when free. In particular, he held three hunger-strikes of protests, two of which were joined by

the taxi drivers who supported the businessman. The presidium decided to send the fines' cases for additional consideration, ruling that it will be reviewed in Minsk by the Supreme Economic Court. However, on 14 October in Hrodna the Office of the Financial Investigation Department in Hrodna Region launched criminal proceedings for the non-payment of taxes and arrested the businessman on the same day.

**On 18 November** the authorities of Shchuchyn cancelled the seal in Veslau Keuliak's passport, which allows him to go to any country in the world. Mr Keuliak is the vice-chair of the Union of Poles of Belarus headed by Anzhalika Borys and not recognized by the authorities. Mr Keuliak came for a regular interrogation regarding the intimidation of Viktor Bohdan, the director of the Shchuchyn-based Polish House. An employee of the passport and visa service cancelled the seal. Veslau Keuliak was told that this had been done because he was a suspect in Bohdan's case. Another vice-chair of the Union of Poles Iuzaf Pazhetski also came to Shchuchyn for interrogation. He was banned to leave abroad the other day when he was being interrogated by the local police.

**On 22 November** the international organization *Reporters without Borders* (RSF) called on the Belarusian authorities to conduct a serious investigation into the potentially violent death of the journalist Vasil Hrodnikau. The organization brought attention to the appearance of the new evidence in the case since the last police investigations. 'Hrodnikau worked on a rather risky theme before he died, and what is not rare for Belarus is when journalists become targets of intimidation or physical violence as they investigate themes some people would prefer to keep secret', said the Reporters. They reminded Mr Hrodnikau had been working on the article *Cheaters 3* devoted to apartment manipulations, and that the notebook found on a table in Hrodnikau's house contained a sketch of the article entitled *Booked Office or a Few Straightforward Questions to the Country's President and His Subordinates*. The Reporters reminded that the investigation into the murder of Veranika Charkasava in October 2004 and the disappearance of the cameraman Dzmitry Zavadski in July 2000 hadn't made any progress.

**On 28 November** Minsk District Prosecutor's Office decided not to bring a criminal case on the fact of death of the non-staff correspondent of *Narodnaia volia* Vasil Hrodnikau. This information was distributed by the investigator of Hrodnikau's death Dzmitry Kirylychyk. According to him, the decision was taken because of absence of corpus delicti. The investigator refused to inform the press about the results of the forensic examination, saying they could be presented only to Hrodnikau's relatives. Mr Kirylychik also pointed the public and mass media paid much interest to the case, but said it had no influence on the results of the check-up.



**On 30 November** the international organization *Reporters without Borders* directed an open letter to Aliaksandr Lukashenka to condemn the decision of the prosecutor's office not to bring a criminal case on death of the journalist Vasil Hrodnikau. 'We are afraid we will never get to know the real circumstances of Hrodnikau's death, as it was in the cases of the journalists Veranika Charkasava and Dzmitry Zavadski. The killers must be punished. The families of victims and citizens of Belarus have the right to know what has happened. That's why we urge you not to close the case of Vasil Hrodnikau without a thorough investigation of his possible murder and receiving the real results on the cases of the murder of Veranika Charkasava and strange disappearance of Dzmitry Zavadski', said the letter.

**On 1 December** not far from the town of Skidzel the police detained the chief editor of *Gios znad Niemna 'in emigration'* Andzhei Piscalnik and took him to Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. They took his passport and annulled there the seal that allowed going abroad, explaining he was a suspect on the criminal case brought because of the application of Viktor Bohdan, chair of Shchuchyn Polish House who stated Piscalnik was among the persons who tried to intimidate him.

**On 5 December** Uladzimir Levaneuski, son of the political prisoner Valery Levaneuski, said the German Embassy in Minsk received the answer from Ivatsevichy penal colony concerning the request to meet with his father. The colony administration refused to give such a possibility to the diplomats and didn't explain the reasons. Meanwhile, Valery Levaneuski was on hunger-strike since 13 November. He demanded to punish the duty officials who violated his rights.

**On 6 December**, in presence of defense lawyers, Mikalai Autukhovich was read the official charges concerning non-payment of an exceptionally large sum of taxes, article #243 of the Criminal Code, providing as punishment 3-7 years of jail with or without property confiscation. According to the defense lawyer Halina Ivanona since 14 October he kept a hunger-strike to protest against being kept in jail. The prison administration considered Autukhovich's action as incomplete hunger-strike. The prison director Aliaksandr Alieu stated the prisoner drank tea, ate honey and vitamins. Autukhovich's father confirmed he passed honey to the prison. Siarhei Malchyk, former teacher of Hrodna Medical University, also went on hunger-strikes in jail, where he was kept for participation in unauthorized actions. He said that in favorable conditions people could even hunger for 80-90 days, but later lethal outcome was possible. What concerns vitamins, they can't be considered as food. That's why Autukhovich's hunger-strike can be considered incomplete, but it is hunger-strike in any case.

**On 6 December** the criminal case about intimidation of the director of the Polish House Viktor Bohdan was passed to Hrodna Regional Board of Internal Affairs. The chief editor of *Gios znad Niemna 'in emigration'* Andzhei Piscalnik went to Shchuchyn for confrontation with Viktor Bohdan, which didn't take place. The investigator explained he passed the case to Hrodna RBIA and failed to warn Piscalnik about it.

**On 7 December** Valery Levaneuski, the imprisoned leader of Hrodna businessmen, stopped hungering at the penal colony in Ivatsevichy. He started the hunger-strike on 13 November, demanding to punish the head of the colony Mikhail Karmanovich, who deprived him of the right to meet with his relatives for unmade bed and then prohibited him to receive a parcel and buy food in the colony shop. The reason for the end of the hunger-strike was the arrival of the commission that was to discriminate into the prisoner's complaints.

**On 8 December** Viktor Sivokhin, vice-chairman of the Belarusian union of the Afghanistan war veterans visited the member of this union Mikalai Autukhovich in jail. He talked with the prisoner for two hours and considered the state of his health has become critical after a long hunger-strike. Viktor Sivokhin said he started to cry when he saw Autukhovich, despite his being an experienced colonel. He said it was necessary for the veterans to apply to the prosecutor general with the request to change the restraint to Autukhovich who wasn't going to flee: 'The veteran of the war in Afghanistan, who honestly worked, provided jobs and wages to other veterans, is isolated from the society for unknown reasons, though his state of health is critical – I say it because I've seen him merry and mighty.' Viktor Sivokhin pointed that all people who fought in Afghanistan returned from there with a subtle sense of justice. It also concerns Mikalai Autukhovich, chevalier of Red Banner order and the medals For Courage and For Merit. Viktor Sivokhin also expressed his disbelief Autukhovich could consume anything, be on 'partial' hunger-strike: 'What honey! Leave that tales! I saw this man. When the doctor gave him a medicine with vitamins, Autukhovich immediately threw it out with slime, because his stomach rejects even these vitamins. The situation is that we can lose a man in peaceful time. I can't imagine what danger he can present to Vaukavysk and Hrodna region.' Viktor Sivokhin added Mr Autukhovich looked as if he was removed from a cross and that the average age at which the veterans of the Afghan war died was 48 years. 771 persons died during the 10 years of the war in Afghanistan and five thousand – in Belarus. About 600 citizens of Vaukavysk signed the appeal to Lukashenka with the request to change the restraint to the prisoner. The investigation of his case was over – according to the final accusation the sum of allegedly non-paid takes was 300 million rubles, not 679 it used to be at first.

**On 9 December** Mikhail Marynich appealed to the Supreme Court the sentence that was issued to him by Minsk District Court in 2004. His defense lawyer Valiantsina Shakhautsova enumerated the arguments that were put in the complaint: 'We wrote he didn't commit any crime and that the accusation failed to present any evidence. All witnesses rejected the charges that he committed a crime by the abuse of his official powers. The owner of the 'stolen' computers had no pretensions, because of the rent agreement that was in action. Of course, we didn't simply enumerate our arguments, but also presented them in another way, because complaints to different courts differ. Still, the essence is the same: there is no corpus delicti in Marynich's actions.'

**12 December** was the 60<sup>th</sup> day of Mikalai Autukhovich's hunger-strike. The defense lawyer Halina Ivanova visited him together with the investigator Mikalai Alikhver. The term of the preliminary arrest that was to have ended on 14 December was prolonged till 14 January 2006. On 12 December the beginning of familiarization with the materials of the criminal case against Autukhovich was declared. The investigation of the case was over. He stated to the investigator he was unable to familiarize with the case because of the state of health. It was put down in the minutes. The businessman was charged with evasion from taxes which resulted in especially large loss to the budget. The Criminal Case concerned article #243 of the Criminal Code, providing 3-7 years of jail as punishment with or without property confiscation.

**On 14 December** the chair of the diplomatic mission of Sweden Stefan Ericsson came to Baranavichy and visited Mikalai Statkevich, who was serving his term of personal restraint at the local open penitentiary institution. He passed to the prisoner a letter of support from the Foreign Minister of Sweden. Mikalai Statkevich thanked to the government of Sweden and his partners from the Swedish social-democratic party for support and solidarity.

**On 14 December** Dzmitry Kirylchyk, the investigator of Minsk Inter-District Prosecutor's Office, made another ruling which again refused to institute a criminal action to investigate the death of Vasil Hrodnikau, the free lance correspondent of *Narodnaia volia*. The first time the refusal came on 28 November due to the 'absence of the crime'. On 29 November the Prosecutor's Office of Belarus cancelled this resolution and returned the case materials to Minsk Inter-District Prosecutor's Office for additional checkup. During the checkup the investigator Dzmitry Kirylchyk again came to the conclusion that Mr Hrodnikau 'could have sustained bodily harm through his own reckless behavior'.

**On 15 December** the administration of Ivatsevichy penal colony refused to release Valery Levaneuski for taking part in his father's funeral. The official reason was that Levaneuski repeatedly violated the prison discipline. The de-

cision was upheld by the prosecutor of Ivatsevichy district. Levaneuski was only allowed to phone home and express his sympathy for relatives.

**On 20 December** the investigation confronted Anzhalika Borys, the chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus that is not recognized by the authorities, and Andzhei Pisalnik, chief editor of *Gios znad Niemna 'in emigration'*, were confronted to the director of the Polish House in Shchuchyn Viktor Bohdan. Andzhei Pisalnik and three of his colleagues from the Union of Poles in Belarus were suspected in intimidation of Viktor Bohdan. Anzhalika Borys didn't conduct the revision at the Polish House in Shchuchyn and didn't take part in the talk with Viktor Bohdan, after which he stated the UCP activists intimidated him. However, during the confrontation Mr Bohdan stated Anzhalika Borys also threatened to him in telephone talks. It was the third confrontation with Bohdan for Andzhei Pisalnik and gave the following commentary concerning Bohdan's statements: 'To my mind, Bohdan tries to make Anzhalika Borys a suspect and he could receive an order for that. Taking into consideration that there is no evidence of our guilt they are trying to present it all as an act of intimidation that was organized by Anzhalika Borys, but it's all lies,' commented Mr Pisalnik.

**On 21 December** the former deputy of the Chamber of Representatives Siarhei Skrabets decided to establish the initiative group on collection of signatures for his registration as candidate to the presidential election. The initiative group was established despite the fact that Mr Skrabets was under investigation, because the electoral legislation denied the right to be elected only for the persons who were found guilty of violation of the Criminal Code.

**On 21 December** the Orthodox priest Sergey visited Mikalai Autukhovich at the prison hospital. He said Autukhovich looked weak. An RFE/RL correspondent visited the hospital and asked a doctor about Autukhovich's health. The doctor said it was prohibited to him to give interviews, but the entrepreneur was in satisfactory state. 'I've seen several hunger-strikers and can say that, including 60 days of hunger-strike, the state of his health was not that bad,' the doctor said. According to him Autukhovich continued to refuse from food, but drank tea, kissel and take glucose. Autukhovich's father didn't believe this information. According to him, several days before this his acquaintances had a meeting with the doctor and said the doctor informed them Autukhovich could die in about ten days in the case he continued hunger-strike.

**At 11.30 p.m. on 23 December** outside the Homel department store a young opposition activist Pavel Madshara was detained. Police officers dragged him out of the car, put him down on the ground and searched him to allegedly find drugs. Pavel Madshara was taken to Homel Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs where they initiated a criminal case for storage of drugs. After

the night in the police station, the activist was taken home, where they searched the apartment, the search warrant, however, had been executed with a violation: it did not have a stamp on it. Apart from a white-red-white flag, party brochures and other kinds of documents and papers, the police did not find anything else – these were the ‘evidence’ confiscated by them.

**On 27 December** Vaukavysk entrepreneur Mikalai Autukhovich was released from jail. The chair of the department of punishment execution Uladzimir Kouchur explained that the prosecutor’s office changed the restraint to home arrest. Mikalai Autukhovich was driven out of Minsk prison hospital by a police bus and taken to Vaukavysk district hospital, because he needed medical treatment after 74 days of hunger-strike. Mr Autukhovich asked for medical examination and asked a doctor who specialized on diets to advise how to get out of the hunger-strike. The police also allowed to Mikalai Autukhovich a short talk with friends and relatives. His daughter Katsiaryna was allowed to stay with him.

**In the evening of 27 December** the police detained Anton Filimonau, son of the murdered journalist Veranika Charkasava, and two friends of his at the trolley bus stop in Bialinski St. in Minsk. One of Filimonau’s friends bought cigarettes and coffee at a kiosk for the forged banknote. He said he received it from Filimonau. The guys told the police they had a bat – in order to find who of them had better computer they had printed copies of banknotes. The investigators of Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Board of Internal Affairs suspected Filimonau in production of forged money and put him to an investigative isolator. Anton’s grandparents were anxious about his health and stated the investigation kept him there with the aim of psychological pressurization.

**On 29 December** the national prosecutor’s office prolonged for a month the investigation of the criminal case concerning intimidation of Viktor Bohdan, director of the Polish House in Shchuchyn. The suspects on the case were the activists of the officially unrecognized Union of Poland in Belarus Veslau Keuliak, Andrei Pachobut, Andzhei Piscalnik and Iuzaf Pazhetski. According to Andrei Pachobut, the authorities didn’t plan to try them because of the upcoming presidential election and rather tried to keep them on hook.

**On 29 December** Minsk Tsentralny Borough Prosecutor’s Office brought a criminal case against the activists of the youth movement *Zubr* Aliaksandr Kazakou and Dzmitry Zubr for alleged resistance to the police during detention (article #363 of the Criminal Code). The guys were detained at night of 28-29 December for making political graffiti on the building of Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court. The police composed a report for hooliganism and took the detainees to court. The law provides criminal punishment for graffiti. That’s

why the judge refused to try the guys. The prosecutor of Minsk Tsentralny BPO said: 'The organ that is responsible for the investigation also chooses the restraint. In this case it will be one of my investigators. In the case he needs my sanction it will be also for me to decide. At present they are suspects. Within the limits of the investigation there will be also given legal evaluation to the graffiti. However, now their attitude to the police is more important.'

**On 30 December** Aliaksandr Khadatovich, the prosecutor of Minsk Tsentralny Borough Prosecutor's Office, ruled to release the students Aliaksandr Kazakou and Dzmitry Zubr, who were detained for political graffiti and suspected in resistance to the police during the detention. After the release Aliaksandr Kazakou said they hadn't resisted to the police and were accused of it because the authorities didn't want to prosecute them for graffiti.

**On 30 December** Mikalai Autukhovich got from Vaukavysk hospital to his home to be kept there under home arrest till the trial. That's why his contacts were limited. It was prohibited to him to leave the house and talk over the phone.

**On 30 December** the term of the preliminary detention for Anton Filimonau finished and the prosecutor issued a sanction for his arrest. Uladzimir Mialeshka, Anton's grandfather, said: 'I don't try to justify Anton. What he has done is quite silly, but I am sure self-enrichment wasn't his aim and the guys didn't inflict any considerable harm to the country's economy. In this case it is quite cruel to put him behind bars on the New Year eve. I think he was taken to the investigative isolator with the aim of psychological pressurization. How can I think otherwise in the case they propose to him to take the blame for the murder of his mother, Veranika Charkasava?'

## 5. Liberty of word and the right to receive true information. Persecution of independent mass media and journalists

**On 4 January** the judge of Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court Valery Ilesman ruled to exact 30 million rubles from the editorial board of *Pressbol* newspaper and 10 million rubles from the chief editor Uladzimir Berazhkov to compensate the harm done to the vice-minister of finances of the Republic of Belarus, the head of the Belarusian Association of Gymnastics Mikalai Korbut. The reason

for the minister's suit was the publication *The man who is wanted by Interpol for participation in a gang is vice-Minister of finances* (#128, 28 October 2004). On the eve of the court hearings the defendants agreed to publicly apologize to M.Korbut in any form he would tell them to. However, Mr Korbut didn't accept any apologies and left his demands in force. U.Berazhkou was indignant at the court decision. He is sure that in the case the judge had satisfied the petition of the defendants to send inquiries to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Interpol and Belarusian Association of Gymnastics, the published information would have proved to be true.

**In the evening of 5 January** in Homel the police detained the activist of the United Civil Party A.Tsurbakou for handing out the newspaper *Vremya*. Mr Tsurbakou was taken to a police station, where the police composed a detention report, confiscated eight copies of the edition and took his fingerprints. In 1,5 hours Tsurbakou was let go.

**On 5 January** the Ministry of Information issued a warning to the editorial board of the independent newspaper *Pressbol*. It was the second warning for the year. According to article #5 of the law *On press*, such situation could result in liquidation of the newspaper by the court. The reason for the warning of 5 January was the article *Questions of vital importance. Open letter to Aleksandr Lukashenko* (#153 (1753), 21 December 2004). The ministry considered this article as publication of the materials of a court case in progress without written permission of the judge (for instance, the article included the suit of the minister of finances of the Republic of Belarus, the head of the Belarusian Association of Gymnastics Mikola Korbut).

**On 10 January** A.Tsurbakou, the activist of the United Civil Party who was detained on 5 January for handing out newspapers, was summonsed to the police. They asked him to bring a copy of the newspaper's registration certificate and a copy of the agreement for distribution. When he did it, they returned to him the confiscated copies of the newspaper.

**On 11 January** Andrei Shantarovich, chief editor of the newspaper *Mestnaya gazeta* newspaper, and the businessman Mikola Autukhovich received summons to Vaukavysk District Board of Internal Affairs in the capacity of the accused. Later they found the reason for the summons was the commentary to M.Autukhovich gave to *Mestnaya gazeta* concerning the events related to the struggle between his firm and the local tax inspection. Having given explanations, Shantarovich and Autukhovich were let go without any charges brought against them. 'The check-up was conducted on the demand of the chair of Vaukavysk district tax inspection, who considered Autukhovich's words as statement about disobedience to the lawless authorities. However, when were gave

explanations, we were let go. The police said they wouldn't bring any case because of absence of corpus delicti,' commented Andrei Shantarovich.

**On 11 January** the Ministry of Information issued official warnings to three FM radio stations – *Hit-FM*, *Unistar* and *Novaie Radio* for non-broadcasting of Belarusian music, as it was demanded by the ministry. The information minister Uladzimir Rusakevich stated that in the case the radio stations didn't execute the demand they would be closed and that the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Culture were elaboration a definition for the notion 'Belarusian performer'.

**On 12 January** the members of Belarusian People's Front Kanstantsin Horny and Uladzislau Tokarau were summonsed to Minsk Kastychnitski borough administrative commission (on 28 December 2004 they were detained for handing out calendars of *Radio Liberty*). They spent about an hour in the corridor, waiting to be invited to the office of the commission head. In the talk to K.Horny the head of the commission Mikhail Dziadzinkin said that he wouldn't consider the case at that time, but would postpone it and call a police brigade, as, to his mind, the case was of criminal nature. As a result, the case consideration was postponed to 26 January. What concerns Uladzislau Tokarau, the police made mistakes in the documents that were submitted to the commission. This case was to be considered by Minsk Pershamaiski borough administrative commission.

**On 12 January** the non-state newspaper *Narodnaia volia*, referring to the chair of the press-service of the National TV and Radio Company (NTVRC) Sviatlana Klaskouskaia, informed the readers that *Euronews* was excluded from the morning schedule of the TV programs of the Belarusian TV channel *Lad*. The alleged reason was that the agreement for broadcasting this news was concluded in 2004 and NTVRC had to refuse from showing the news, being unable to pay for it. However, there can be another reason: in December 2004 *Euronews* showed news concerning the situation of non-state mass media in Belarus and the ceremony of giving Sakharov prize to Zhana Litvina, chair of Belarusian Association of Journalists, who also sharply criticized the policy of Belarusian authorities towards independent press.

**On 17 January** in Vitsebsk the police detained the vice-chair of the United Civil Party Alena Zaleskaia for handing out the newspaper *Vremya* and took her to Vitsebsk Kastychnitski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. There the police composed a violation report and confiscated several copies of the newspaper. The detainee didn't manage to convince them that the newspaper was issued officially and she didn't violate anything. The policemen said they would pass the documents to court which would define whether she was guilty.



**In the evening of 18 January** Homel Tsentralny Borough Court ruled to make oral admonition to the correspondent of *Narodnaia volia* in Homel region Iryna Makavetskaia for violation of article #166 of the Code of Administrative Violations – disrespect to court. The journalist thinks that the punishment is relatively mild because the authorities don't want a scandal around the events where the law machinery demonstrated its dark side.

**On 19 January** the Unitarian enterprise *Pressbol Plius*, founder of *Pressbol* newspaper, appealed to the Supreme Economic Court the warning that was issued by the Ministry of Information on 5 January for alleged violation of article #5 of the law *On press and other mass media* – publication of the court materials before the end of the trial without written permission of the responsible official. The Ministry of Information qualified as such violation the publication of the suit of the vice-minister of finances and the head of Belarusian Association of Gymnastics Mikalai Korbut to the newspaper, dated 21 December 2004. At the time of the publication Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court considered the suit of M.Korbut to the editorial board of *Pressbol*, its chief editor U.Berazhkov and journalist S.Viarsotski.

**On 20 January** it became known the audience of *Radio Rocks* FM station negatively reacted to the change of its preferences. Many of the listeners couldn't understand the radio had to turn to Russian pops from foreign music due to the state order that 75% of music must be of Belarusian nature. As a result, the radio station started to broadcast mostly Russian pops, or Belarusian pops, sang predominately in Russian as well.

**On 21 January** the ideology department of Hrodna Regional Executive Committee sent letters to state enterprises and institutions of the city with the 'recommendation' not to put their advertisement in non-state newspapers. Together with the 'recommendation' Hrodna enterprises received the list of the state institutions that put their ads in non-state newspapers. Among them there were Hrodna State University, the milk factory and the meat combine. The head of the ideology board Uladzimir Amelka stated the document was meant to support the state press and was of advisory nature.

**In the evening of 24 January** the TV channel *Euronews* disappeared from the cable and ether non-state TV nets. It was replaced with Belarusian *Stalichnaie Telebachanne* (Capital TV). *Euronews* was the only of the twelve channels, proposed to Mahiliou citizens by *Dion-TV-service* Ltd that broadcasted daily information from different spheres, including political, without ideological comments. The head of *Dion* Aliaksandr Astapau referred to the state check-up during which the authorities demanded from the firm to execute the demands of the Ministry of Information concerning the obligatory TV

channels. The list includes *Stalichnaie Telebachanne*, but doesn't contain *Euronews*.

**On 25 January** Minsk Leninski Borough Prosecutor's Office passed to court the criminal case against the journalist of *Belorusskaya gazeta* Kiryl Zhyvalovich. He is accused in fight with a guard of Main Post Office in Minsk. The investigator Iury Varanko familiarized the journalist with the final accusation under part 2 of article #363 of the Criminal Code (resistance to policeman or other person that guards public order with usage of physical force). According to the accusation, on 10 December 2004 Kiryl Zhyvalovich came to the Main Post Office in the state of alcoholic intoxication. The guard Iury Nazarchuk complained that the journalist hit him in the face and smashed his nose and lips. He was confessed the victim on the case. Kiryl Zhyvalovich disproved the charges: 'The accusation has false information that I was drunk and beat the guard, which wasn't confirmed by medical expertise. I asked Minsk Leninski Borough Prosecutor's Office to stop the criminal case against me because of absence of corpus delicti. Iury Nazarchuk gave comments to *BelaPAN* agency, which is pressure on the investigation and distribution of false information. I'll wait till trial and then will file suit for protection of my honor and dignity. If the court found Kiryl Zhyvalovich guilty, he could be punished with up to five years of personal restraint or jail.

**On 25 January** the chair of Smarhon District Executive Committee Mechyslau Hoi didn't agree to place in the town *Novaya gazeta Smorgoni*. Let us remind that on 3 January Ramuald Ulan, the founder of the newspaper, directed to the DEC a complaint against the refusal to lend an office the newspaper. This time he received the second refusal. The first was issued by the DEC chair S.Iurhel and Ulan complained against it to Hrodna Regional Economic Court, that issued a private admonition to Smarhon DEC, pointing at mistakes in the documentation.

**On 26 January** the state-owned trading enterprise *Mahilioukniha* returned the non-sold copies of the magazine *Arche* to the public distributor Aliaksandr Asiptsou who was a mediator between the enterprise and the editorial board of the magazine. At the same time, the administration of *Mahilioukniha* stated broke the agreement with the editorial board of *Arche* and wouldn't sell the magazine at newsstands and bookstores, explaining it with the weak demand for it, proving it with a number of old copies of the magazine that weren't bought. Ales Asiptsou, however, thinks that the agreement was broken because the magazine devoted one of its latest numbers to the tenth anniversary of Lukashenka's rule. Last autumn a number of Minsk bookstores refused to sell the magazine and demanded from the editorial board to take away all numbers, including the older ones.

**On 26 January** district administrative commissions of Vitsebsk issued warnings to the members of the BPF Party Uladzislau Tokarau and Kanstantsin Horny, who were detained on 28 December 2004 for handing out calendars of Radio Liberty.

**On 28 January** the Belarusian Consulate in Biaiyastok refused to issue visa to the chief editor of the weekly of Belarusians in Poland *Niva* and the head of the Belarusian Union in Poland Eugeniusz Wappa without any explanations. Mr Wappa gave the following comments concerning this action: 'I consider it as the confession of the role which *Niva* plays in the life of Belarusians. We try to touch different aspects of life, including Belarus. We write about it in our articles... I think this is the reason for the refusal. It'd be also a good thing to ask the Consul about it, but Geneva Convention frees consulates from answering to such questions.'

**On 28 January** at the college of the Ministry of Information the minister Uladzimir Rusakevich said that in 2004 the ministry suspended 25 mass media and issued 160 warnings to 81 periodicals. He also stated the ministry would use suspension of editions more often because it proved to be the most effective means to fight with law violations. 'Soon mass media may have to master in practice new legislatives norms and rulings', he said. 'Implementing the state policy in the field of electronic mass media, the ministry gives priority to the directions that are defined as the most important ones by the country's authorities. Among them there are the increase of the role of Belarusian TV and radio broadcasting, cutting down broadcasting of foreign programs, increase of the part of Belarusian music on the radio up to 75%, establishment of civilized and relations with our Russian partners with the aim to expand the Belarusian informational space. That's why the department of electronic mass media was created.'

**On 28 January** Siarhei Niarouny, editor of the non-state newspaper *Volny horad* and chair of Krychau district organization of the United Civil Party, was summonsed to the inter-district KGB office. The KGB agents asked Niarouny about several articles that were published in the newspaper. For instance, they were interested in the publications concerning the conflict in the district veteran organization, which the authorities wanted to hush up on the eve of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victory over fascism. The main topic of the discussion was the connection of Krychau democrats with the opposition activist Andrei Klimau and preparation to the action of 25 March. Siarhei Niarouny considered this summons as the beginning of pressurization of the democratic activists in the region.

**On 31 January** all workers of the state newspaper *Leninski klich* issued in

Krychau district, were deprived of bonus for December 2004. It was the punishment for their failure to increase the circulation of the newspaper to 4 000 copies, which was ordered by Ivan Prakopau, chair of Krychau District Executive Committee. The matter was that *Leninski klich* got into the regional list of the state newspapers (there were five newspapers in the list) that were ordered to become self-supporting in spring 2005. Their editorial offices were warned that less budget means would be spent on them and they would have to earn money on their own. In particular, every worker of *Leninski klich* was ordered to subscribe at least 100 persons to it.

**On 2 February** Vitsebsk Kastrychnitski borough administrative commission was to have considered the case concerning the detention of Alena Zaleskaia, chair of Vitsebsk regional organization of the United Civil Party. The matter is that on 17 January Ms Zaleskaia left several copies of *Vremya* newspaper in the building of Vitsebsk Kastrychnitski borough department of *Akhova* (guard) association. It was registered by the video-camera that was installed there. *Akhova* workers called to the police and informed them about it. As a result, Alena Zaleskaia was detained. She said to the police the newspaper was registered, but the administrative case against her was passed to the administrative commission. Halina Ivankovich, vice-chair of the commission, refused to express her opinion about Zaleskaia's action and prohibited to the present journalists to record anything with their Dictaphones. Then she said she couldn't finish the sitting because she didn't know how she must treat *Vremya* newspaper and correlate its distribution with the Administrative Code and therefore had to consult the Ministry of Information. Alena Zaleskaia was ordered to come to the next sitting in two weeks.

**On 3 February** the correspondent of Baranavichy newspaper *Intex-press* Aliaksandr Charnenka wasn't allowed to attend the reception of citizens by the first vice-minister of internal affairs Aliaksandr Shchurko. The vice-minister accepted visitors at Baranavichy City Board of Internal Affairs. The correspondent received the agreement of the CBIA press-secretary Natallia Sidzelnik in advance. However, when he came to the CBIA on 3 February, he wasn't admitted to the office and it was prohibited to him even to speak to the visitors who were standing in the corridor.

**On 4 February** the editorial board of the non-state newspaper *Birzha informacii* received the letter where it was said that Skidzel branch of Hrodna regional consumer society couldn't prolong the agreement for its distribution 'due to lack of salespeople'. The director of Skidzel branch Halina Kavalchuk said she had no pretensions to the newspaper and the agreement wasn't prolonged because the consumer society didn't want to cooperate with it any more.

**On 4 February** the journalist of the non-state newspaper *Pahonia* Andrei Pachobut was summonsed for interrogation to Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs because of his articles concerning the conflict in the Union of Poles in Belarus. In the morning he testified to the investigator Siarhei Savushkin who investigated the arson of Tadevush Kruchkouski's car. In particular, the investigator asked Pachobut about his personal relations with Kruchkouski and said the latter accused Pachobut of threats. 'It is complete nonsense. I think that's the way Kruchkouski tries to revenge me for my publications about the sexual scandal in the university which he was the main figurant of,' said Andrei Pachobut. Tadevush Kruchkouski categorically refused to comment on the situation. The matter is a five-year student of Hrodna State University applied to the rector Siarhei Maskevich, stating Tadevush Kruchkouski forced her to co-habitation, abusing his official powers.

**On 8 February** members of Hrodna branch of Belarusian Association of Journalists passed to Hrodna Regional Executive Committee the list of the journalists who needed to be invited for official press conferences and petitions with the request to issue to representatives of non-state mass media let-passes to the measures that would take place at the executive committee. The constant ignorance of representatives of non-state press by workers of the department of ideological work of Hrodna Regional Executive Committee was the main reason for the meeting of journalists with the head of this department Uladzimir Amelka. The journalists expressed their indignation with the fact that during the previous year no representatives of independent mass media were invited to the press-conferences that were organized by the ideological department. U.Amelka called this fact a 'blunder' and ordered his subordinates to correct this situation. The question of access of non-state media correspondents to Hrodna Regional Executive Committee was also raised. The executive committee introduced electronic let-pass cards for its workers, as a result of which it became quite difficult for independent journalists to get there. According to U.Amelka, the department made such let-passes only for correspondents of the state newspapers *Hrodzenskaia prauda*, *Viacherni Hrodna* and the state TV and radio company *Hrodna*. The meeting participants proposed to give such let-passes to those workers of independent mass media who need free access to the executive committee for execution of their professional duty. Uladzimir Amelka promised the people present to do what he could.

**On 8 February** in Mahiliou there took place the extended college assembly of the ideology council of Mahiliou Regional Executive Committee. Anatol Hlaz, vice-chair of the REC, said he was dissatisfied with the work of the local state mass media. In his criticism he referred to the results of the last subscription campaign. For instance, he mentioned the newspaper *Babruiskaie zhyttσιο* that lost 100 subscribers in the first quarter and said it yielded to two non-state

newspapers in the depth and topicality of the content. Hlaz also accused the district journalists in laziness and non-creative approach to their work and demanded to increase the activity and discipline.

**On 9 February** Shklou passport and visa service refused to issue the permission for temporary stay abroad to Aliaksandr Shcharbak, editor of the non-state newspaper *Shklouskiia naviny*. The matter is that in 1996 he was the executive director of *Sidler and Co.* firm. He was fired from there short before its liquidation. The tax inspection informed Mr Shcharbak *Sidler and Co* owed 8 000 Belarusian rubles (3,5 US dollars) to the state. Under this pretext he wasn't let abroad.

**On 10 February** the state bookstores refused to accept for sale the independent magazine *Dzeiaslou*. The chief editor of the magazine Barys Piatrovich thusly commented on the decision of *Belkniha* state-owned company to break the agreement with the magazine: 'The formal reason is that the magazine prints materials with four-letter words and the sixth number is mentioned in connection with it. One can look it through and see that the word taken for 'foul language' is only one letter and three dots. It is quite strange to hear such things from the administration of *Belkniha* when the bookstores sell books of such Russian authors as Sorokin, Viktor Yerofeyev, Venedikt Yerofeyev and Pelevin where all four-letter words are printed in full, without any dots.' Mr Piatrovich is convinced in the political motivation for this step: 'We think that the real reasons for throwing our magazine out of bookstores are political ones, first of all because we published works of Vasil Bykau'.

**Since 11 February** *Pressbol* newspaper had to start compensating the moral harm to the minister of finances Mikola Korbut, who also headed the Belarusian association of gymnastics. The newspaper and the newspaper were sentenced to pay to him 40 million rubles, or almost 20 000 US dollars. The newspaper complained against such verdict of Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court to Minsk City Court, the college board of which left it in force. Uladzimir Berazhkou, chief editor of the newspaper, expressed his concern with the future of the editorial board and the newspaper. He said the newspaper could even cease to exist. At first Mikola Korbut said he would spend the received money on support to the collective farm that was under the ministry patronage. Then he stated he needed the money for medical treatment.

**On 11 February** during the briefing on the results of his visit to Belarus the OSCE representative on freedom of mass media Miklos Haraszti said: 'For the 14 years of independence of Belarus the interference of the state with the activity of mass media continues to increase.' According, to M.Haraszti, Belarus has serious problems with press, which could be solved with the assist-

ance of the OSCE. Among such problems he mentioned the deficient, 'limiting' law on mass media. At present Belarus is the only of the 55 OSCE countries where a person can be imprisoned for insult of the head of the state, pointed M. Haraszi. He also thinks that it is inadmissible for the state officials to suspend the activity of mass media. To his mind, this right belongs only to the court. He also criticized the absence of public TV in Belarus. At the same time, the information minister stated that it was impossible to start non-state TV.

**On 14 February** Krychau district prosecutor's office warned Uladzimir Kudrautsau, the founder and editor of the unregistered non-state newspaper *Volny horad*. Kudrautsau and the editorial office considered it as pressurization from the side of the authorities. *Volny horad* is a non-state newspaper that is quite popular in the town of Krychau. It has been published for more than five years. 299 copies are printed in Smolensk to be gratuitously distributed throughout Krychau district. Mr Kudrautsau said: 'The authorities pressurize the newspaper. The documents which we have received from the executive committee contain grievances against our newspaper. The officials believe that the articles contain libel, insult of the authorities, our 'fatherly' president and, allegedly, a call to a revolution around Klimau.' The editorial office believes that the prosecutor's office grievances are ungrounded. According to Uladzimir Kudrautsau, the newspaper attacks the authorities with a view to making them work better, and also informs the readers of various democratic projects and actions. All juridical bodies and private individuals who sold periodicals were ordered to present to district and city executive committees detailed information about all newspapers they sold **by 15 February**. This order didn't concern the state companies *Belsaiuzdruk* and *Belposhta*. For instance, it is mentioned in the decision of Minsk Regional Executive Committee, dated 13 December 2004. According to this document, the entrepreneurs (organizations) that retail periodicals, had to present to the ideological department of the regional executive committee not only detailed information about themselves, but also the special 'attachment to the line of the sold newspapers' with such information as the name and the topic of the edition, the state where it was registered, the date of registration and the number of the registration certificate and the body that issued it, the date and the number of the distribution agreement, and for foreign editions (except for Russian ones) – also the date and the number of the permission, issued by the Ministry of Information for distribution on the territory of Belarus. It's worth mentioning that the executive committees of some other cities and towns of Belarus issued the same orders at about the same time. For instance, Hlybokaie Town Executive Committee issued such order on 28 December. The lawyers of Belarusian Association of Journalists said that as a result the number of distributors of non-state press could rapidly decrease. Besides, some entrepreneurs and organizations were afraid that they could be obliged to subscribe to such official newspapers as

*Sovetskaya Belorussiya* as it happened to state institutions during the last subscription company.

**On 16 February** there took place the council that was dedicated to the work of the national TV channels and the perspectives of the TV development in Belarus. Aliaksandr Lukashenka stated that it was 'important not only to pass news to people, but also to explain what stands behind it'. According to Lukashenka, this becomes especially important because of the 'massive lies' concerning Belarus. A. Lukashenka stated the East and the West increased the informational pressure on Belarus and this pressure would grow in connection with the upcoming political events and, in particular, the political event of 2006. He emphasized that in the worst traditions of the cold war for Belarus there were opened new programs of the *Voice of America* and *Radio Liberty*. According to Lukashenka, anti-Belarusian TV channels of the neighbor countries often demonstrated almost the same level of prejudice and aggression. He said: 'The informational war that is led in Belarus is a direct violation of the international legislation. It is necessary to directly and honestly show for whose money some people live and whose interests they defend.' Lukashenka also pointed the Belarusian TV channels were behind other ones in timeliness and the quality of presentation of the information. To his mind, they must influence the public thought and form it, not only tell people about the events: 'It is necessary to repulse insinuations instead of self-justification', he said. According to Lukashenka, TV had to make a breakthrough in its quality and the establishment of the satellite TV and the international TV-channel Belarus-TV could be the starting point. Lukashenka stated he didn't interfere with the activities of the mass media, but attentively watched the development of the national mass-media and wished the mass media of our country (first of all, the electronic ones, that have the greatest influence on people's opinion) to be as good as the mass media of the neighbor countries and the whole world.

**On 17 February** the Belarusian Association of Journalists directed an inquiry to the minister of trade Aliaksandr Kulichkou concerning the new rules that were established by executive committees for the trade of periodicals. According to ruling of the Soviet of Ministers #384 of 7 April 2004 (that adopted the new rules for the retail of certain kinds of goods) the local executive organs were to define the list of the goods that every trade center had to have (the minimal range of goods) and also agree on the supplements to that range, with detailed information about each edition. BAJ asked the minister to answer whether the entrepreneurs and organizations had to get the approval of the executive committees for the whole range of their goods or the minimal range and whether the executive committees were guided by this novelty when demanding from press retailers detailed information about the editions that were considered as supplements to the minimal range of goods.



**On 21 February** Ivatsevichy district consumer society refused to conclude the sale agreement with the non-state newspaper *Gazeta dlya vas*, stating it was undesirable to sell the newspaper that could rival the official district newspaper *Ivatsevitski vesnik*. The chief editor of *Gazeta dlya vas* L. Tsaluika found out it was Leanid Skindzer, vice-chair of Ivatsevichy District Executive Committee on ideological work, who prohibited concluding the agreement. He said that the city and the district shops were to sell only the state newspapers that reflected the official point of view. The distribution net of the consumer society also refused to distribute the newspaper in the towns of Bيارoza, Pryzhany and Drahichyn, where it was sold as a district edition.

**On 24 February** there ended the suspension term of the Hrodna-based non-state newspaper *Birzha informacii*. However, the edition couldn't resume its issue because of the refusal of Hrodna regional printing house to continue cooperation. According to the chief editor of the newspaper Alena Raubetskaia, the administration of the printing house referred to the absence of the director that would be soon appointed by Hrodna Regional Executive Committee. A. Raubetskaia said the executive committee could give the oral order not to conclude the agreement for printing with the newspaper. The newspaper was suspended for the article *Treason in People's Name* (#39 for 9 September 2004). The Ministry of Information decided the article contained 'false information that didn't reflect the legal grounds of the appointed... referendum and insulted the honor and dignity of the President of the Republic of Belarus'. A. Raubetskaia was also fined for this article on 30 September 2004 under part 10 of article #172-1 of the Code of Administrative Violations.

**On 26 February** Homel Regional Executive Committee held a sitting. One of the issues on its agenda was the implementation of presidential directive #1 concerning order and discipline in the capital construction. Before its discussion the press-secretary of Homel REC Iauhen Pabalavets came to the correspondent of *Radio Liberty* Kazimir Ianouski and stated the discussion would take place in absence of the press. The journalist asked him whether he knew it was a violation of the law *On press and other mass media* and Pabalavets said he knew. The journalist had to leave the sitting hall, together with the *Interfax* agency correspondent Alena Alshanskaia and the journalist of *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* state newspaper Andrei Novikau.

**On 28 February** Pinsk regional printing house refused to print the non-state newspaper *Miastsovy chas*. The editorial board of the newspaper was situated in Pinsk, but the newspaper had to print in Baranavichy, 160 kilometers from Pinsk, which caused additional transport expenditures. The prohibition to print the newspaper was issued by the former chair of Pinsk City Executive Committee V. Shust. After his retirement the chief editor of the newspaper

Viktar Iarashuk received the agreement of the director of Pinsk regional printing house to print the newspaper. However, after his visit to the Ministry of Information the director refused from his promise.

**On 2 March** Aliaksandr Karachun, chair of the department of electronic mass media of the Ministry of Information, stated the ministry strictly controlled the execution of the order that obliged FM radio-stations to provide 75% of Belarusian music. According to him, the ministry concluded an agreement with the center of sociological and political research of the Belarusian State University for monitoring of the radio broadcasts. The results of the monitoring showed that *Alfa Radio*, *Radio Rox* and *Pilot-FM* didn't execute the order. That's why six FM radio-stations received warnings.

**On 3 March** the unitary enterprise *Pressbol Plius*, the founder of the leading Belarusian sports newspaper *Pressbol*, paid 30 million rubles on the suit of the minister of finances, chair of the Belarusian association of gymnastics Mikola Korbut. According to the chief editor of the newspaper U.Berazhkou, it was the money the newspaper received from subscription. U.Berazhkou was also sentenced to pay 10 million rubles to Korbut and said this money would be probably exact from his wage.

**On 3 March** Uladzimir Viarbovikau, founder and editor of *Volny chas* newspaper was summonsed to Homel Savetski borough tax inspection. The tax inspector Aleh Miranovich informed him that he, being an individual entrepreneur who issued a newspaper, was fined 0,5 million rubles (about 230 US dollars) for non-payment of the value added tax in 2003. The entrepreneur tried to prove the newspaper wasn't issued for 1,5 years because of absence of finances, but the tax inspector pointed he could fine him 1,5 million rubles.

**On 4 March** the journalist Andrei Pachobut, who was detained during the protest action of entrepreneurs in Hrodna, was found guilty of violation of article #167.1 of the Code of Administrative Violations (violation of the order of organization and holding of mass actions) and sentenced to 10 days of jail by Hrodna Leninski Borough Court.

**On 4 March** at the web-site of the Ministry of Information it was stated that there was established a new department that would watch the work of electronic mass media – TV channel and radio-stations of all forms of property. The vice-minister Siarhei Bulatski was appointed the curator of the department.

**On 5 March** the Belarusian printing houses refused to print the Hrodna-based independent newspaper *Birzha informacii*. It happened after the end of

the three-month term, for which the newspaper was suspended by the Ministry of Information. According to the chief editor Alena Raubetskaia, an official from Minsk said the newspaper got into a black book and state printing houses became inadmissible to it. At the same time, the newspaper couldn't be printed abroad for financial reasons. 'Besides, in this case issue of the newspaper would turn from a normal business into a political action', said Alena Raubetskaia. That's why the editorial office decided to suspend the issue of the newspaper and create the internet version of it.

**On 9 March** the Council of Belarusian Association of Journalists issued a note of protest against the imprisonment of the organization member Andrei Pachobut, journalist of the web edition *Pahonia*. On 4 March Hrodna Leninski Borough Court found him guilty in violation of article #167.1 of the Code of Administrative Violations for his presence at the meeting of entrepreneurs that took place on 3 March. The journalist only executed his professional duty during the mass action.

**On 11 March** Iulia Darashkevich, correspondent of *Nasha niva* newspaper complained to Hrodna Regional Prosecutor's Office and the head of Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. She complained against the action of the riot squad policemen, who detained her during the action of 10 March in Hrodna. The journalist was making photos, when two policemen in helmets and with truncheons in their hands seized her and led to the bus where the arrested businessmen were kept. The journalist wore her badge and immediately informed the police about her professional state. As a result they lead her to the opposite side of the square, away from the action, and threatened to beat her if she approached the businessmen once again. In her complaint Iu.Darashkevich stated that the police interfered with her professional duties and demanded their punishment.

**On 11 March** [forum.grodno.by](http://forum.grodno.by) internet forum was closed in Hrodna. This forum was situated at the web-site of Hrodna branch of the state monopolist on electronic communications *Beltelekam*. This forum was very popular – more than 2 000 individual users entered it everyday. The forum pages were destroyed. The administration of *Beltelekam* proposed Aliaksei Rads, director of Hrodna Forum department, to retire from work. Aliaksei Rads said the reason for this 'proposal' was that critical opinions about the present regime appeared at the forum entry that was devoted to the repeated election at Hrodna central election circuit #52. The forum also had such parts as *About Europe and the Republic of Belarus*, *Our president. Who is he?*, *About propaganda as it is*, *Iron curtain*, etc.

**On 11 March**, at the sitting of Ivatsevichy District Executive Committee its

chair Vital Dzmitranitsa openly ordered the head of the tax inspection to take measures against the Ivatsevichy-based non-state newspaper *Gazeta dlya vas*. At the same sitting the committee vice-chair on ideology Leanid Skindzer insisted on breaking the agreement with the editorial office of the newspaper by the district social service combine. However, these orders weren't executed, because on 13 March Vital Dzmitranitsa was detained on suspicion in receiving 5 000 US dollars as a bribe from a local entrepreneur.

**On 11 March**, the sale of the non-state newspaper *Mestnaya gazeta* was stopped in Vaukavysk and its district on the order of Mikhail Savelieu, chair of Vaukavysk Town Executive Committee. The chief editor of the newspaper A.Shantarovich got the audience of the chair of Vaukavysk TEC, but didn't receive the answer Savelieu really gave such order. A representative of the trade department of the executive committee was called to the office. She explained the situation with independent decisions of the shops not to sell it. *Belsaiuzdruk* kiosks and private retailers continued to sell the newspaper. On 11 and 12 March in Vaukavysk the police detained several retailers of the newspaper despite the fact they had all the necessary documents.

**On 14 March** the chair of Belarusian Association of Journalists Zhana Litvina and the member of its Council Mikhail Pastukhou directed open letter to the information minister U.Rusakevich, expressing their concern with the situation of the Hrodna-based newspaper *Birzha informacii*. The newspaper couldn't resume its issue after the three-month suspension, because all Belarusian printing houses refused to cooperate with it. 'Uladzimir Vasilievich, being the information minister, you must care about the fate of each. Isn't it a time to proceed from rough measures to the practice of compassion and cooperation with all Belarusian journalists and publishers without dividing them to friends and enemies? It will bring good to thousands of Belarusian readers and the society in general, including the state.'

**On 14 March** the international organization for protection of journalists' rights *Reporters Without Borders* expressed its indignation with the fact that Hrodna Leninski Borough Court sentenced the journalist of the web-site *pahonia.promedia.by* Andrei Pachobut to 10 days of jail for alleged violation of article #167.1 of the Code of Administrative Violations.

**On 13 March** the discussion of the draft law on the main directions of the internal and foreign policy of Belarus continued. At the Soviet of the Republic there took place the sitting of the scientific-consultative board at the regular commission on international affairs. Journalists weren't allowed to be present at it. In the very beginning they had chance to listen to only one expert, vice-chair of KGB Piotro Tratsiak. He said KGB considered it necessary to intro-

duce certain amendments and specify a number of juridical norms. Then the journalists were ordered to leave the building.

**On 14 March** in New-York the international organization *Committee to Protect Journalists* presented its yearly report *Harassment of Mass Media in 2004*. There it was stated that the Belarusian authorities almost liquidated the independent press and that the prosecutors' offices, tax inspections and other state organs 'started a campaign on haunting and intimidation of journalists, opposition activists and members of human rights organizations that criticized Lukashenka for his repressive policy'. On the other hand, it was pointed that state mass media in Belarus functioned as instruments of the state propaganda.

**On 16 March** the activist of United Civil Party Alena Zaleskaia managed to defend her right to distribute the independent press. The administrative commission of Kastychnitski borough of Vitsebsk thrice returned to the consideration of her case (on 17 January the police detained Alena Zaleskaia for handing *Vremya* newspaper). This time they presented their final decision: distribution of legally printed newspapers and fly-sheets wasn't a law violation.

**On 16 March** the editor of *Mestnaya gazeta* Andrei Shantarovich had an audience with the chair of Vaukavysk Town Executive Committee Mikhail Savelieu. He asked why Savelieu ordered to prohibit the sale of the newspaper. Savelieu referred to violation of the sanitary norms and said one couldn't sell newspapers that had led in their ink, next to foodstuffs. On 17 March Mr Shantarovich also found the official also gave an oral order to the administration of the district police not to give any information to the independent edition.

**On 18 March** the letter that was signed by R.Tarasevich, chair of the education department of Hlybokae District Executive Committee, was sent to the schools of Hlybokaie district. He asked them to organize individual subscription of teachers to state periodicals by 20 March 2005. Among the mentioned editions there were the newspapers of the national level *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, *Narodnaya gazeta*, *Respublika*, *Zvezda*, *Znamya yunosti* and, the regional ones, such as *Vitsebski rabochy* and *Narodnoe slovo* and the district *Vesnik Hlybocchyny*. It was necessary to make each teacher subscribe to at least three newspapers.

**On 18 March** Vitsebsk distribution net refused to accept for sale the numbers of *Arche* magazine they had ordered. According Viktor Stsiapanau, the magazine distributor from Vitsebsk, not only fresh, but also old numbers of the magazine were in high demand. Among the ordered numbers there was also the famous #4, which was called 'Lukashenka's'. This was the number from which the sale troubles at Minsk bookstores started. Vitsebsk good managers

also refused to accept the magazine, referring to the overload of the region's bookstores.

**On 20 March** there took place the repeated election at Hrodna electoral circuit #52. Three Polish journalists – Michai Kacevicz and Adam Tuchlinski from *Newsweek* edition and Marcin Smiaiowski from *Polsat* TV channel were detained at polling stations #38 and 39, both situated in secondary school #3. The riot police detained them for the attempt to video the vote count. They stated the journalists had invalid accreditation and erased the recording. Marcin Smiaiowski said: 'They took us into two cars and drove to a police station. At first they threatened to search us and take away the cameras in order to find out what we photographed. We answered we won't give them anything and won't talk with them without the Polish consul.' When the Polish consul Jakubik arrived, the journalists gave explanations to the police. The accreditation proved to be real and valid. The detainees were let go after 11 p.m., three hours after detention. Marcin Smiaiowski was also warned for having left his passport at the hotel (article #185 of the Code of Administrative Violations considers it as a violation of the rules for foreign citizens).

**On 21 March** Leanid Skindzer, vice-chair of Ivatsevichy District Executive Committee on ideological work, had a talk with Lidziia Tsaluika, chief editor of the non-state newspaper *Gazeta dlya vas*. He said he didn't want the edition to write anything about Ivatsevichy district, but rather about the neighboring districts. According to him, the newspaper's critical articles spoiled the authority of the local administration and allegedly misinformed the local population concerning the policy and the ideological work that were conducted in the district. According to L.Skindzer, public opinion was to be formed solely by the state newspaper that was subordinated to the DEC.

**On 22 March** the property of the chief editor of *Pressbol* U.Berazhkou was attached by the court marshals for exaction of 10 million rubles in favour of the minister of finances Mikalai Korbut. Among the attached things there were the electric kettle, hoover, washing machine, etc. Berazhkou's wife applied to the court, asking to exclude from the list of the attached things half of the property, stating her rights for half of the family property.

**On 24 March** the police detained Aliaksei Ianukevich, vice-Chair of the BPF Party, as he was handing out copies of the Day of Freedom bulletin among the students of the Belarusian State Economic University. The bulletin is devoted to the declaration of independence of Belarus on 25 March 1918.

**On 24 March** KGB and the police searched the editorial office of *Zgoda* newspaper. They sealed and took away the computers. The activity of the

newspaper was paralyzed. Aliaksei Karol, the newspaper's chief editor, called this incident a part of the purposeful policy conducted on the eve of the presidential election.

**On 24 March** the police detained Frantsysk Viachorka, the under-age student of the Belarusian Humanities Lyceum, for handing out copies of the Day of Freedom outside the shopping mall Impulse. The detained person was taken to Minsk Savetski Borough Department of Internal Affairs.

**On 24 March** Siarhei Niarouny, chief editor of the non-state newspaper *Volny horad* that was issued in Krychau, was summonsed to Krychau District Prosecutor's Office. The police officers showed to him a fly-sheet with his face and the urge to support Andrei Klimau's revolution and come to Minsk on 25 March. According to Niarouny, this flyer was received from Krychau District Executive Committee. *Volny horad* published articles about Klimau and informed readers about his ideas. Siarhei Niarouny stated it was the first time he saw the flyer and he had no relation to it. He called it a provocation of the authorities and urged the prosecutor's office to discriminate in the situation.

**On 24 March** near *Pushkinskaia* tube station in Minsk the police detained the BPF activist Iury Karetnikau and three more persons for handing out the bulleting *Freedom Day*, dedicated to the anniversary of the 87<sup>th</sup> anniversary of declaration of the Belarusian People's Republic. The detainees were taken to Minsk Frunzenski Borough Board of Internal Affairs.

**On 25 March** near the tube station *Uskhod* in Minsk the police detained Aliaksei Kazlouski, chair of Minsk regional branch of BPF *Adradzhenne*, for handing out *Freedom Day* bulletin. They composed on him a report for violation of part 2 of article #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations and then let him go. The trial was appointed on 28, but later was postponed to unknown time.

**On 25 March** it became known that Brest authorities were going increase the control over the distribution of periodicals. At the sitting of Brest Regional Executive Committee, during discussion of 'the system of informational provision of the population and the measures for regulation of the retail sale of periodicals on the territory of Brest' the chair of the ideological department of the REC Zoia Illiushonak stated that 'not all economic subjects that sold periodicals, abided by the goods alignment'. For instance, it concerned the sale of non-state mass media. It was proposed that Brest City Executive Committee would deprive the individual entrepreneurs of the license for retailing of periodicals in case they continued ignoring this fact.

**On 1 April** the head of Minsk OSCE office Eberhard Heiken visited the

editorial office of the non-state newspaper *Zgoda* that felt victim to the state persecution. Mr Heiken expressed his support and solidarity with representatives of independent mass media of Belarus. The reason for his visit to *Zgoda* was confiscation of the computers that belonged to the newspaper and also the letter of the worker of the editorial office Natallia Valakida to the OSCE office, in which she described how Minsk riot police beat her during the opposition action that took place on 25 March 2005. This letter was passed to the Vienna office of the OSCE representative on freedom issues Miklos Haraszti.

**On 1 April** journalists of *Intex-press* newspaper were denied information in two cases. The officials of the housing economy L.Astapchyk and V.Kudlasevich refused to present the information about the fulfillment of the 'Balcony repair program' to journalist Aksana Lianko. They said that they could give it only if she submitted a written inquiry to the chair of the organization. The same day I.Stasevich, chair of the education department of Baranavichy City Executive Committee, refused to tell to the *Intex-press* journalist A.Charnenka the results of the check-up of the three sportive schools subordinated to the department. The official said it was internal information that couldn't be published in a newspaper.

**On 8 April** the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) during its annual meeting in Bilbao (Spain) adopted the following declaration on the situation of mass media in Belarus: The Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Journalists notes with grave concern the serious deterioration of the media situation in Belarus over the last few years and especially before and after 2004 Parliamentary election and Referendum, as a result of which the appropriate article of the Belarusian Constitution was changed to contain no terms' restrictions for the President Lukashenka. During this time the number of independent media outlets has been rapidly declining and the number of administrative warnings and suspensions of independent media issued by the Ministry of Information has been growing. The state media, controlled by the Government are overwhelmingly dominating the market. All national, regional and cable TV channels and radio stations are state owned or, even if are commercial ones, are tightly controlled. The Government heavily subsidizes the state owned electronic and print media, which became Soviet like propaganda and brain washing tools. The few remaining independent print and Internet media are struggling to survive. Harsh libel and insult laws are established solely to protect the oppressive regime of Aliaksandr Lukashenka against critical or investigating journalism. Belarus is the only country in the OSCE region where people are serving prison sentences for insulting the dignity of the Head of State. This legislation is effectively contributing today to self-censorship and lack of free debate in the media and society. Opposing the broad powers given to the Government by the current Media Law and the abusive libel and insult



legislation, the EFJ Annual Meeting denounces as unacceptable any Government plans or proposed amendments to the new media Law under preparation, which will make it and other legislation even more oppressive on independent journalists and media outlets in Belarus. The Annual Meeting of the EFJ strongly supports the brave struggle for freedom of expression and independent journalism fought by our colleagues working in independent press and the Belarusian Association of Journalists, BAJ...

**On 8 April** the new issue of *Zgoda* came out. However, Aliaksei Karol, chief editor of the newspaper, said it became possible only due to the journalist solidarity, because the computers and the office equipment still haven't been returned to the editorial office. We should remind that on 24 March the police came to the editorial office of the newspaper without the prosecutor's sanction. They said that an unknown person phoned them and said that the fly-sheets that were harmful to the authority of the state power were printed in the editorial office. The police confiscated the computers and the organization equipment without composing any reports. Among the confiscated equipment there were items that were lent by the US Embassy. Aliaksei Karol negotiated with the police and the prosecutor's office for more than two weeks. The prosecutor's office violated the 10-day term for answering the complaint – 18 days passed after it was passed. Aliaksei Karol: 'I haven't received any detailed answers. They hinted they continued to look for something, I don't know what. It means that that they failed to confirm the charges upon which they confiscated the equipment. We didn't produce any fly-sheets. I have twice applied to the prosecutor's office, they answered they were working on our application. They still haven't answered to it. They said only that some violation were really found, but the police didn't have any sanction and didn't give any documents that the documents were confiscated, arrested or I don't know how to say what happened to them. Nevertheless, the equipment is still there.'

**On 9 April** the ideological department of Barysau City Executive Committee submitted a letter to the enterprises and organizations of Barysau. In this letter it prohibited to subscribe to the non-state newspapers *Kurier iz Borisova* and *Borisovskije novosti* on behalf of the enterprises and organizations. The administration of some factories even demanded from those who were responsible for the subscription, to compensate the expenditures for subscription to the two newspapers from their own means.

**On 11 April** Minsk Kastychnitski Borough Court, presided by judge Hanna Bulash, ruled to exact from the non-state newspaper *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta* 50 million rubles in favor of the foreign journalist Arkadiy Mar. The journalist of *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta* Iryna Khalip wrote about him in her article *Oklahoma won't found about Lukashenka*. In this article she denied the

very fact of existence of the newspaper *Russkaya Amerika*, described the relations of Arkadiy Mar with the highest level officials of the post-Soviet countries and described him as adventurer. Iryna Khalip also said the trial was conducted with the only aim to close *BDG*. Arkadiy Mardidn't attend the trial, his interests were represented by a lawyer. The lawyer presented to the court two numbers of *Russkaya Amerika*. The plaintiff asked to exact from *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta* and the journalist 1 million dollars. The defense lawyer referred to the fact that Mar was a citizen of the US and such sums were normal for the American court practice. On the other hand, Iryna Khalip said that *Russkaya Amerika* wasn't an influential newspaper in the US and the author of the interview with Lukashenka received free advertisement. The court decided to exact 28 000 dollars, but even this sum was enough to close the newspaper. Its chief editor Piatro Martsau said there were many attempts to liquidate *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta*, but in order to succeed it would be necessary to liquidate its readers, among whom there are even officials from Lukashenka's administration. Martsau also stated the newspaper would complain against the court verdict to supreme instances.

**On 13-15 April** the Ministry of Information issued warnings to the editorial offices of the non-state newspapers *Narodnaia volia*, *Borisovskiy novosti* and *Volnae Hlybokaie*. The warning served to *Narodnaia volia* is dated 13 April and signed by the Minister of Information Uladzimir Rusakievich. The warning is put down to 2 articles printed in March. The first article was printed on 3 March under the heading *Virtual war of granddaughter against grandmother*. The Ministry of Information believed that the author (A.Sivy) published the materials of unfinished legal case without the written permission of the judge. On 31 March the newspaper published *Appeal to the Afghan War Veterans* by the leader of the lury Zakharanka movement Homeland Defenders A.Volchak. The Ministry of Information argued that this was dissemination of information on behalf of an unregistered association. Thus, in the opinion of the registration authority, the editorial office twice violated the demands of article #5 of the law *On press and other mass media*. According to the Ministry of Information, the newspaper *Borisovskiy novosti* violated several articles of the media legislation. The periodical was accused of failure to inform in writing the Ministry of the change in the distribution territory (article #11), of publishing advertisements which had no confirmation of the advertiser's right to perform licensed activity (article #30) and of providing inaccurate imprint on the newspaper and using non-standard fonts (article #26). The editorial office received a warning on 15 April, which was signed by the first vice-minister of information Lilia Ananich. The 15 April warning issued to the founder of the editorial newspaper *Volnaie Hlybokaie* was based on the same claims. The publication is accused of changing the publication language to Russian and Belarusian (instead of Belarusian) without informing the registration authority; publishing advertisements related

to licensed types of activity without indicating the license number, and also violating the publication imprint standards.

**On 14 April** an officer of the Pinsk-based regional branch of the State Control Committee arrived at the editorial office of *Zhivaya voda* newspaper (founded by the state-owned concern *Bedmeliavadhas*) issued in Minsk. He familiarized the senior editor of the publication Valiantsina Navarych with the regulation by the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Belarus. The document said that the editorial offices of the newspapers founded by the state-owned institutions and organizations should not have as founders private individuals, individual entrepreneurs and businessmen with a share of foreign capital. The editor was not allowed to keep this document. As requested by the State Control officer, V.Navarych signed a declaration, in which she promised not to cooperate with the above persons over the issue of the newspaper, or use foreign sponsor help. Also, the newspaper editor communicated brief information about the registration date, the periodicity and coverage, and also confirmed that her newspaper subordinated to Brest Regional Executive Committee will not be printed in printers other than Pinsk Regional Printing House.

**On 14 April** the international organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF) distributed its official statement concerning the verdict of Minsk City Court that fined the journalist Iryna Khalip and the editorial office of *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta*. The organization called the verdict 'scandalous parody on justice' and pointed at the disproportion of the fine to the harm that could be done by the article concerning the so called interview with Lukashenka. RSF also expressed the opinion that the Belarusian authorities weren't going to tolerate the voices of opposition-minded persons and would try to make one of the independent newspapers of Belarus bankrupt.

**On 18 April** the World Campaign for Freedom of Speech *Article 19* sent an open letter to the head of the Belarusian state A.Lukashenka, expressing its deep concern over the deteriorated situation with freedom of expression in Belarus. The organization was particularly concerned over: the lack of results in the case of the murder of the journalist Veranika Charkasava; the closed elaboration of the new draft law on the media; the creation of obstacles for the professional activity of some journalists, etc. The organization urged the Belarusian authorities to bring the national legislation and its enforcement in line with the international standards of freedom of expression. In particular, Article 19 required:

- cancellation of the laws providing for imprisonment for defamation and insults;
- fulfillment of requirements made by the OSCE representative for the freedom of the media, and by the UN special rapporteur for human rights in Belarus, which were presented in the reports in March 2005.

**On 20 April** Iury Ziser, head of the largest Belarusian internet-portal [tut.by](http://tut.by), stated: 'Near at hand there are trials resulting from naivety and short views of Internet users'. He also prepared the official appeal to about 20 000 of the portal users. There he reminded that secret services could find each internet user and also stated the portal administration would remove any postings that would seem law-offensive to the administration, including insult and propaganda of crimes. In the ultimate cases the administration would liquidate the users' post-boxes. Usually internet resources have special filters against four-letter words and the most insulting postings are removed. Iury Ziser didn't hide that his actions were caused by the political situation: 'It seems to us that it will be safer for TUT.BY if people won't have the possibility to write insulting expressions about the president or anyone at all at our forums. Otherwise, we will simply let down our users. People think they are anonymous. In the case they insult one another nothing will happen, but in the case officials get insulted it can have consequences for the authors. In the case the officials sue, they will sue us and those who wrote the insults. For instance, they will require the court to exact from us 100 million rubles, and we will be no more. To put it short, we decided to be on the safe side. We explore the officials' opinions and know that they are really dissatisfied with our forums,' said Iury Ziser.

**On 21 April** Drahichyn District Court ruled to partially grant the claims of plaintiffs (four members and chair of the Drahichyn precinct election commission), who demanded reimbursement of the moral damages inflicted on them by the BPF member Mikola Brych. This is the information provided by the press service of the BPF Party. Mikola Brych worked as a journalist in the local independent newspaper *Gazeta dlya vas*. On the Election Day (17 October 2004) he came to the polling station and became witness to several violations committed by the representatives of the election commission, but was removed from the station. He noted that the chair and some members of the commission were drunk. Because of this, Mr Brych filed a complaint with the prosecutor who organized medical examination of the indicated individuals. However, some other members of the commission were examined instead of the specified ones. So, the journalist's opinion was not confirmed. Then the representatives of the election commission that were accused of drinking brought an administrative action despite the fact the results of the medical examination were not approved by the Regional Drugs Clinic.

**On 25 April** the senior editor of the non-state newspaper *Zgoda* Aliaksei Karol received an answer from the Minsk Partyzanski Borough Prosecutor's Office. He tried to call to account the police officers who at the end of March broke into the apartment he rents, where the journalists were working, and took all office equipment away. The prosecutor's letter said that the police had not committed any violations while searching the apartment and seizing the

computers. On the contrary: the police officers found in the apartment materials (collages) which, if demonstrated, may, in the opinion of the prosecutor's office, be qualified as public defamation of the President (part 1 of article #368 of the Criminal Code). According to Prosecutor Ramanouski, the police took away the computers 'because they had sufficient reasons to believe' that the collages had been produced using this equipment. According to the prosecutor's office, all the materials in this case awaited further verification and the issue of restoring the computers to the owner could only be considered after the end of the verification.

**On 2 May**, the Universal Day of Press Liberty, the board of the Belarusian Association of Journalists issued the statement *Hrodna zone – territory of risk for independent journalists*. There it was said: The last year was defined with the suspension of 25 printed mass media, which became a sad record for the last years. Hrodna region became a zone of risk for independent mass media. Yet in 2001 Hrodna Leninski Borough Court sentenced the journalists of *Pahonia* newspaper Mikola Markevich and Pavel Mazheika to different terms of personal restraint. Another campaign aimed at journalist persecution started in Hrodna region in 2004. In spring 2005 Hrodna regional again drew attention of the Belarusian and the international community. However, even in these hard circumstances the independent press remains devoted to the principles of journalism and a source from which Belarusian citizens can receive timely and objective information about the events that take place in the country and abroad.

**On 5 May** it became known that the catalogue of mass media of Hrodna region was issued by the ideological department of Hrodna regional executive committee for the 9<sup>th</sup> international exhibition *Mass media in Belarus* that opened in Minsk on 3 May. The circulation of the catalogue is 400 copies. The catalogue contains no information about non-state editions, such as *Birzha informacii*, *Hazeta Slonimskaia*, *Mestnaya gazeta*, *Novaya gazeta Smorgoni*, *Tel-eskop*, *Gios z-nad Niemna*. It informs readers about periodical and electronic mass media of Hrodna region, its printing houses, Hrodna branches of such state companies as *Belposhta* (Belarusian post), *Belsaiuzdruk* (Belarusian union publishing) and the open company *Hrodnakniha* (Hrodna book). According to Maryian Maksimonka, worker of the ideological department who was responsible for the catalogue issue, the department consciously decided to include information only about the editions that are completely or partially financed by the state. Natallia Makushyna, editor of the social department of *Birzha informacii* newspaper that wasn't included in the catalog, is sure that the officials again separated journalists depending on their loyalty: 'The most outrageous is that this book with description of 'pocket' newspapers was issued for the means of those who pay taxes, including journalists of *Birzha informacii*', she said.

**On 8 May** the sale of the non-state newspaper *Kurier iz Borisova* stopped at the grocery stores of Barysau. On 1 May the kiosks of the state company *Minabsaiuzdruk* refused to accept for sale the non-state newspaper *Borisovskije novosti*. In both cases the sale agreements were broken by the state enterprises. These actions started after Barysau City Executive Committee gathered information about the ways the city's independent mass media were distributed.

**On 11 May** the Union of Poles in Belarus, founder of *Gios z-nad Niemna* newspaper, decided to suspend the edition for two weeks. The matter was that in the middle of April the Council of the Union of Poles in Belarus fired Andrei Dubikouski from the position of the chief editor of *Gios z-nad Niemna* newspaper. Dubikouski was fired because the newspapers circulation decreased under his rule and the newspaper began to play less interest to life of Poles in Belarus. Instead, the council appointed Andzhei Pisalnik to be the editor. Three newspaper numbers were issued after this appointment. Belarusian officials stated Dubikouski was a good editor and it was a wrong step to fire him. As a result, Hrodna Leninski Borough Court decided to rehabilitate Andrei Dubikouski at his former position and obliged the editorial staff to compensate the harm and the court expenses to him. The total sum was about 1 000 000 rubles. According to the Council of the Union of Poles, by its verdict the court created a dangerous precedent that can paralyze the organization and demonstrated interference in the internal affairs of the organization. One of the reasons for the suspension is also the loss the newspaper experienced as a result of the payment of compensation to Andrei Dubikouski.

**On 16 May** the Ministry of Information issued the second warning to the editorial office of the *Narodnaia volia* newspaper, accusing it of distributing deceitful statements. At the same time, the editorial office came to know that five citizens had simultaneously filed five suits worth 50 million rubles each. Article #32, which the *Narodnaia volia* allegedly violated in the opinion of the ministry, states the right of the Belarusian citizens to receive truthful information from the media. According to the ministry, the newspaper violated these provisions by publishing the articles entitled *This is the will of the people* (issue #7 of 23 April 2005) that said that around 300 employees of the Belaruskalii (state-owned company) had signed under a collective letter to support creation of the civil movement *Will of The People*. The Belarusian Association of Journalists reported that *Narodnaia volia* refuted this information on 14 May by declaring that some of the people mentioned in the list weren't employees of Belaruskalii. The same April article served as a ground for five suits filed by the employees of Belaruskalii who claimed they hadn't signed in support of the civil movement *Will of the People*. Each required compensation worth 50 million rubles. The chief editor of *Narodnaia volia* Iosif Siaredzich said he would

study all pretensions, but stated the Ministry of Information hurried too much: 'The Ministry of Information actually overtook the function of the court. It doesn't give to the editorial board any possibility to correct its mistakes as it is required by the law on press.' Mr Siaredzich also said all five civil suits looked alike, only surnames were different. He even quoted a paragraph that could be found in all of the suits: 'I actively support the policy that is conducted by the president of the Republic of Belarus Lukashenko A.G. and therefore think my political views were compromised, by which my honor and dignity were violated.' According to Siaredzich, the lists of the signers were passed to *Narodnaia volia* by the coordinators of *Will of The People* movement and some provocations could be staged.

**On 16 May** in Ivatsevichy (Brest region) the kiosks owned by *Belsaiuzdruk* (the state-owned company that distributes newspapers and magazines) stopped putting up for display independent periodicals, including *Gazeta dlya vas*, *Narodnaia volia* and *Kurier iz Borisova*. The order for it was issued by the head of Ivatsevichi branch of *Belsaiuzdruk* Iryna Mikhniuk. According to the sellers, the department head herself received an appropriate instruction from Ivatsevichy District Executive Committee. I. Mikhniuk herself during a meeting with L. Tsaluika denied the directive or a document from the Ivatsevichy district executive committee, and said that this was misunderstanding. Nonetheless, the situation with the independent periodicals in Ivatsevichy stayed the same.

**On 18 May** Iosif Siaredzich, the senior editor of *Narodnaia volia* was summoned to the prosecutor's office of Belarus to be served an official warning for 'unacceptability of the law violation and distribution of information on behalf of unregistered ... public associations'. The warning was signed by the vice-prosecutor general of Belarus Mikalai Kupryianau on 16 May. The warning says the prosecutor's office analyzed the material about the activity of the civil association *Will of The People* published in February and concluded that that 'the civil initiative *Will of the People* is not registered as a civil association, as required under the law'. Thus, the prosecutor's office argues that Mr Siaredzich, in his capacity of the senior editor of *Narodnaia volia*, violated article #5 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus *On press and other mass media*. Mikhail Pastukhou, the head of the Legal Support Center for Media of the Belarusian Association of Journalists, believes that the governmental agencies use too broad interpretation of the notion of a civil association, which enables them to considerably restrict not only the initiative of the Belarusian citizens, but also the activity of the media, through which they attempt to publicize themselves. He does not rule out that the authorities also used this article as a pretext for pressurizing the only independent daily published in Belarus.

**On 19 May** the international organization *Reporters without Borders* (RSF)

made a special statement expressing its concern over the pressurization of the independent press by the Belarusian authorities. The statement was released following the warning issued by the Ministry of Information to *Narodnaia volia*, and legal suits filed by five workers in Salihorsk who demanded that the newspaper pay them damages for alleged libel. The statement issued by the international organization quoted the words of the *Narodnaia volia* editor Iosif Siaredzich who thinks that 'the Ministry of Information simultaneously plays the parts of an investigator, a prosecutor and a judge'.

**On 20 May** four citizens of Hlusk sued the editorial board of *Narodnaia volia*, stating they didn't sign in support of *Will of The People*. Each of the plaintiffs demanded 5 million rubles of compensation. This time all suits also looked alike.

**On 23 May** Pinsk City Executive Committee sent to the chairs of state enterprises, organizations and institutions letter #26 of 15 May 2005, signed by the CEC chairman Aliaksandr Hordzich. Here's an excerpt from it: 'We turn your attention to the necessity of obligatory institutional subscription to the following newspapers during the second half of 2005: *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, *Respublika*, *Narodnaia hazeta*, *Zviazda*, *Zarya* and *Pinski vesnik*.' All of these newspapers are state ones and have the appropriate ideological orientation. The founders of *Zarya* are Brest Regional Deputy Soviet and Pinsk City Executive Committee. The letter also informed the vice-heads on ideology about the necessity to subscribe to the magazine of the presidential administration *Belaruskaja dumka*. It was recommended to the primary organizations of Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM) to subscribe to the newspaper *Znamiya yunosti*.

**On 24 May** at the press conference in Vitsebsk City Executive Committee at the beginning of May, Siarhei Kochatau, a correspondent of *Vitebskiy kurier*, was not allowed to ask a question. 'We have not invited the *kurier* here at all! , declared the head of the information department of the city executive committee of Vitsebsk Aleh Abrosimau. - So, ask no questions!' At the press conference the senior architect of the city Barys Liadzenka explained the need for constructing a gas station within Vitsebsk. *Vitebskiy kurier* wrote that the residents of the nearest high-rises are indignant at the construction of this site and send many letters to governmental agencies. That's why the press conference was convened. In the middle of May, Vitsebsk Regional Prosecutor's Office refused to provide information to the *Vitebskiy kurier* correspondent Zhanna Paharelava, saying the following: 'You are working in the wrong newspaper'.

**On 25 May** the hearing of the suit filed by the leader of the Liberal-Democratic Party of Belarus Siarhei Haidukevich against *Narodnaia volia* was to



have taken part at Minsk Leninski Borough Court. S.Haidukevich argues that the article *Haidukevich's letter. And fax message for Haidukevich* (#39 of 1 March 2005) contained untrue information, and so requires payment of damages worth 200 million rubles. The trial was postponed to 3 June because, according to the judge Liubou Valevich, a part of the documents that were presented to the court by the sides of the trial, weren't translated from English by 25 May.

**On 26 May** it became known that before 15 June the companies and organizations of Hrodna were to submit a report about the subscription to *Sovetskaya Belorussia* newspaper for the second half-year in 2005. It was said in the letter sent out by the administrations of two boroughs in Hrodna. The document indicated the numbers of copies of *Sovetskaya Belorussia* a company had to subscribe. It was recommended that the information about the subscription results be submitted to the borough departments of ideological work. According to journalists, the administrations of the boroughs did the subscription on the instruction of Hrodna City Executive Committee. Uladzimir Amelka, head of the ideology department of Hrodna City Executive Committee, said that apart from *Sovetskaya Belorussia* the executive committees also insisted on subscription of several state republican periodicals (*Zviazda*, *Respublika*, *Belorusskaya niva*, *Sem dney*, *Znamia yunosti* and *Belaruskaia dumka*) 'because they cover the policies conducted by the state'. The list of newspapers that were supported by the authorities also includes six local state periodicals, including *Hrodnenskaia prauda*, which Mr Amelka himself called 'unexciting'.

**In the evening of 26 May** a print-run of the independent newspaper *Den* was attached on the Russia-Belarus border. The car was taken to Dubrouna District Department of Internal Affairs (Vitsebsk region). According to the paper made, the newspaper was attached because it 'was not accredited'. According to the newspaper editor Mikola Markevich, earlier the Smolensk printers that printed the newspaper received a letter from the Ministry of Information of Belarus signed by the Vice-Minister Lilia Ananich. The letter said that the Ministry asked the printers to stop printing the newspaper because it had not been registered in a properly way. 'This is all lies. We went through the re-registration procedure and have a properly registered status,' said Mikola Markevich.

**On 27 May** the senior editor of *Den* Mikola Markevich filed a complaint against the actions performed by the officers of Dubrouna District Board of Internal Affairs who in the evening of 26 May confiscated 1990 copies of *Den* newspaper 'without indicating actual or legal reasons' for their actions. M.Markevich demanded that 1990 copies of the newspaper should be restored and those behind – called to account under the law. The complaint was filed

with the head of Dubrouna DBIA. The message underlined that the police actions contradicted the legislation effective in Belarus. The police officers did not provide official explanations to *Denpress* or give any reasons for their actions; they did not take a sample of the product, as is allowed under article #16 of the law *On police* but the entire print-run of the newspaper; the confiscation was not properly formalized; the police interfered with the legal distribution of the periodical without a court ruling in violation of article #25 of the law *On press*, and with the legal activity of the editorial office, the publisher and the distributors in violation of article #48 of the same law. 'These violations show that confiscation of printed media materials (print-run #1 (190) of *Den*) is illegal and violates the rights and legal interests of the editorial office and the publisher of *Den – Denpress*,' says the complaint.

**On 27 May** a new issue of *Gios znad Niemna* newspaper wasn't published after the two-week suspension. Andzhei Pisalnik, the chief director of the newspaper, didn't manage to contact the director of Hrodna printing house. A worker of the printing house said the editorial board owed money for printing, but at the accountant's office of the printing house Pisalnik was said all bills were paid. Pisalnik: 'The experience of other independent editions shows that in the case a printing house in Hrodna refuses to print a newspaper, all printing houses of Belarus will refuse to print it as well. We could print the newspaper abroad, but in this case the editorial office would be unable to distribute it.' The new issue of *Gios znad Niemna* was also prepared by the journalist Andrei Pachobut. He gave the following commentary: 'In fact, the refusal to print *Gios znad Niemna* is the beginning of liquidation of the Union of Poles. I think the authorities refused to print it so that common members of the Union of Poles wouldn't find out what happened. We know that regional leaders of the Union of Poles are being intimidated all over the country with participation of KGB and the local authorities.'

**In the afternoon of 30 May** a policeman came to the chief editor of the newspaper *Zgoda* Aliaksei Karol. They showed him the warrant of the prosecutor's office for examination of his flat. The policeman paid interest to the registration certificate and copies of the newspaper. However, Mr Karol managed to escape examination of the flat – the warrant contained no directions concerning the objects the policeman was to look for, which is a violation of the legal requirements. We should remind that two months before the prosecutor's office brought a criminal case on the fact of 'defamation of the president' in *Zgoda*. The reason for the case was a series of humoristic collages that were later confiscated from the editorial staff together with the computers that were used for preparation of the newspaper.

ing the individual entrepreneurs and the juridical bodies who retailed periodicals to coordinate with the ideological departments of city and district executive committees the list of the periodicals they could sell to the people by 1 June. The entrepreneurs were ordered to provide information about the name of each edition, its topics, the information about the state registration, the date and the number of the concluded distribution agreement. What concerns foreign editions (except for Russian ones) it was also necessary to put the number of the permission of the Ministry of Information for distribution in Belarus. Hanna Shydloouskaia, chair of the ideological department of Homel City Executive Committee, specified the aims of this regulation: 'We need to know where they print the newspapers somewhere here, in the suburbs, or conclude with somebody supply agreements. Another thing: at least 70% of the sold newspapers must be the Belarusian periodicals that receive support from the state budget.' Among the newspapers which were ordered for obligatory sale there were *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, *Respublika*, the local state newspapers *Homelskaia prauda*, *Homelskiia vedamastsi* and other official sports, children's and cultural editions. The total number of the state editions for obligatory sale is 32. The vice-chair of the private enterprise *Press-time* Aliaksandr Shylovich said: 'We want to sell what people read and have little space. In the case we lay out all obligatory editions, what trade will be there?'

**On 31 May** the journalist Katsiaryna Tkachenka was again summonsed to Minsk Savetski Borough Board of Internal Affairs for giving explanations concerning the article *Our Poles* that was published in *Nedelya* newspaper in autumn 2004. In this article she criticized the activity of the former chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus Tadevush Kruchkouski. Mr Kruchkouski considered the articles insulting for his honor and dignity and discrediting. After he stopped being the UPB chair, he filed a complaint with the prosecutor's office, asking to start a criminal case on the fact of the publication. According to Katsiaryna Tkachenka, at that time the prosecutor's office decided not to bring the case, but in May they again paid interest to the article.

**On 31 May** the senior inspector of Minsk police Siarhei Siavets demanded written explanations from the journalists of *Narodnaia volia* Vital Harbuzau and Maryna Koktysh in connection with the publication of the articles about the movement *Defenders of Fatherland*. Maryna Koktysh took an interview from the movement's leader Aleh Volchak and Vital Harbuzau prepared an article about its presentation. According to Maryna Koktysh, the inspector asked how it became known that former KGB agents joined the movement. We should also remind that the Ministry of Information issued a warning to *Narodnaia volia* for the publication of Aleh Volchak's *Appeal to Veterans of War in Afghanistan*, considering it as distribution of information on behalf of unregistered association.

**On 1 June** the director of Hrodna printing house Piatro Mironau didn't give any answer to the editorial office of *Gios znad Niemna*, newspaper of the Union of Poles in Belarus. They asked him why the newspaper wasn't printed atwart the concluded agreement. According to the chief editor of *Gios znad Niemna* Andzhei Piscalnik, 1 June was the deadline by which the newspaper was to have been printed. 'It means the newspaper won't come out this week as well', said Mr Piscalnik. To his mind, the obstacles were created by the Belarusian authorities with the aim to destabilize the work of the editorial office and cause mistrust among the subscribers.

**On 1 June** the broadcasting of the Ukrainian TV channel *Inter Plus* was stopped in Kalinkavichy. Citizens of the border districts think the reason could be the fear of the Ukrainian orange revolution the authorities had.

**On 1 June** the editorial board of *Narodnaia volia* filed with KGB the inquiry concerning the origin of the anonymous *Declaration on the forming and the aims of the activity of the Belarusian People's Liberation Army* that was received by E-mail on 31 May. The declaration was attached. In particular, in this document it was said that on 15 June a number of actions would be carried out in Belarus. The editorial office believes this document could be fabricated with the aim to justify the political repression against the leaders of the opposition, independent mass media, public associations and the human rights organizations that voice harsh criticism over the human rights violations in the country.

**On 3 June** the trial on suit of Siarhei Haidukevich, chair of the Liberal-Democratic Party of Belarus to the independent newspaper *Narodnaia volia* started at Minsk Leninski Borough Court. The lawyer of Belarusian Helsinki Committee Aleh Hulak took part in it as the public representative of the newspaper's interests. The court refused Andrei Bastunets, vice-chair of Belarusian Association of Journalists, in the right to represent the newspaper's interests at trial due to absence of the documents that could confirm that *Narodnaia volia* was an associate member of BAJ. The newspaper's defense lawyer Uladzimir Ptashkin solicited for cessation of the trial because the case exceeded the competence of the court. The court announced a break to make a decision on this petition.

**On 3 June** the international organization *Article 19* directed an open letter to A.Lukashenka to express its great concern with the latest events around the newspaper *Narodnaia volia* and the trial on the suit of the leader of the Liberal-Democratic Party of Belarus Siarhei Haidukevich. Article 19 also reminded about other cases: the appeal of the vice-editor of *Narodnaia volia* Aliaksandr Silich for political asylum in Belgium, the warning that was issued for the publication about the civil movement *Will of The People*, nine suits worth 125 000 US dollars that almost completely repeated one another. Article 19 urged the

Belarusian authorities to provide free and fair trial of *Narodnaia volia* the proportionality of the financial punishment (in the case it would be given) to the harm inflicted and abolishment the legal norms that provided for liquidation of a newspaper on the basis of two warnings.

**On 7 June** two preliminary sittings on the suits against the editorial board of *Narodnaia volia* took place at Minsk City Economic Court. One suit was filed by *Belaruskalii* plant, the other – by Salihorsk State Mining and Engineering School. The suits concerned the article *This Is Will of People* that was published in #77 of the newspaper. The articles contained information about the establishment of the civil movement *Will of the People* and signatures of workers and students. A representative of *Belaruskalii* and the college director came to the court together with a defense lawyer. They refused to explain the essence of their pretensions to the newspaper. According to the chief editor of *Narodnaia volia* the sides tried to reach a compromise during their pre-trial talk. *Narodnaia volia* promised to publish an article with definition of the position of the college director and the editorial board, which can put an end to the conflict. What concerns *Belaruskalii*, Mr Siaredzich said the case could be solved in the same way and there would be no trials.

**On 9 June** Vera Tupik, judge of Minsk Leninski Borough Court ruled to find incorrect and insulting the information printed in *Narodnaia volia* – people's signatures under the appeal about the establishment of *Will of the People* movement after the 'signers' – Salihorsk citizens Siarhei Katovich, Nina Hrechyts and Nina Fralova sued the newspaper. She obliged the newspaper to pay 2 million rubles of compensation to each of them. The judge turned up the suit of Pavel Zhyshevich. The same day Minsk Leninski Borough Court considered similar suits of four Kletsk citizens – Piatro Talaika, physician-in-chief of the medical department of Kletsk, Lilia Liber, director of a village school, the brigade commandant Ivan Hudzko and the housewife Iryna Zakruta. Each of them demanded five million rubles as a compensation for the moral harm done to the information printed in *Narodnaia volia* and their signatures under the manifest about the establishment of *Will of the People*. The chief editor of the newspaper Iosif Siaredzich proposed the plaintiffs to refuse from material pretensions in exchange of publication of confutation, but Kletsk citizens refused to do it, following the example of the plaintiffs from Salihorsk. The court sentenced the newspaper to pay 3 million rubles to each of the plaintiffs from Kletsk. Thus, the total sum to be paid by *Narodnaia volia* became 15 million rubles, which is about 7 000 US dollars.

**On 10 June** Hrodna regional printing house printed the 19<sup>th</sup> issue of the newspaper of the Union of Poles in Belarus *Gios znad Niemna*. The UPB considered it as a provocation, because the regional printing house didn't accept

for printing the number that was prepared by the editorial office, but published another issue. Even the name of the editor wasn't printed there, which is a law violation. Andzhei Piscalnik commented: 'The appearance of this number of *Gios znad Niemna* is a doubtless provocation, because neither the Union of Poles nor the editorial board of *Gios znad Niemna* had nay relation to it!' Piscalnik's opinion was shared by the vice-chair of the UPB Iuzaf Pazhetski, who pointed the number was issued without the agreement of the UPB administration. Andzhei Piscalnik informed the director of Hrodna regional printing house and the prosecutor's office about this violation of the law on mass media. He also tried to stop distribution of the false newspaper issue.

**On 14 June** Liubou Valevich, judge of Minsk Leninski Borough Court, sentenced *Narodnaia volia* to pay 100 million rubles (about 45 500 US dollars) to Siarhei Haidukevich, leader of the Belarusian Liberal-Democratic Party and deputy of the Chamber of Representatives of National Assembly for compensation of moral harm. The court found the information of the article *Letter from Haidukevich. And Fax to Haidukevich* (published on 1 March 2005) deceitful and insulting. In the article it was said that Haidukevich owed about one million dollars to Hussein's oil ministry.

**On 15 June** the director of the closed corporation Publishing House *Vitebskiy kurier* received a letter from the Cultural Business Center of the open corporation KIM. The letter informed *Vitebskiy Kurier* that since 10 July 2005 KIM broke the rent agreement with it and asked to leave the rented premises by that term, because the new owner of the Cultural Business Center of KIM would become the communal property of Vitsebsk.

**On 16 June** it became known that the Polish authorities suspended the financing of *Gios znad Niemna*, because the last number (the false one) was issued by the old head of the Union of Poles in Belarus Tadevush Kruchkouski. He was the author of all articles and slurred the new leaders of the Union and the Polish authorities as well.

**On 16 June** the Economic Court of Minsk started to hear the case brought by Salihorsk State Mining and Engineering School against the editorial office of *Narodnaia volia*. The case concerned protecting business reputation. The school demanded that the information distributed by the periodical be recognized as false and libelous, the newspaper print a refutation and reimburse legal expenses. The suit concerned the article *Solid voice of young people* that appeared in the paper issue #77. The article said that 37 students of Salihorsk School signed the petition in support of *Will of the People* movement. The claimant argued that a number of people from the printed list weren't students of this institution, and several more did not sign any documents at all.

**On 19 June** Hrodna regional printers started printing a false issue of *Gios znad Niemna*, a paper of the Union of Poles. The senior editor of the newspaper Andzei Piscalnik found it out and requested that the printers show him the documents relating to this issue of the newspaper. It turned out that the newspaper arrived without supporting papers, and the signature of the editor that signed it to print was illegible. Mr Piscalnik came to Hrodna Kastrychnitski District Board of Internal Affairs and filed a statement saying that the newspaper is being illegally printed by people who do not work in the editorial office, and on the paper that belonged to the Union of Poles.

**On 17 June** the consumer services department of Minsk City Executive Committee sent to the administrations of the city's enterprises the official order 'to take measures for obligatory provision of the subscription to the newspaper of the presidential administration *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* and the newspaper of Minsk City Executive Committee *Minskiy kurier*'. The document was signed by A.Koushar, the head of the department of consumer services. The editorial office also received copies of two similar documents. One of them was signed by the chair of Minsk Zavodski Borough Executive Committee, the other – by his colleague from Pershamaiski BEC Valery Skakun. In both cases they asked to organize the institutional subscription to the state editions and 'prevent institutional subscription to non-state ones'. The chair of Pershamaiski BEC asked heads of administrations to personally control this issue 'due to its political importance' and gave the exact number of copies to which all branches of enterprises, dormitories and libraries of Pershamaiski borough had to subscribe. Belarusian entrepreneurs said the same order was given to private firms and entrepreneurs. The state organs refuted this information, but said they didn't approve of subscription to non-state press. Representatives Minsk Savetski BEC gave oral order to subscribe to the state press to the local entrepreneurs.

**On 20 June** the registration and licensing department of Minsk City Executive Committee refused to register changes to the statute of *Den-press*, the company that published *Den* newspaper. The changes concerned the new legal address that was provided by the Polish House in Minsk. The officials stated the rental agreement between the House and *Den-press* was invalid. Mikalai Markevich, the senior editor of *Den* and head of *Den-press*, received from the registration and licensing department of Minsk City Executive Committee a paper that said the agreement providing office premises was invalid because the new organs of the Union of Poles were deemed as illegitimate. Mr Markevich concluded: 'One thing is clear: this is an attempt to destabilize the situation, an attempt to create an atmosphere of uncertainty and prevent the legal activity of the legally registered periodical'.

**At p.m. on 21 June** police officers came to the privately-owned apartment

where the renowned Hrodna journalist, the editor of *Magazyn polski*, Andrei Pachobut lives. The journalist and public activist was taken to the police station of the Dzeviatouka block. There the investigator Natallia Haidash informed Andrei Pachobut that they had received a complaint from Tadevush Kruchkouski. He had referred to the insulting articles published by Andrei Pachobut about Kruchkouski, calling the journalist the senior editor of *Pahonia* newspaper site, which wasn't true. Andrei Pachobut refused to testify and was released later on.

**On 21 June** *Narodnaia volia* was refused accreditation at the press conference of the prosecutor general of Belarus Piatro Miklashevich, due to take place on 23 June. The official reason for refusal was no room for *Narodnaia volia* correspondent in the court hall, where Mr Miklashevich intended to meet with the media representatives. The newspaper challenged this version and noted that the press conference was an open event.

**On 23 June** the Belarusian Association of Journalists asked several governmental agencies to undertake measures to prevent the illegal actions connected with the illegal issue and distribution of *Gios znad Niemna*, and bring the guilty people to account. BAJ sent its appeal to the minister of information Uladzimir Rusakevich, the minister of communications Uladzimir Hancharenka, the chair of the State Control Committee Anatol Tozik, prosecutor general Piatro Miklashevich and also to the prosecutor of Hrodna region, the director of Hrodna branch of *Belposhta* and the director of Hrodna printers. The appeal was based on the appearance of two issues of *Gios znad Niemna* on 10 and 17 June that was printed and distributed without the permission of the senior editor and without the consent of the founder – the Union of Poles in Belarus. The organization asked for the disclosed facts to be examined and for measures to prevent such events in the future, and bring the violators to account.

**On 24 June** Hrodna regional printing house issued the third issue of *Gios znad Niemna* that was prepared without participation of its editorial board and the consent of the Union of Poles in Belarus. It was confirmed by the director of the printing house Piatro Mitrafanau. The UPB leaders again applied to Hrodna Kastychnitski Borough Board of Internal Affairs and prosecutor's office.

**On 27 June** Minsk City Court left in force the verdict on the case of vice-editor of *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta* Iryna Khalip. We should remind that on 11 April Iryna Khalip and the private Unitarian enterprise *Marat* were found guilty in insult of honor and dignity of the American journalist Akradiy Mar. I.Khalip was sentenced to pay 10 million rubles and *Marat* – 50 million rubles as compensation to the journalist.



**On 27 June** the Supreme Economic Court dismissed the suit filed by the editorial office of *Narodnaia volia* against the Ministry of Information, upholding the warning to the newspaper. The warning issued by the Ministry of Information on 13 April concerned two articles. The first article was published on 3 March and was entitled *Virtual war of a granddaughter and a grandmother*. The Ministry of Information believed that the author (A.Sivy) published the materials of the case being investigated without written agreement of the judge. On 31 March the newspaper printed *Appeal to the Afghan War veterans*, which was signed by the human rights activist Aleh Volchak alongside other people. He was mentioned in the letter as the leader of the movement *Defenders of Fatherland*, and the Ministry of Information regarded this as information distributed on behalf of an unregistered association.

**On 27 June** it became known that the three unofficial issues of *Gios znad Niemna* that came out contrary to the leadership of the Union of Poles in Belarus were funded by Hrodna Region Executive Committee. The senior editor of the newspaper Andzei Piscalnik learnt this from the distributor of *Gios znad Niemna – Belsaiuzdruk*.

**On 27 June** the American Center for Exchange and International Research (IREX) reported the deteriorated situation with the freedom of speech in Belarus last year. This information is provided in the *Index of media stability in 2004*. The Index... offers an assessment of the development of the media in the 20 countries of Eurasia. The report assesses the freedom of speech, pluralism of the media available to the public, standards of professional journalism, media stability and efficiency of the institutes that support the independent media.

**On 29 June** the consideration of the suit about the protection of the business reputation of *Belaruskalii* plant at Minsk City Economic Court ended with a voluntary settlement. According to the defense lawyer of *Narodnaia volia* Larysa Atamanchuk, before the beginning of the sitting vice-director general of *Belaruskalii* Anatol Makhlai and the lawyer of the plant Valiantsina Iakimovich proposed to conclude a voluntary settlement with the following conditions: the editorial office of the newspaper excused for the publication of untrue information about the support of *Will of the People* movement by workers of *Belaruskalii*, because 262 of 302 signers didn't work there. *Belaruskalii*, in its turn, undertook to refuse from its pretensions and pay for the court expenses. On 17 June the court also closed the analogical case that was brought on the suit of Salihorsk State Mining and Engineering School because the argument 'was not liable to consideration at the Economic Court'.

**On 29 June** Ivatsevichy District Board of Internal Affairs composed a re-

port for violation of part 3 of article #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations (distribution of printed materials without data-line) against the former policeman Stanislau Khaladovich. Mr Khaladovich visited several villages of Ivatsevichy district, including the village of Hortal. He met with citizens and handed out materials about the activity of some oppositional organizations. A citizen of Hortal phoned to the police. Policemen composed the report, came to the village and confiscated the printed materials from the villagers.

**On 30 June** the editor of Mahiliou non-state TV studio *2<sup>nd</sup> Channel* Alena Barysava was almost fired because a local official expressed his dissatisfaction with a program she prepared within the framework of the series of programs *Near the History*. In the middle of June the TV showed the program with expression of criticism regarding the way the Orthodox bishop's palace of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Mahiliou was being restored. Two years before the building was returned to Mahiliou Orthodox Church, which started the repairs. The author of the program and its other participants expressed their concern with the restoration that destroyed certain architectural peculiarities of the palace. The chair of Mahiliou regional committee on religious and ethnic affairs Valery Vankovich was highly critical of the program and said it wasn't journalists business to interfere with the process of restoration of the property of Mahiliou Orthodox Church by its owners. When A.Astapau, chair of *2<sup>nd</sup> Channel*, found about it, he said to A.Barysava he would fire her. However, he refused from this intention after she personally phoned to V.Vankovich and proposed to settle the case at court, which he refused to do.

**On 30 June** Uladzimir Chyhirynau, the chair of the department of sports and tourism of Hrodna City Executive Committee, refused to give information to the journalist Aliaksandr Dvaretski. Mr Chyhirynau explained he didn't 'talk to free journalists'. Aliaksandr Dvaretski was looking for information about the development of tourism in Belarus and phoned to Uladzimir Chyhirynau, asking to inform him about the official vision of the perspectives of tourism in Hrodna. He introduced himself as a free journalist and a member of the Belarusian Association of Journalists, after which the official refused to talk with him.

**On 1 July** the assortment 're-approval' term specified by Homel City Executive Committee for all companies and businesspeople that sold printed periodicals expired. The term was one month long. This was not the first step by the authorities, which indicates their desire to control the distribution of printed materials and complicate the work of those involved in the process. At the end of 2004 in several regions of Belarus the local authorities issued a regulation telling businesspeople (organizations) that trade in printed media to seek approval for 'additions' to the assortments, including details about each periodi-

cal. Besides, the conditions for retail of periodicals were changed by order #285 *About some measures on regulation of business activity* signed by A.Lukashenka on 18 June. As a result individual entrepreneurs were made to pay a set of business taxes instead of the single tax they used to pay.

**On 5 July** there came out the fourth issue of *Gios znad Niemna* without the agreement of the Union of Poles in Belarus. In the data-line Viktor Kruchkouski, the brother of the former UPB chair Tadevush Kruchkouski still recognized by the authorities as the head of the Union, was mentioned as the senior editor. The previous three false issues of the paper were signed by an unknown 'editorial board'. One of the articles of the latest issue claimed that 'for obvious reasons government will soon undertake the maintenance costs of organizations representing minority groups. The authorities provided for printing and distribution of the *Gios znad Niemna*'. The real editorial office had only one thing left - protest.

**On 6 July** in Hrodna in Lenin Square the police detained journalists protesting against the pirated version of *Gios znad Niemna*. The detained people included the senior editor of *Gios znad Niemna* Andzei Pisalnik, his co-workers Inesa Todryk, Ihar Bantsar, and also the senior editor of *Magazyn Polski* Andrei Pachobut and a *Salidarnasts* newspaper correspondent Ivan Roman. They were taken to the police station, and after lunch - to the court. The court fined Andrei Pachobut and Ihar Bantsar for taking part in an unauthorized picket and insubordination to the police.

**On 6 July** the editorial offices of the Brest newspapers received from the local city executive committee a letter signed by the vice-chair Viachaslau Khafizau. The letter informed of the need to fulfill the decision of the city executive committee #310 of 17 March 2005 *On the system of providing information to people and on the measures for improving the retail network of distribution of periodicals on the territory of the city*. In particular, the editorial offices required that the ideology department of the city executive committee be provided with a list of public distributors of the local periodicals.

**On 8 July** Hrodna Leninski Borough Court stopped hearings of the cases against journalists who staged a protest in the center of the city demanding that the Union of Poles in Belarus be returned their newspaper *Gios znad Niemna*, and were detained by police. As a result, the judge imposed on Inesa Todryk a fine of about 230 US dollars, Andzei Pisalnik and Ivan Roman were sentenced to a fine of about 1 200 US dollars each. We would like to remind you that several days before Ihar Bantsar was fined 510 thousand rubles, and Andrei Pachobut – 5 125 000 (about 2 400 US dollars). At that time Andzei Pisalnik and Andrei Pachobut were expecting the administrative committee's

decision because the police had also prepared a report registering their alleged violation 'sanitation rules' (these journalists during the action on 6 July put their belongings on the grass in Lenin Square).

**On 11 July** in Ashmiany border guards detained the vice-chair of the Union of Poles Iuzaf Pazhetski and the senior editor of *Magazyn Polski* Andrei Pachobut. The journalists came to the Polish House in Ashmiany to have a meeting with the leadership of the local department of the Union of Poles. However, there unexpectedly came the border guards who took both of them to the commandant's office. They submitted their passports to the Visa and Immigration Service, however, they had other documents on them and travel certificates. The journalists were warned for violating the rules of stay in the border zone, which includes the town of Ashmiany. From the commandant's office the border guards took Iuzaf Pazhetski and Andrei Pachobut to the police, where they were warned that if they are again detained in Ashmiany, they will be charged. A.Pachobut: 'The sense of this action against us is to restrict contacts of the Union of Poles leadership with the regional structures'. Mr Pachobut said that they had been told frankly: they were detained thanks to information made available to the border guards, which means that the police could spy on them and tap their telephones.

**On 13 July** the administrative commission of Ivatsevichy District Executive Committee fined the local resident Stanislau Khaladovich 204 000 rubles for illegally distributing printed periodicals. The reason for the punishment was that Mr Khaladovich distributed in Hortal, Ivatsevichy district, the Russian newspaper *Novaya gazeta*, the brochure by Vasil Liavonau *Without right to mistake* and the news bulletin covering the activities by the 5+ coalition.

**On 13 July** the journalists of the Polish Public Television (TVP) in Lodz (Poland) started to raise funds to pay the fines incurred by the journalists of *Gios znad Niemna*, which were awarded by Hrodna Leninski Borough Court. The Lodz journalists call on the people of Poland to show a gesture of solidarity and join the action of support. Hrodna journalists had to pay fines within 15 days.

**On 15 July** in Vitsebsk the police patrol detained the independent press distributors Barys Khamaida and Ales Mudrychenka outside Vitsebsk Regional Executive Committee. They were handing out the magazine *Arche*, the newspaper *Vitebskiy prospekt* and the independent periodical *Vybor*.

**On 15 July** the Ministry of Information issued a warning to the editorial office of the independent newspaper *Vitebskiy kurier*. The warning was signed by the first vice-minister of information Lilia Ananich. The periodical was ac-

cused of failing to reregister because of changes made to the title (article #11 of the Law *On press* and the Soviet of Ministers' regulation #727 of 30 May 2003). Furthermore, the Ministry of Information noted that the imprint of the newspaper did not mention the complete name of the founder (article #26), that 'the subheader data do not include the name of the publisher', and the name of the newspaper editor 'isn't printed above the data-line'.

**On 19 July** the property that belongs to the editor of the sports newspaper *Pressbol* Uladzimir Berazhkou was attached. According to the decision taken by Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court, Berazhkou had to pay almost 5 000 US dollars in favor of Mikalai Korbut, Minister of Finances (the editorial office of the newspaper had paid him about 15 000 dollars).

**On 21 July** Brest Regional Executive Committee allocated 70 million rubles to buy new equipment for state-run newspapers. This is the information provided on the official site of Brest REC. The money was provided by the decision of Brest Regional Deputy Soviet. According to the senior specialist of the REC ideology department Ms Hahakava, the new equipment could significantly help the editorial offices of the regional newspaper *Zarya* (the founders included Brest Regional Deputy Soviet and Brest Regional Executive Committee), the district-based newspapers *Poleskaya pravda* (the founders are Pinsk District Deputy Soviet and Pinsk District Executive Committee), *Chyrvonaia zvezda* (the founder is Ivanava District Executive Committee), *Drahichynski vesnik* (the founders are Drahychin District Executive Committee and Drahychin District Deputy Soviet), the town newspaper *Pinski vesnik* (Pinsk City Deputy Soviet and Pinsk City Executive Committee). A part of the equipment was given to the editorial offices of the regional newspapers *Narodnaia trybuna*, the district-based newspapers *Savetskaie Palesse* (Hantsavichy), *Zarya nad Bugom* (Brest), *Naviny Palessia* (Stolin), etc. The founders of these periodicals also were executive committees and deputy soviets at various levels.

**On 25 July** the College Board on civil cases of Minsk City Court did not grant the complaint by the private unitary enterprise *Narodnaia volia*. The editorial office of the newspaper attempted to have Minsk Leninski Borough Court ruling cancelled the verdict which found *Narodnaia volia* guilty of undermining the dignity and business reputation of the chair of the Belarusian Liberal-Democratic Party Siarhei Haidukevich and also three residents of Kletsk, as a result of which the editorial office of the newspaper was sentenced to pay the leader of the Liberal-Democratic Party damages worth 100 million rubles, and 3 million worth damages to the residents of Kletsk – Ivan Hudzka, Piatro Talaika and Iryna Zakruta. The senior editor of *Narodnaia volia* Iosif Siaredzich planned to continue complaining against these decisions, now in the Supreme Court, because he considered this to be a matter of honor and scruples.

**On 26 July** the vice-head of the housing economy for ideology in Baranavichy Volha Kudlasevich refused to answer questions of the freelance correspondent of the non-governmental newspaper *Intex-press* Liudmila Hurman. Ms Kudlasevich reassured that she was prepared to prepare all answers provided the ideology department of Baranavichy City Executive Committee permitted her to do so. According to Kudlasevich they received an order from 'above' to give information to the media only at the request from the ideology department of Baranavichy CEC. The head of this department Tatsiana Zhydko said to the journalist Liudmila Hurman that she did not have the information which the journalist was interested in (the correspondent attempted to obtain information about the collection of garbage and preparation for the heating season 2005-2006).

**27 July** the Belarusian police detained journalists of the Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* Wacław Radzinowicz and Robert Kowalewski, as they were going from Hrodna to Lida. 'As we were leaving the Union of Poles in Hrodna, two officers of special services were watching us from their car, and the third one was filming us', said Wacław. He added that as soon as the journalists had left Hrodna, their car was detained by the police, who checked their documents, issued a fine to them, and then someone called them, and then they removed the license plates from the car, and detained the driver – the brother of the vice-chair of UPB Iuzef Pazhetski – Iezhy. The Polish journalists had to get a taxi to continue their journey.

**On 27 July** the Shchuchyn police detained Agnieszka Romaszewska, a journalist of the Polish Public TV Company *TVP1*. The pretext used for the detention was that the journalist did not have a document of accreditation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus. Agnieszka Romaszewska was detained right after she arrived in Shchuchyn, outside the Polish House, where the sitting of the old board of the Union of Poles in Belarus was taking place. The journalist attempted to ask a question to a man whom she had earlier seen on the Belarusian television, however, she got immediately detained by the police and taken to the local police station.

**On 28 July** several journalists representing non-governmental Belarusian media were not permitted to attend a press conference of Tadevush Kruchkouski. Some of the Polish journalists were also denied entry. The press conference started at 3 p.m. in the House of the Union of Poles, where in the evening of 27 July Mr Kruchkouski came accompanied by a riot police squad. Before the meeting started, Kruchkouski's associate showed – Kazimir Znaidzinski who personally checked the documents of each journalist and decided who would be allowed entry. A police squad was near him. The head of the Hrodna branch of the BAJ Pavel Mazheika, the editor of *Gios znad Niemna* Andzhei

Pisalnik and a journalist of the same periodical Ihar Bantsar, the senior editor of the newspaper *Den* and of the internet site [www.pahonia.promedia.by](http://www.pahonia.promedia.by) Mikola Markevich, a journalist of the *Salidarnasts* Ivan Roman, and a correspondent of [www.hrodna.by](http://www.hrodna.by) Andrei Kusialchuk could not get inside the building. The journalists representing the Polish radio station *RMF-FM* were not allowed, either. Unrestricted access was allowed to the Television Company *Hrodna*, the governmental media representatives – *Zviazda*, *Perspektiva* (the founders are Hrodna District Deputy Soviet and District Executive Committee) and also correspondent of the Polish television.

**On 30 July** members of the branch of the Union of Polish Journalists in Zheszuw and also the Center for Monitoring of the Press Freedom of the Union of Journalists created the Fund of Assistance to independent Belarusian media. The Fund authors say that the protests of the journalists from all over the world against human rights violations and against the Belarusian authorities disregarding the freedom of speech are not enough. They say that funds are required, for example, to provide legal assistance to the journalists persecuted by the authorities. 'The Fund will support independent journalists in Belarus – both Polish and Belarusian ones. This will be our small contribution to the expansion of freedom in Belarus', said the head of Zheshuw branch of the Union of Polish Journalists Juzef Matusz.

**On 1 August** the head of the trade department of Baranavichy City Executive Committee V.Makhovik refused to give information to Aksana Lianko, a journalist from Baranavichy private newspaper *Intex-Press*, saying that this should be countenanced by the ideology department. After numerous appeals to the ideology department and trade department, Lianko had to give up publication (she planned to publish the names of the people who received commendations on the eve of Trade Workers Day).

**On 4 August** the Polish TVP1 channel's car was found with a punctured tyre. The journalists think that this was a deterrent of the Polish journalists in Belarus.

**On 4 August** a meeting of Smarhon officials with the friends of local office of the Union of Poles took place in Smarhon School of Art. The participants of the meeting were also to nominate delegates for the Union's regional congress. The meeting was attended by the local journalists. However, Tereza Piatrova, the head of Smarhon district branch of the organization, declared that journalists had not been invited to the meeting, so they were to leave the room. She also said that it was the press who magnified the conflict with the Union of Poles. There were numerous attempts to pack off the journalists, including a *Mestnaya gazeta* reporter S.Stankevich, an OKS-TV channel crew

(H.Shaturka and A.Burau) and I.Dabrydzen, a reporter of a local state newspaper. The conflict was put an end to by M.Hoi, head of Smarhon District Executive Committee, who asked the journalists to leave the premises, because 'the people demand it'.

**On 6 August** the Belarusian authorities deported Adam Tuchlinski, photo correspondent of *Przekroj* and *Newsweek* magazines and didn't let the TV journalist Marcin Smiaiowski into Belarus. Mr Tuchlinski was deported from Belarus for alleged absence of accreditation. He was detained by two policemen in plain clothes who pulled him into ordinary car. He was very surprised at it and said it looked like a gang assault and one couldn't even talk of any legality of such actions. Mr Tuchlinski stated he had come to Belarus on tourist visa and made photos in public places, which is not banned by the law, but Belarusian police paid no attention to his explanations. The same day the Polish journalist Marcin Smiaiowski wasn't let into Belarus though he had visa and accreditation. Belarusian border guards detained him for several hours and then stated his presence in Belarus was undesirable and told him to return to Poland.

In the evening of **10 August** during the check-up at Hrodna customs office Belarusian boarder guards detained the journalist of Polish TV Mikola Wauraniuk, who was going by train from Hrodna to Biyaiystok. They confiscated from him video tapes with materials about Belarus and returned him back. Mikola Wauraniuk is a journalist of the 3<sup>rd</sup> channel of Polish TV in Biyaiystok. He was on a mission to Hrodna and shot there video reports about the events concerning the Union of Poles in Belarus.

**On 10 August** the International Institute of Press expressed its deep concern with the growing persecution of journalists in Belarus, 'in particular, those who work for the Polish minority media.' 'We condemn the reprisal of the local and international journalists working in Belarus. We urge the authorities to maintain everybody's right 'to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers' – said Johan Fritz, head of the International Press Institute. IPI is the oldest organization protecting the freedom of the press. It was founded in 1950 by 34 journalists from 15 countries. Nowadays 2,000 journalists and publishers from 120 countries are the friends of the organization.

**On 19 August** Minsk City Executive Committee liquidated *Denpress* Ltd. that issued *Den* newspaper. Mikola Markevich, chair of *Denpress* Ltd. found about it from workers of Minsk Tsentralny borough tax inspection. The decision about liquidation was signed on 4 July by Mikhail Savanovich, chair of Minsk City Executive Committee, because of 'absence of business activity for 6 months in succession and non-submission of information about the reasons to Minsk



City Executive Committee'. The liquidation was initiated by Minsk Tsentralny borough tax inspection. 'This is a political order, similar to the liquidation of my previous newspaper, *Pahonia*', said M. Markevich.

**On 23 August** the Belarusian border guards took away the passport from the Polish correspondent of *Gazeta Wyborcza* Wacław Radzinowicz. The border guards said they would return the passport after execution of some formalities. Right after he arrived in Hrodna, he was detained, searched and questioned by the Belarusian police. 'They counted the money I had with me. Fortunately, I put it in the declaration so they had nothing to be unhappy about. I was afraid they would put something in my baggage', said the Polish journalist. Wacław Radzinowicz said the authorities were looking for a reason to deport him from Belarus. On Saturday in Hrodna the repeated sixth congress of the Union of Poles was to take place in Hrodna. Radzinowicz thinks that the Belarusian authorities did not want this event to be covered by independent journalists.

**On 24 August** the Economic Court of Minsk Region granted the suit filed by Minsk Regional Executive Committee, which requested the liquidation of *Press-Service* company, the founder of the non-state newspaper *Kurier iz Borisova*. The company was to be liquidated till 1 January 2006. The liquidation suit was filed on 17 June. Minsk Regional Executive Committee presented the following accusations: the Statute of the *Press Service* did not indicate the goals and objectives of the published newspaper (*Kurier iz Borisova*), the labor rights of the staff and other provisions that, under the law, should be specified in the charter of the media editorial office, though at that time the functions of the editorial office were performed by another legal entity and, correspondingly, it wasn't mentioned in the Statute. The judge Tamara Benchuk sided with the regional executive committee and ruled to void the registration issued to *Press-service*, appoint the receivership commission and liquidate the company before 1 January 2006. (What should be noted is that the head of the ideology department of Minsk Regional Executive Committee was appointed the head of the receivership commission for the economic entity). The newspaper's editorial office stated the court ruling was made on a political order. 'The situation that could be observed recently was a rare one for Belarus: one region simultaneously had two independent newspapers (*Kurier iz Borisova* and *Borisovskije novosti*) whose circulation was 7 times as large as that of the official local newspaper *Adzinstva*. Naturally, this situation could not keep the authorities happy', said the newspaper correspondent Pavel Mahilin. The journalists also stated the real motives for the moves undertaken by Minsk Regional Executive Committee could be understood from the suit that says that the work of *Press-service* is against the state and public interests.

**On 24 August** the chief editor of *Magazyn Polski* A. Pachobut and the chief

editor of *Gios znad Niemna* 'in exile', were fined 25 US dollars each for 'trampling the grass during an unauthorized picket.' The picket in support of the Polish newspaper *Gios znad Niemna* took place in Lenin Square in Hrodna and lasted for a minute, whereupon the journalists were arrested.

**On 25 August** the prosecutor's office of Barysau issued an official warning to the senior editor of the independent newspaper *Borisovskiyе novosti* Anatol Bukas. The warning said that if the violations repeated the Prosecutor's office 'would decide on a suite to suspend' the periodical. The reason for the warning was two articles entitled *One-way trial* published in numbers 26 and 27 in June – July and dedicated to the court proceedings in the case against A.Bukas. According to the prosecutor's office, these articles violated article #5 of the law *On press* that bans publication or public disclosure of the materials still considered to be court case materials without the written permission of the judge. The prosecutor's office claims that the verdict in the case against A.Bukas came into effect after the mentioned articles were published: although the court of Barysau district passed the ruling on 16 June, the appeals court upheld it only on 22 July. Thus, so far the criminal case was not completed, says the prosecutor's office. The lawyers of the Media Legal Assistance Center of the Belarusian Association of Journalists on their part emphasized that the articles did not contain any quotations from the case materials. In his own words the journalist retold what he had seen and felt during the open proceedings in court. The check that led to the warning issued to A. Bukas was held on the basis of the appeal from the editor of the newspaper of Barysau City Executive Committee *Adzinstva* Vera Pratasevich.

**On 25 August** Roman Warszycki, a Polish TV cameraman from Biaiyastok, was not allowed to enter Belarus. They did not explain the reasons and referred him to the General Consulate of Belarus in Biaiyastok for explanation. True, Mr Warszycki lost neither his visa nor accreditation. Four Biaiyastok journalists, who had been driving in the Polish TV car to Hrodna, were detained for a while – customs officers checked their documents and baggage. They first put a seal in the passport of Roman Warszycki, which allowed entry to Belarus, but then annulled it. This is the story told by his colleague Mikola Wauraniuk. Roman Warszytski repeatedly visited Hrodna to cover the conflict around the Union of Poles. On 4 August unidentified people punctured two wheels in his company car near the Hrodna railroad station.

**On 25 August** the visitors of the official site of Vitsebsk city [www.vitebsk.by](http://www.vitebsk.by) could not take part in the discussion of social issues, because all the previous materials of the forum had been destroyed. According to the moderator of the forum, S.Serabro, the forum *Politics. Society. Power* had a very short existence of more than a year. It gave people opportunity to freely share their opin-

ions on international political events, and was the last official political on-line forum. However, he thinks that there is no need to speak about an outrage of the state, while the forum was probably attacked by hackers.

**On 26 August** the administrative commission of Bioroza District Executive Committee considered the charge-sheet drawn up in Damachava police station against Iury Hubarevich, a member of Belaaziorsk Town Deputy Soviet. According to it he was arrested while distributing a bulletin, undermining the existing regime in Belarus. Hubarevich did not accept the charges brought against him. He explained that he did not distribute the bulletin – it was simply found in his car. Besides, the bulletin features information about presidential candidates and the NGOs' activity, and does not contain any anti-state information. Moreover, it had the publisher's imprint. According to Hubarevich, under the Administrative Code such cases should be considered by a local commission, while he was summoned to Bioroza. Taking into consideration numerous violations, Hubarevich requested to summon the witnesses of the incident and asked to postpone the hearing. Hubarevich's request was satisfied.

**On 1 September** A. Hatouchyts, head of Homel branch of the Belarusian Association of Journalists, was arrested in the village of Darashevichy, Petrykau district, by a special police squad with major S. Kutasau at the head. The journalist was interviewing the villagers and took some photos of a fence on the Prypiats bank (he was working for *Narodnaia volia* newspaper). The police confiscated two *Sony* Dictaphones (a digital and a cassette one), a *Zenit* photo camera, and 4 cassettes from his car. The squad commander contacted someone on the radio, and when asked if the journalist had broken any law answered: 'No he didn't, but we must wait for chief commanders to come.' One hour later a man in plain clothes appeared. He said that his name was Uladzimir Mikalaievich and that there was a special police operation *Antiterror* in connection with Lukashenka's visit to Petrykau district, so the police had to check all the Dictaphones, cameras and other appliances.

**On 1 September** Barysau City Prosecutor's Office didn't grant the complaint of the chief editor of the newspaper *Borisovskiyе novosti* Anatol Bukas, who asked to discriminate into the cases of illegal hindrance to distribution of the newspaper. In the complaint he stated that the workers of Barysau City Executive Committee Valiantsina Shutko and Natallia Kasperskaia purposefully hindered the sale of the newspaper in the city. The chief editor asked the prosecutor's office to inform the officials about inadmissibility of such actions and also submit the answer to the mentioned vendors. The prosecutor's office refused to do it and stated he could complain against its decision to court or Minsk Regional Prosecutor's Office. The complaint was submitted on 26 July 2005. The answer came in September.

**On 2 September** a few hours before the end of time set apart for the re-registration of media having the words 'Belarusian' and 'National' in their names, *BDG.Delovaya gazeta* newspaper was granted permission to use the name by the Ministry of Information. After a long conflict with the Ministry, the decision was taken in favor of the newspaper. The conflict emerged when the Ministry of Information asked the editorial board to say what the letters BDG in the newspaper's new name stood for. This request was considered unlawful and viewed as an attempt to prevent the newspaper from being re-registered. The newspaper's editor-in-chief P.Martsau said that the victory could be temporary – the presidential election was near at hand, so the newspaper would have to fight for its existence, together with other independent mass media of Belarus. The newspaper has been persecuted since 2003 – it was not allowed to be published in Belarus and be distributed through the state company *Belsaiuzdruk* and mail.

**On 9 September** the officials of Hantsavichy District Executive Committee refused to tell to the correspondent of the newspaper *Hantsavitski chas* Iryna Damaratskaia what families had the right to receive financial support for preparing their children to school. She asked this question to Ala Stralchenia, chair of the committee's financial department on the eve of the new curriculum year, who answered she couldn't explain anything. However, according to the newspaper's information, the finances for this support were issued from the district budget. Being asked the same question, Uladzimir Mukha, chair of the district education department, answered: 'You'd better read it in *Savetskaie Paliessie*' (a state newspaper).

**On 9 September** the European Commission started preparations for a 2 million Euro project to increase access in Belarus to independent sources of news and information. The European Commission expressed its interest in democratization of Belarus and providing its citizens with alternative sources of information. The Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner said: 'I am deeply committed to helping the people of Belarus. The human rights situation in Belarus is deteriorating, and if the country is to find its way onto the path to democracy, the people need access to free media.'

**On 13 September** Valiantsina Kulak, new chair of the ideology department of Pinsk City Executive Committee, started her work with ordering Aliaksandr Kolba, the main specialist of the department, to personally phone to all heads of organizations and enterprises of Pinsk and say they had to obligatory sign to the newspaper *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, an organ of state propaganda.

**On 16 September** the Belarusian Association of Journalists celebrated its

10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. 'We have been together for 10 years. We move the same road. We live the hope for change. To make sure it happens, we should continue to be together', this is the slogan with which BAJ met the anniversary.

**On 16 September** the Committee for Legal Issues and Human Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted in Paris a statement that condemned 'the systematic campaign of persecuting the independent journalists and activists of civil society in the Republic of Belarus', as well as 'reprisals against the Union of Poles and the Polish-speaking media'. The PACE committee expressed its concern over the criminal persecution against the authors of a cartoon assessed by the Belarusian authorities as libeling and insult of the head of state, and believes that such actions 'are incompatible with the freedom of speech and the right to peaceful assembly' that Belarus 'has undertaken to honor in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of UN and the Helsinki Final Act of OSCE'.

**On 19 September** Vaukavysk authorities prohibited to sell the non-state newspaper *Mestnaya gazeta*. The economical smothering started in spring and was going on – the circulation decreased from 8 000 to 5 000 copies, the editorial board didn't receive wages since April, because the tax inspection fined the newspaper 32 million rubles and arrested the bank account. The formal reason for the prohibition sell the newspaper was that it didn't match the list of the goods that was approved by the authorities. The founder and editor of the newspaper Andrei Shantarovich said the real reason was the publication of the first article about corruption in the tax organs of Vaukavysk district.

**On 20 September** instead of the independent newspaper *Borisovskiy novosti* Barysau Post Office started to deliver to citizens the official periodical of Barysau District Executive Committee *Adzinstva*. The editor of *Borisovskiy novosti* Anatol Bukas phoned the post service and found out that *Borisovskiy novosti* was crossed out of the delivery card, with *Adzinstva* taking the place. The post head assured him that this was 'a post mistake'.

**On 21 September** it became known that the pressurization of students, teachers and state officials were made to subscribe to state editions. Some of them were persuaded into doing it. Soldiers and policemen are ordered to do it and teachers are blackmailed. The humanistic faculties of the Belarusian State University received a document from the Ministry of Education, signed by the vice-minister of education Tatsiana Kavalioua, informing them that at the meeting with intellectuals that at the end of 2003 the president told them to support the 'stateized' editions (*LiM, Polymia, Nioman, Maladosts* and *Vsemirnaya literatura*). However, the Ministry of Education 'noticed improper execution of this errand of the head of the state. The fact that the enumerated edi-

tions didn't draw the attention of the teachers of universities is especially alarming. It can be witnessed by the fact that few teachers subscribed to these editions'. The letter ended with the demand to provide the Ministry of Education with the detailed information about the number of individual subscribers among teachers.

**On 26 September** the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Belarus issued a warning to the journalist Iryna Khalip. In the beginning of August the article entitled *Time to Dispose of Rake* was published by *Novaya gazeta* with a question 'Will there be a revolution in Belarus?' In the article Iryna Khalip analyzed the situation in Belarus in the run-up to the presidential campaign. The article author concluded that the Belarusian authorities would change as a result of a street revolution. The prosecutor's office assessed the journalist's opinion as a call to destabilization of public order and change of the constitutional regime of the Republic of Belarus using illegal methods. Iryna Khalip was summonsed to the constitutional rights department of the national prosecutor's office, where she was read a warning. In Iryna Khalip's opinion, this situation confirms the conclusions of the article: 'My warning is very indicative because it shows that the authorities are well aware of how it will be changed. I just voiced what everyone already knows. Too bad, the officers of the Belarusian Prosecutor's Office are not very well educated. They would not even think of issuing a warning to, for example, the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. While articles printed in Russian press cause them to respond in a very strong way.' Iryna Khalip was the first to receive a warning for her article. Earlier the prosecutor's office tended to launch criminal proceedings. The journalist had been called for talks, however everything went off fine. Sviataslau Harelik, a representative of the department, warned the journalist that in the event of new articles of the same sort the prosecutor's office would assess them as calls to overthrow of the government. According to the criminal code, this may lead to 1-5 years in prison.

**On 26 September** Aliaksei Karol, the editor of the independent newspaper *Zgoda*, and his deputy Aliaksandr Sdvizhkov were fined approximately 1 200 US dollars each by Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Court. The court punished the heads of the independent periodical for 'releasing knowingly untruthful information'. The reason for the court ruling was the collages printed in several issues of *Zgoda*. The journalists used famous paintings, for example, those by Salvador Dali, where instead of the original faces they placed the images of several Belarusian politicians who, as emphasized Mr Karol, did not represent only the incumbent government.

**On 26 September** the college board of Minsk Regional Economic Court did not grant the complaint by Barysau independent company *Press-Service*.

On 24 August the court ruled to liquidate Press-Service, which was the founder of *Kurier iz Borisova*. The *Press-Service* head Anatol Udavichenka informed the court board that the verdict was not grounded. The company operated for three years without violations, he said. Andrei Lahachou, the representative of the legal department of the regional executive committee, in turn confirmed the earlier position that the *Press-Service* had violated the order of registration three years before that's why the registration should be cancelled. The board with Mr. Aliksandrau at the head supported the initiative and rejected the complaint by the Barysau company. At the same time, Anatol Udavichenka believes that this decision has a political coloring.

**On 27 September** *Narodnaia volia* published in Belarusian and Russian an appeal by the founder and the senior editor of the newspaper Iosif Siaredzich with a call to all people of Belarus to help with the payment of the compensation worth 100 million rubles. This was the amount Minsk Leninski Borough Court ruled should be paid to the deputy of the Chamber of Representatives Siarhei Haidukevich as material damages with respect to the publication in *Narodnaia volia* of an article about the cooperation of the Belarusian Liberal-Democratic Party with the regime of Saddam Hussein and the allocation of special privileged oil quotas. The newspaper's editorial office property was attached, the paper was seized and the bank account of the *Narodnaia volia* was blocked until the payment of 100 million rubles to Mr Haidukevich.

**On 28 September** the state company *Belsaiuzdruk* unilaterally cancelled a contract with the editorial office of *Narodnaia volia* for the distribution of the publication since 1 October. The director of *Belsaiuzdruk* Mikhail Padhainy said the contract was canceled because the newspaper had repeatedly violated the press law. The editorial office of the newspaper, however, believes it was *Belsaiuzdruk* who violated the law: 'The contract says that *Belsaiuzdruk* must warn of its intention to cancel the contract with a periodical a month before the intended date of the cancellation', noted the vice-senior editor of *Narodnaia volia* Sviatlana Kalinkina. 'State-owned newspapers also get warnings, but there has not been a single case of a distribution contract with them being cancelled...'

**On 28 September** the Belarusian Association of Journalists issued a statement concerning the situation of *Narodnaia volia*: 'The Belarusian authorities have delivered the most powerful blow on the independent press of the recent time. Though the editorial office transferred more than 70 million rubles of the 100 million rubles awarded by a court ruling in favor of a deputy of the Chamber of Representatives Siarhei Haidukevich, the state officials hurried to cancel the relations of the subordinate services (printers, distribution networks) with the newspaper. The reasons indicated in the letters about the cancellation

of relations with the newspaper are not only legally incompetent but also cynical. The Belarusian Association of Journalists assesses the actions of the Belarusian authorities with respect to *Narodnaia volia* as an obviously illegal act aimed at destroying an independent periodical prior to important public events.

**On 28 September** the chief editor of the non-state newspaper *Narodnaia volia* Iosif Siaredzich sent a telegram to Aliaksandr Lukashenka, demanding to stop 'the bureaucratic mess and self-will of the officials'. Simultaneously he applied to the head of the office of the OSCE mission in Belarus ?ke Peterson, asking for support from the side of the international community.

**On 29 September** the vice-prosecutor of Hrodna Leninski Borough Prosecutor's Office Aliaksandr Abramovich officially warned Andzei Piscalnik that he could not introduce himself as the senior editor of *Gios znad Niemna*, the Union of Poles in Belarus weekly. The warning was issued as a result of the complaint that was filed by the former chair of the UPB Tadevush Kruchkouski before the repeated assembly of the organization that was supported by the authorities.

**On 29 September** the vice-chair of Pinsk City Executive Committee Aliaksandr Kaneuski held a council with the CEC workers. There he asked the specialists of the departments of the executive committee not to give any information to the non-state information *Miastsovy chas*. He explained his request by saying the editorial office of the newspaper explained the facts and events that concerned the social life of the city in its own way and sometimes showed them in undesirable light. According to the editor of *Miastsovy chas* Viktor Iarashuk, the administration of the hotel *Sport*, to which the editorial office moved several months before, received an oral order from the chair of Pinsk CEC Aliaksandr Hordzich to break the rent agreement with the newspaper. Besides, Pinsk branch of *Belsaiuzdruk* refused to accept the newspaper for retailing, referring to the overload of the local kiosks. At the same time, all mailmen and workers of Pinsk district post office were ordered to subscribe to the newspaper of the executive committee *Pinski vesnik* (50 copies) and *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* (25 copies).

**On 30 September** the editorial board of *Narodnaia volia* paid the total sum of 100 million rubles for compensation of moral harm to S.Haidukevich.

**On 30 September** Minsk Kastychnitski Borough Court ruled to fine the editorial board of *BDG.Delovaya gazeta* 50 million rubles (more than 23 000 US dollars) and the journalist Siarhei Satsuk – 5 million rubles for the benefit of the former riot squad officer Siarhei Biadrytski. In June 2005 the former police-



man sued to the court concerning protection of his honor and dignity. The matter is that #70 of the newspaper, dated 20 May 2003 had the article Advertisement action by Siarhei Satsuk, reporting about the investigation of the criminal case against two persons who were accused in several crimes. One of these persons is the plaintiff. He demanded 100 million rubles compensation from *Marat* enterprise (the newspaper founder) and 10 million rubles from the journalist. The trial started this summer, but was suspended because of absence of the plaintiff's lawyer. On 29 September the court hearings were resumed. According to the information of the defense lawyer Larysa Atamanchuk, who represented *BDG* interests, the court partially satisfied the suit. The published information was found corrupt and insulting for the plaintiff's honor and dignity. The editorial staff of the newspaper was obliged to publish a disapproval within 30-day term and pay 50 million rubles to the plaintiff. Mr Satsuk was also fined 5 million rubles for the benefit of Siarhei Biadrytski. The editorial staff of the newspaper considers this sentence as an attempt of the authorities to dispose of the newspaper.

**On 30 September** in his speech to the Defense Soviet, Aliaksandr Lukashenka stated it was necessary to protect Belarusian society from foreign informational expansion and 'induction of instability by anti-Belarusian information resources'. A. Lukashenka stated that 'during the last decade all military conflicts, escalated in the world by the US and its satellites, began from such informational attacks and massive propagandist campaigns against the country defined for military intervention'. According to him, the leading state of the West actively uses the informational means and strategies for one-lateral pushing of its geopolitical interests. 'They are trying to manipulate the public conscience with the aid of mass media and internet, discredit the 'inconvenient' countries and artificially create conditions for escalation of social tension with the aim to seize the power'. According to Lukashenka, Poland and Baltic countries have already turned into a foothold of NATO means of radio electronic struggle and spying. He stated that the large-scale program of radio broadcasting to Belarus had been already declared and promoted. 'The West and so called Belarusian opposition that is directed by it, search all possible ways to form a negative public opinion and spread destructive information about our country', he said.

**On 1 October** during the opening ceremony near Bioroza (Brest region) of the first in Belarus German military cemetery of the times of World War II the heads of Bioroza District Executive Committee recommended representatives of the German part to refuse from contacts with press. This was reported by the newspaper *Vecherniy Brest*. According to the information of the edition, one of Bioroza DEC officials 'advised' the reporters of *Reuters* agency not to make photos at the action.

**On 3 October** it became known that all Belarusian printing houses refused to cooperate with *Narodnaia volia*. The editorial board of *Narodnaia volia* concluded an agreement for printing with a printing house in Smolensk (Russia). Many influential representatives of the international community expressed their support to the edition. The World campaign for freedom of speech *Article 19* sent a note of protest to the presidential administration and the Ministry of the information. The OSCE representative on freedom of mass media Miklos Haraszti sent similar letters to the foreign minister Siarhei Martynau and minister of information Uladzimir Rusakevich. 'I am convinced that liquidation of *Narodnaia volia* will result in a strong recourse in the development of free press in Belarus will be a great loss for the Belarusian society. I addressed the authorities with the request to do everything possible to prevent it,' said Mr Haraszti. The influential international organization *Reporters without borders* addressed Aliaksandr Lukashenka with the request to stop the oppression of independent Belarusian editions. The reasons for this appeal became the cancellation of contracts for printing and distribution of *Narodnaia volia* and the large fine that was imposed on *BDG.Delovaya gazeta*. The European Union issued a note of support to *Narodnaia volia*. 'The European Union expresses its concern with the future of the independent press in Belarus in connection with harassment of the last daily independent newspaper. The European Union condemns the unfair fine imposed on the newspaper and also the cancellation of the contracts for printing by the state printing houses and distribution by the state distributors-monopolists,' reads the statement. Besides, the European Union addressed the minister of information of Belarus Uladzimir Rusakevich with the request to meet with the heads of diplomatic missions of the EU countries in Minsk with the aim to discuss the situation of mass media in the country. The application of the EU was supported by Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Ukraine.

**On 3 October** the chief accountant of the State College of Olympic Reserve Sviatlana Ramanovich sued to court with the demand to exact from *Pressbol* newspaper 14 510 000 rubles to compensate the moral harm that allegedly was done to her by the article *News from Fields* that was written by the well-known biathlete Sviatlana Paramyhina and didn't even contain the surname 'Ramanovich'.

**On 4 October** the American political magazine *Time* declared the well-known Belarus journalist, assistant editor of *BDG.Delovaya gazeta* Iryna Khalip 'Hero of Europe 2005' in the category 'Brave heart'. 'The journalist exposes corruption among the authorities, touching even upon Aliaksandr Lukashenka. She has been beaten and interrogated many times,' says the article devoted to the Belarusian journalist.

**On 6 October** Hantsavichy district unit of telecommunication (RUTC) refused to place an advertisement of the newspaper *Hantsavitski chas* (founded by the publishing house *Intex-press* Ltd) in the ether of the local radio. The chair of Hantsavichy RUTC Rylka answered to the director of *Intex-press* Uladzimir Ianukevich that it was impossible to execute the request because the radio had to congratulate many people and, besides, during the specified time it was necessary to broadcast the RUTC's own information.

**On 7 October** Minsk Regional Prosecutor's Office turned up the complaint filed by Anatol Bukas, chief editor of *Borisovskiy novosti* newspaper, against the warning that had been issued to him by the prosecutor of Barysau. The letter dated 29 September 2005 and signed by the vice-prosecutor of Minsk region Kampanets, states that article #5 of the law *On press* prohibits not only to distribute the information that was obtained at a criminal trial, but also to 'present to readers the author's own insinuations'. It is also mentioned in the letter that 'there was no written permission to publish materials till the enforcement of the verdict' to the author of the article and *Borisovskiy Novosti* newspaper'. Let us remind that the prosecutor's office of Barysau issued the warning to Anatol Bukas on 25 August. The check that led to the warning issued to A. Bukas was held on the basis of the appeal from Vera Pratasevich, the editor of *Adzinstva*, newspaper of Barysau City Executive Committee. We would like to remind you that she was the main character of the critical article published in March 2004, which was why Anatol Bukas was found guilty of violating two articles of the Criminal Code. On 16 June the court ruled to fine him about 1 million rubles and awarded three million rubles worth of moral damages to Vera Pratasevich.

**On 6 October** the police detained the members of Christian Democratic Party BPF Aliaksandr Salauian and Uladzimir Plieshchanka for the third time during the last 10 days. These activists hand out the editions of their party outdoors on Mondays and Thursdays. The police also detained the non-party opposition activist Barys Khamaida, who distributes *Arche* magazine and his own newspaper *Vybor*. However, on 6 October the police were suspicious about the two copies of *Naviny BPF* bulletin they found in his bag. As a result, they decided to take him to court. However, a higher police officer told them not to this, as the detainee managed to prove he didn't hand out those editions. Khamaida was released, but when he came home, he met the court officer, who wanted to attach his property for payment of the earlier non-paid fines. The total sum of the fines is really great: the last one alone is 4 million rubles (Khamaida was sentenced to it for celebration of Military Glory Day). However, the court martial didn't manage to find the property he could attach to cover the 4 millions.

**On 7 October** in Hrodna the police detained Ivan Roman, correspondent

of *Salidarnasts* newspaper, for handing out *Narodnaia volia* issue devoted to the Congress of Democratic Forces, to workers of auto-supplies factory. The policemen detained him for about an hour and even composed a report for handing out the newspaper. 'I was quite surprised they appeared in seven minutes, said Ivan Roman. They composed the report for handing out *Narodnaia volia*. However, it can't be considered as corpus delicti according to Belarusian legislation!' said Mr Roman.

**On 11 October** the deputy of the House of Representatives Volha Abramava directed to the minister of information Uladzimir Rusakevich an inquiry regarding the situation of the non-state newspapers *Narodnaia volia* and *BDG.Delovaya gazeta*. 'I ask you to answer what do the formulations for pre-schedule cancellation of the contracts that were concluded between the Unitarian enterprise *Narodnaia volia* and the Unitarian enterprise *Belsaiuzdruk* and *Chyrvonaia Zorka Ltd* mean? I understand it so that the newspaper is accused of publication of the information that contradicts to the legislation of the Republic of Belarus... I can't understand what this loose formulation stands for,' wrote Abramava. V.Abramava also noted that the sanctions against the newspaper are connected to 'Haidukevich's case' and that the editorial board of the newspaper completely executed the court verdict. 'Why then not resume the publication and retail of the newspaper on the territory of Belarus?' asked Abramava in her inquiry to the minister of information. She also stated that her petition for renewal of printing and distribution in Belarus also concerned *BDG.Delovaya gazeta*.

**On 11 October** the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Narodnaia volia* Iosif Siaredzich directed to 109 deputies of the Chamber of Representatives of Belarus (to everybody except for Siarhei Haidukevich) the request to raise the question of *Narodnaia volia* at the next parliamentary sitting. 'We consider as lawless the actions of the heads of *Belsaiuzdruk*, *Minharsaiuzdruk* and *Minabsaiuzdruk* who unilaterally broke the agreements for distribution and printing of the newspaper', wrote Mr Siaredzich in his appeal to the deputies. The chief editor of *Narodnaia volia* asked the deputies to use their powers for putting the question about the oppression of *Narodnaia volia* on the agenda, adopt the petition to the executive authorities with the demand to urgently stop the harassment of the edition and execute the international undertakings regarding mass media. On the eve the editor-in-chief of *Narodnaia volia* met with the minister of the information Uladzimir Rusakevich and discussed with him the fate of the newspaper. According to Mr Siaredzich, the talk was complicated and fruitless.

**On 11 October** at session of the Executive bureau of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (Hramada) it was decided to organize mass subscrip-

tion to *Narodnaia volia* and help distributing in with the forces of the regional party structures.

**On 12 October** in Vitsebsk the police detained the public activist Barys Khamaida for distribution of non-state editions: *BDG.Delovaya gazeta*, *Arche* magazine and the local newspaper *Vybor*. The policemen of Vitsebsk Chyhunachny Borough Board of Internal Affairs stated that *Vybor* had no data-line on it: Barys Khamaida, the newspaper's editor wrote it was issued in Krapivenskaiie field near Orsha (on 8 September 1514 a small Belarusian army overwhelmingly defeated there the Russian troops). As a result the policemen composed on him a report for distribution of unregistered printed edition and attached to it seven copies of the newspaper in order to pass it all to Vitsebsk Chyhunachny borough administrative commission for consideration.

**On 12 October** the chair of Hrodna branch of the Belarusian Association of Journalists Pavel Mazheika received a subpoena to Shchuchyn District Borough Board of Internal Affairs. The paper was thrown into his post box, whereas according to the law it is to be handed to him directly and he should sign that he received it. Besides, it was not specified on which case he was summonsed. It was said that he could be forcibly taken there or fined for 'malignant evasion' from testifying. Mr Mazheika didn't go to Shchuchyn: he was not informed about the reason why he was summonsed and who would pay for the transport to Shchuchyn and back.

**On 21 October** in Vitsebsk the police detained Barys Khamaida, who was carrying *Narodnaia volia*. It was the first time the newspaper appeared in Vitsebsk after the refusal of *Belsaiuzdruk* to sell it in its kiosks. The police demonstrated a quick reaction: 20 minutes after Mr Khamaida came to the place where he always hands out newspapers, a police car arrived. The same car had to drive him back after the workers of Vitsebsk Chyhunachny Borough Board of Internal Affairs found that *Narodnaia volia* is an officially registered edition and every copy had the seal *For advertisement*, which means it was distributed free of charge.

**On 24 October** the Ministry of the information liquidated the registration certificate of the non-state newspaper *Kurier iz Borisova*. In the liquidation order it is said that the certificate was annulled on the basis of the decision of Minsk Regional Economic Court of 22 August and the excerpt from the minutes of the liquidation commission of the *Press-service* enterprise of 28 September. The order was signed by the first vice-minister of information Liliia Ananich. We should remind that in August the court satisfied the suit of Minsk Regional Executive Committee for liquidation of *Press-service*, the founder of *Kurier iz Borisova*. The judge Tamara Benchuk took the side of the REC and

annulled the registration of *Press-service* and obliged it to establish the liquidation commission and liquidate itself by 1 January 2006.

**On 24 October** in London the deputy editor-in-chief of *BDG.Delovaya gazeta* Iryna Khalip was awarded a *Hero of Europe* prize in nomination *Brave Heart*. 'This award shows that there is nothing wrong with a journalist in a totalitarian state taking on some functions of a public activist and human rights activist', said Iryna Khalip before the prize was awarded.

**24 October** is the World day of actions for access to information. The international NGO *Reporters without borders* (RSF) published the report 2005 about the situation of press in the world. The first lines are occupied by the North-European countries - Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland and Norway. Turkmenistan, Eritrea and Northern Korea close the list. Belarus is on 152<sup>nd</sup> place out of 167, only such post-Soviet countries as Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have worse situation (155<sup>th</sup> and 164<sup>th</sup> place respectively). In the rating *Freedom House* which also watches freedom of press, Belarus is on 185<sup>th</sup> place out of 194. Thus, the state is already notorious for the absence of liberty of press.

**Since 25 October** the residents of Hrodna have not been able to watch the 1<sup>st</sup> Polish TV channel. Instead, Hrodna Regional Technical Center *Harant* Ltd broadcasts *Polsat*. An employee of the company, who required anonymity, said this had been done at the special order issued by the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus. The 'recommendation' of the Ministry of Information surprisingly came at the same time as the Polish TV company decided to open a correspondent office in Hrodna', said Andrei Pachobut, the famous Hrodna journalist and public activist. 'In fact, the Belarusian authorities launched a pre-emptive strike on the freedom of speech, took a counter-measure to make sure the Hrodna residents do not have access to an alternative and uncontrolled source of information'.

**On 26 October** the Supreme Economic Court left in force the part of the warning of the Ministry of Information to the newspaper *Belorusy i rynek*, which concerned the edition's name. The judge Katsiaryna Karatkevich abolished only the second part of the warning in which it was stated that the newspaper violation the state standard #7.4-95. The warning was issued in September. The Ministry of Information warned the newspaper for the change of its name from *Belorusy i rynek* to *BR.Belorusy i rynek* without the re-registration and for wrong printing of subheadings and the data-line.

**On 27 October** Uladzimir Pleshchanka was fined for distribution of the editions of his party, CCP BPF. The policemen who detained the activist stated he insulted passers-by while handing out the bulletin *Belaruskaia solidarnasts*.

The judge of Vitsebsk Chyhunachny Borough Court lury Urban found him guilty of petty hooliganism (violation of article #156 of the Code of Administrative Violations) and fined about 12 US dollars.

**On 28 October** the press-secretary of Homel Regional Executive Committee Iauhen Pabalavets refused to provide information on the schedule of the foreign affairs minister Siarhei Martynau's visit to the region to Alena Paskannaia, a journalist for the *BelaPAN* news agency. Pabalavets stated that Paskannaia's accreditation had been annulled which made her ineligible to work in the status of a news agency journalist. Paskannaia asked to issue her an official document stating the reasons for accreditation refusal. In some time Pabalavets called back and said that Paskannaia would be allowed to certain meetings while others would be closed to her. 'I'm afraid that in this instance I won't have access to any information', said Paskannaia. The Belarusian Association of Journalists stated that noted that the possible reason for annulment of the journalist's accreditation could be the dissatisfaction of the REC workers with the fact that some of her information was reprinted by the non-state newspaper *Narodnaia volia*.

**On 31 October** the activists of the United Civil Party Uladzimir Chyrvonenka and lury Istomin were stopped by the road police several kilometers before Hrodna. The police ordered to open the car trunk and found there 4 000 copies of *Narodnaia volia*. Then he called for Hrodna police and composed a report for carrying the load without the necessary documents. Then Chyrvonenka and Istomin were directed to Hrodna District Board of Internal Affairs where the report for confiscation of the newspaper was composed. Then the UCP members were let go. The policemen said they would return to them the newspaper after they brought the documents for trafficking and distribution of the newspaper. The UCP and the editorial board of *Narodnaia volia* concluded the agreement for distribution of the newspaper by the UCP members. U.Chyrvonenka and lu.Istomin said they would bring the text of the agreement to the police and also emphasized that all the confiscated copies of the newspaper were to be distributed free of charge, because each of them had the seal 'For promotion'.

**At the end of October** the edition of the Union of Poles in Belarus *Magazyn Polski* was for the first time printed 'in emigration', as it is noted on its cover. 2 000 copies of the magazine were printed in Poland. Before this *Magazyn Polski* used to be printed in Hrodna. The 'emigrational' edition was compiled by Andrei Pachobut, who became the chief editor of the magazine under the rule of Anzhalika Borys at the Union of Poles in Belarus. However, he didn't manage to publish even one number of the edition in Belarus. '*Magazyn Polski* was printed in Poland with the support of the Polish Law and Justice Party. This magazine differs from the one published by the official Union of Poles in

Belarus. The official magazine comes as historical and cultural overview, while the new edition has a socio-political tone,' commented Mr Pachobut.

**On 2 November** Hrodna Leninski Borough Prosecutor's Office issued the official warning to the journalist Andzhei Piscalnik for 'outrage against Belarusian nation' in one of his publications. The ground for the warning became his article *The Poles of Aliaksandr Ryhorovich*, which appeared in the newspaper *Gios znad Niemna* #21 printed in Poland. Prosecutor Urubleuski who signed the warning considered that the contents of the article 'humiliates national honour and dignity' of Belarusian citizens and the present chairman of the Society of the Poles Mr Luchnik. In the case of 'going on illegal activity' the prosecutor promised 'to call the journalist to account according to the law'. At the prosecutor's office they clarified to A.Piscalnik that his actions can be considered as violation of article #130 of the Criminal Code. In the judgment of Mr Piscalnik it is important that in the text of warning the edition of *Gios znad Niemna* is viewed as 'a newspaper of the Republic of Poland'. It means that the prosecutor purposefully applied sanctions against publications in foreign press. Mr Piscalnik considers this as an attempt to stop the edition of *Gios znad Niemna* in Poland, which has great influence on the Belarusian community in Poland.

**On 3 November** Minsk Economic Court left the decision of Minsk City Executive Committee on the liquidation of the *Denpress* company, founder and publisher of the newspaper *Den* unchanged. In the decision of Minsk City Executive Committee the reason for the liquidation was named as 'non realization of business activity during 6 months without informing the tax organs about the reasons for it'. The leaders of *Denpress* consider this decision politically motivated and. According to Mikalai Markevich, the state officials refuse to admit that the company conducted business activity: on 26 July it published the edition of the newspaper in Smolensk, made a contract to its distribution, paid for the services etc.

**On 7 November** in Lenin Square in Homel the police detained a member of the United Civil Party Maryia Bahdanovich when she was distributing the newspaper *Tovarishch* (edited by the Communist Party of Belarus) together with the flyers highlighting the problems of housing and communal services. M.Bahdanovich spent around two hours in the police station. They confiscated 72 copies of the paper and demanded a written explanation from her. The report on confiscation was not composed. According to M.Bahdanovich's words their main claim touched upon flyers which did not have a date-line. That is why it had not rights to be distributed according to his words. In three days Maryia Bahdanovich was summoned to Homel Tsentralny Borough Prosecutor's Office. The assistant prosecutor Andrei Lahunovich claimed that in respect of the Maryia they brought the administrative case according to part 8



of article #172, 'Illegal production and distribution of mass media' as the fly-sheets were put in the middle of the paper and the prosecutor's office considers it as illegal supplement.

**On 8 November** it became known that the newspapers *Narodnaia volia* and *Salidarnasts* had been removed from the state subscription catalogue for 2006. The editors of these editions received the letter from the administration of Belarusian post informing them about the breach of cooperation since 1 January 2005 because of economic inexpediency. Aliaksandr Starykevich, chief editor of *Salidarnasts* and Sviatlana Kalinkina, chief-editor of *Narodnaia volia*, believe the decision must have been taken not by *Belposhta* alone, but in higher official circles. Sviatlana Kalinkina considers, that deprival readers of subscription is the continuation of the persecution campaign against the newspaper that started in October. At that time the printing house *Chyrvonaia Zorka* refused to print *Narodnaia volia* newspaper and *Belsaiuzdruk* enterprise – to distribute it through its newsstands. Aliaksandr Starykevich and Sviatlana Kalinkina say it is quite hard to establish an independent system of distribution, because this kind of activity is licensed and the Ministry of Communications is unlikely to issue the license to non-state distributors. 'After this step non-state mass media again come to the DIY and internet epoch', said Aliaksandr Starykevich, whereas Sviatlana Kalinkina stated that issue of a newspaper can't exist as a business. To her mind, a public or political non-state newspaper must be issued so that it can be handed out in the streets free of charge and its circulation must be at least equal to the circulation of *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* state newspaper.

**On 8 November** in Barysau unknown persons beat the journalist of the non-state newspaper *Borisovskiye novosti* Ales Abramovich. The incident took place late in the evening nearby Ales Abramovich's apartment. An unknown person has attacked him. He hit him in the head, face and trunk. The journalist's acquaintances who walked by this place captured the assailant and took him to the police. Barysau police stated that 'a conflict situation between Abramovich and the identified person did take place and it needed investigation'. Under A. Abramovich's urgent request the journalist was told the name and the surname of the assailant, who turned to be the employee of one of the private enterprises in Minsk. However, the victim's request to file a criminal case on the assault and battery was to be considered only in 10 days. Both the victim and the colleagues of the journalist connected the attack with his professional activity.

**On 8 November** *Belposhta* company didn't include the newspaper *Zgoda* into the subscription catalogue for the first half-year of 2006. The editors found out about it from the letter of the company's director general Iryna Samsonava.

*Belposhta* referred to 'inexpediency' of further cooperation with *Zgoda*, accused the edition of breaking the condition of the contract and listed some cases when the edition did not timely inform about changing the date of issue or didn't issue when it was supposed to. From his part, the editor-in-chief of *Zgoda* Aliaksei Karol said that he had always informed the company about the changes in the schedule of the newspaper issuing. He thinks this is the continuation of a long-term campaign on clearing the information field prior to presidential elections 2006.

**On 9 November** Eduard Brokarau, independent journalist from Horki, carried out a personal action of protest against the fact that the newspaper *Narodnaia volia* had disappeared from *Belsaiuzdruk* kiosks. Acting as an ordinary buyer of newspapers, he left complaints about the non-availability of the newspaper *Narodnaia volia* in the *Belsaiuzdruk* kiosks in Horka, in Orsha nearby and the regional center. Soon after that the complainer received an official response from Orsha signed by the head of the district subsidiary of *Belsaiuzdruk* Aliaksandr Kokhau on 9 November. The response said that the company headed by Mr Kokhau was a 'structural division of the Republican enterprise *Belsaiuzdruk*' and it was this central company that had the right to make contracts for selling products in their outlets'. E. Brokarau was not happy with such a response because each of the *Belsaiuzdruk* subsidiaries has the status of a legal entity and enjoys full economic independence.

**On 10 November** the court trial at the suit of the former accountant of the State Olympic Reserve School Sviatlana Ramanovich against the newspaper *Pressbol* started at Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court. The trial was caused by a newspaper article *News from Fields* that, in the opinion of the accountant, embarrassed her honor and dignity. And though the very name of Ms Ramanovich wasn't mentioned in the article, she demanded a material indemnity equaling 14,5 million rubles. A month ago, during Sviatlana Ramanovich's previous talk in court with the editors of the newspaper *Pressbol* Uladzimir Berazhkov and the author of the article Sviatlana Paramyhina, the parties did not come to agreement. As it was reported by the editor of *Pressbol*, all four witnesses from the side of the defendant have proven the truthfulness of the information in the article. There were no witnesses from the part of the plaintiff.

**On 10 November** at the mini-market in Vaukavysk the police detained the distributor of the non-state newspaper *Mestnaya gazeta* Marharyta Makavetskaja and confiscated 400 copies of the publication from her. The policemen drew up the report on M. Makavetskaja and brought her to Vaukavysk District Court that this very day fined her 10 000 rubles for trade in improper places. The editor-in-chief of the newspaper A. Shantarovich thinks that the police executed the order of the chairman of Vaukavysk District Executive Committee

Mikhail Saveliev. He thinks that the sanctions against the newspaper are related to the newspaper's active coverage of the conflict between the local authorities and Vaukavysk entrepreneur Mikalai Autukhovich.

**On 10 November** the Belarusian Association of Journalists called the readers to stand for their rights and in support of independent newspapers. BAJ suggested sending the notes of protests and appeals to the director general of *Belposhta* and the minister of information of the Republic of Belarus. Besides, BAJ thinks that everyone can leave a record in the Book of Proposals at his/her post office. According to presidential decree # 2 of 14 January 2005 *On improving the work with population*, a citizen shall be able to access the book upon his immediate request, while the proposals and notices have to be considered in the course of 15 days. 'A moment came when it is necessary to say 'no' to willfulness. Together we shall protect the right to receiving information,' says the statement of the Belarusian Association of Journalists.

**On 11 November** the editors of the non-state newspaper *Zgoda* received a warning from the Ministry of Information. The edition was accused of disseminating information that offended the honor and dignity of Aliaksandr Lukashenka. According to the Ministry of Information, a number of publications and collages published in several numbers of *Zgoda* contained the offence. Aliaksei Karol, chief editor of the newspaper, explained the situation: 'We had a collage with the map of CIS countries. Instead of Belarus there was the face of the man who reminded of Lukashenka. There was also the interview with me concerning the revolution of 1905, under the heading 'Living in Lukashenka's Belarus I understand the events of the 1905 revolution much better'. This heading was also considered as insulting information. The warning was signed by the minister, Uladzimir Rusakevich, and dated 9 November, but the editorial office received it two days later. Aliaksei Karol points at the fact that the majority of the publications that are mentioned in it have been already put into the administrative cases against him and Mr Sdvizhkou. In September both of them were fined about 2,8 million rubles for distribution of information that was insulting to the president

**On 11 November** it became known that in Pinsk the employees of post offices advised readers not to subscribe to the non-state newspaper *Miastsovy chas* saying that the postmen would stop delivering it to the subscribers' home addresses from the New Year. In particular, such 'recommendation' the employee of the monitoring service of the Belarusian Association of Journalists heard in post office #16. The employees of the post office refused to explain from whom they got this information and who asked them to instruct the subscribers of *Miastsovy chas*. The non-state newspaper *Miastsovy chas* published in Pinsk since long time feels the pressure of local authorities upon

itself. Pinsk branch of *Belsaiuzdruk* refused to contract with the publication to have it sold in kiosks referring to the overload with press. Public distributors are forbidden to sell the newspaper in crowded places under the threat of repressive sanctions. According to the information of the edition's editor-in-chief Viktor Iarashuk, at a sitting of the ideological department of Pinsk Town Executive Committee there was openly stated the necessity 'to hound out' this newspaper from the town.

**On 12 November** at the market of the town of Vialeika the police detained Uladzimir Maliarchuk and Mikalai Susla for handing out the bulletin calling the citizens to join the 16 November action of solidarity with political prisoners. The activists were kept at a police station for about two hours. The police confiscated more than a hundred of bulletins from them.

**On 12 November** it became known that the editorial office of the Ivatsevi-chy-based non-state newspaper *Gazeta dlya vas* could be removed from the rooms where it was located for the past three years. According to the newspaper's information, it was Ivatsevichy District Executive Committee that initiated the cancellation of the rental agreements with the newspaper. A man who asked not to mention his name informed the publication's editor-in-chief Lidziia Tsaluika that at one of the sittings of Ivatsevichy District Executive Committee all the communal property objects and entrepreneurs were ordered not to provide space to *Gazeta dlya vas*. The rented office belongs to the district domestic combine. In the talk with L.Tsaluika the chair of Ivatsevichy DEC Anatol Tkachuk stated that in September 2006 *Dazhynki* festival will be held in Ivatsevichy and therefore the editorial office will be needed for placement of the combine office.

**On 14 November** the editorial office of the newspaper *Narodnaia volia* brought to Minsk Economic Court the suit to against *Belposhta* state company that refused to include the publication in the subscription catalogue for 2006. 'We demand from court to force the defendant signing the contract on distribution of the newspaper *Narodnaia volia* on the condition stated in a similar agreement for 2005', said the edition's editor-in-chief Iosif Siaredzich. He also expressed the intention to explain in one of the nearest newspaper issued how the readers could defend their right to subscribe to the newspaper. 'We will easily give our readers a legal advice. I'm sure that after that *Belposhta* will receive thousands suits like that from ours subscribers' noted I.Siaredzich.

**On 14 November** Aliaksandr Mantsevich, director of *Rehiianalnaia hazeta* limited company and the chief editor of the newspaper under the same title, has received the letter from director general of *Belposhta* saying that the edition was not included in the subscription catalogue for the first half year of

2006. *Rehiianalnaia hazeta* Ltd. was accused that it 'repeatedly broke' the obligations before *Belposhta*. In particular, it didn't pay for including the edition in the subscription catalogue for 2005; did not pay bills for the delivery of the newspapers having more pages than regular; untimely informed about the necessity to increase the number of pages. In the letter signed by the director general Aliksandr Charniak it is said that *Belposhta* is 'in a difficult economic situation' and that 'performing financial discipline is the most important condition of signing the contracts'. According to A.Mantsevich, *Belposhta* had formal 'hitches' to cancel the agreements with the edition. But all the listed 'disturbances of the obligations' occurred with the knowledge of *Belposhta* and without any claims from the side of the enterprise that always covered extra charges with 'subscription' money of *Rehiianalnaia hazeta*. 'In fact, it is possible to find these hitches in the activity of any economic subject', thinks A.Mantsevich. 'I'm indignant about this difference in approach to the state and private enterprises'.

**On 14 November** the banners calling to take part in the Day of Solidarity with political prisoners disappeared from pages of the leading Belarusian portal *tut.by*. This is another proof of the authorities' control over the Internet sources.

**On 15 November** it became known about the methods with which the authorities intend to watch over the Internet. According to the rules for computer clubs, all the users who came to use the Internet a required to leave in a journal their passport details and address. Besides, in a club there shall be installed the software that keeps track of everything the user does on the Internet. The member of the organization *Third Way* Andrei Abozau who was a witness in the criminal case about placing political animation on the Internet web site explained: 'The state strives for supervising the Internet, influencing it, limiting the access to the Internet. It is enough to remember the blocking of sites of oppositional organizations during the time of electoral campaigns. It is unacceptable for a democratic country. There is a monopoly on the Internet in our country - when all the providers a forced to access the Internet only through the channel of *Beltelekam* state company, this is also the lever of oppression'. In Internet - cafes the users are far from being always able to visit the sites of oppositional organizations and also youth and student's structures that are alternate to the Belarusian National Youth Union (BRSM). At the universities in computer classes students are deprived of such possibility at all. In 2001 in Criminal Code a special section appeared: 'Crime against Information Security'. Criminal responsibility is specified for the non-authorized access to the Internet, destruction of information and damage of sites.

**On 15 November** *Reporters without Borders* (RSF) published the annual list of the states-enemies of the Internet. China and Iran are on top of the list.

Belarus, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are among those who try to censor virtual space in order to fight against political opposition. The leader of the *Reporters without borders* internet department Julien Pen considers that the greatest enemy of human rights in virtual space is dictatorial regime. Censorship and prohibition are the two main strategies of dictators in struggle with world net. In 2003 Belarus got into the list alongside with Zimbabwe where political leader considers the net the greatest evil. *Reporters without borders* admit that in Belarus it is easy to control all users as access to net is provided only by one state provider, which gives private information about any user to the secret services of the country. In summer 2005 Belarusian authorities prosecuted organization *Third Way* ([3dway.org](http://3dway.org)), which had placed a cartoon film about A.Lukashenka at their site.

**On 15 November** the editorial staff of *Nasha niva* found out the newspaper was not included in the catalogue of subscription for newspapers in 2006 year. At the time there was no message about it from the organization responsible *Belposhta*. Such was the gift for the newspaper on the 100th anniversary of the edition. The chief editor of *Nasha niva* Andrei Dynko knew that readers had no chance to subscribe for the newspaper. Even more from the list some other papers have also disappeared such as regional non-state newspaper periodicals *Hazeta Slonimskaia*, *Volnaie Hlybokaie*, *Vitebskiy kurier*, *Brestski kuryer* and the Baranavichy-based paper *Intex-Press*. 'This shows that the country does not play by any rules, and that Belarus cannot have free election any longer. So, in my opinion, this has an adverse strategic impact on the regime. As regards the *Nasha niva*, the regional newspapers, this is also a cultural crime. The Belarusian press, Belarusian-language publications, account for 10% of all publications, but they also account for 70% of all banned publications. This is elimination of Belarusian culture,' said Andrei Dynko.

**On 15 November** the US Ambassador George Kroll staged a press conference devoted to a number of scandalous statements made by the state-run TV channels in Belarus against the US government and officers of the US Embassy in Minsk. Mr Kroll argues: 'Almost every day the state-run media of Belarus claim that the United States allegedly want to destabilize the situation in Belarus, unleash a revolution here and subordinate the country to the 'imperial will' of the US. Some representatives of the Belarusian government made absurd statements, claiming that the US allegedly developed a plan for destabilizing Belarus – 'down to an intervention'. At the same time the state media paint the US diplomats as persistent spies. Such statements that contain disinformation, distortions and even lies do not seek to inform Belarusian society rather form a negative attitude to the US, the values of democracy and free choice long supported by the US and other democracies of the region'. Am-

bassador Kroll compared the atmosphere created by the Belarusian media with what was happening during the Cold War in the Warsaw Pact countries and in the USSR. He said that the US Embassy expressed its concern over these events to the Belarusian authorities, in particular to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noting that it viewed this as a campaign launched by the state-run media of Belarus against the United States. George Kroll dismissed the charges leveled against the USA and US diplomats by the Belarusian state-owned media. He said that the US Embassy expressed its concern over 'the anti-US campaign in the state-owned media' to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus. Mr Kroll categorically said that the United States respects the sovereign right of the Belarusian people to determine their own political course and choose their own way of development without intimidation or compulsion both from inside or outside, and that his country openly supports democratic procedures, free and fair elections in Belarus, free media, freedom from coercion, intimidation and threats aimed at people or organizations that want to take a peaceful part in the political life of the nation.

**On 17 November** police and persons in plain clothes confiscated copies of the magazine *Studentskaia dumka* from the shops *Traffic* and *Padzemka* and the internet café *Saiuz Online*. Founded in 1924, the magazine as it looks now emerged at the end of the 1980s in the national democratic youth. During the years of independence the periodical was registered, but in 2003 it lost registration. Over the past few years *Studentskaia dumka* was issued as a full-color youth magazine with a circulation of 299 copies, which didn't require registration. Among other things, the magazine was distributed free of charge in over ten shops and internet cafes in Minsk downtown. The representative of the magazine editorial office Andryias Kopys (pen-name), commented on the situation: 'We can only be surprised: what made adult law enforcement officers go after the magazine rather than the Minsk bandits'.

**On 17 November** the Economic Court of Minsk found as insubstantial the grounds used to cancel the contract and ordered that the publication of the newspaper *Narodnaia volia* be resumed by this printing house *Chyrvonaia Zorka*. However, the Economic Court did not grant the suit filed by *Narodnaia volia* against *Belsaiuzdruk* and *Minharsaiuzdruk* regarding the restoration of the distribution contracts. The senior editor of the newspaper Iosif Siaredzich commented on the ruling by Neli Arlouskaia, judge of the Minsk Economic Court, which ordered that the *Chyrvonaia zorka* printers resume the printing of *Narodnaia volia*: 'I did not expect something different to happen. There was no reason not to grant the suit. If the court had taken a different ruling, this would mean that our country does not have any courts at all. So, thanks to God, justice has been restored'. During the court proceedings, the chair of *Chyrvonaia Zorka*, the former minister of information Mikhail Padhainy said that

the contract had been unilaterally terminated on the basis of an additional agreement concluded with *Narodnaia volia* this year in January. Under the mentioned agreement, *Belsaiuzdruk* had the right to cancel the agreement unilaterally without any prior warning in the case the newspaper violated the law *On mass media*. Mikhail Padhainy quoted three warnings issued by the Ministry of Information to *Narodnaia volia*. However, Mikhail Padhainy was not able to produce the original of the additional agreement signed by both parties. He said it had been lost. The demands of *Narodnaia volia* regarding the resumed distribution of the newspaper in the capital via *Minharsaiuzdruk* network were not granted by the Economic Court of Minsk, either. The court hearing of the *Minabsaiuzdruk* case was transferred to 21 November, because of the illness of the defendant's representative.

**On 18 November** the European Union and the Norwegian Union of Journalists that unites about 9 000 members and is a member of the International Journalists' Federation condemned the pressure exerted by the government on the privately-owned media in Belarus. 'The decision of the state-owned company *Belposhta* to stop the distribution of the privately-owned periodicals in the year of the presidential elections is yet another serious blow on the freedom of expression in Belarus... The Norwegian Union of Journalists views the *Belposhta* decision as part of the cynical campaign that seeks to eliminate independent sources of information prior to the presidential elections', says the statement by the Norwegian journalists. The European Union expressed its 'serious concern' over the *Belposhta* decision not to include into the subscription catalog for the first half-year of 2006 the newspapers *Zgoda*, *Narodnaia volia* and *Salidarnasts*. 'The insufficient preservation of the media freedom and the freedom of expression in Belarus continues to be a matter of serious concern for the European Union', says the statement.

**On 18 November** the Ministry of Information annulled the registration certificate of the independent newspaper *Maladziiozhny prasppekt*.

**On 18 November** it became known that Barysau District Mail Service Company wasn't going to conclude contracts with the independent newspaper *Borisovskkiye novosti* for the first half-year in 2006. This was said in the official letter received by the chief editor Anatol Bukas from the head of Barysau DMSC. The letter sent by the head of the Barysau DMSC says that the company does not view it as 'necessary' to cooperate with the newspaper, because the latter violated the contract for reception and delivery of the subscription circulations of the paper for the 2<sup>nd</sup> half-year of 2005.

**On 21 November** Minsk City Economic Court turned down the suit of the editorial office of the newspaper *Narodnaia volia* against the state-owned com-



pany *Minablsaiuzdruk* that since 1 October cancelled the agreement for the newspaper's retail in Minsk region by its kiosks.

**On 21 November** the chief editor of the newspaper *Borisovskkiye novosti* Anatol Bukas said that Barysau City Prosecutor's Office was to give a 'legal evaluation of several articles that were published in the newspaper (issues 29-31 of 2005) and take an appropriate decision regarding prosecutor's reaction'. An appropriate instruction arrived from Minsk Regional Prosecutor's Office, which had in turn received a commission from the Prosecutor's Office of Belarus (the civil rights and liberties department). The message from the Republican Prosecutor's Office says that the Ministry of Information acted on the commission from Minsk Regional Executive Committee and analyzed a number of articles regarding 'the abuse of the freedom of the media' by the editorial office of *Borisovskkiye novosti*, however, 'did not find any reasons for applying sanctions against the editorial office according to the Law of Belarus *On press and other media*. At the same time, as is obvious from the letter it was the Ministry of Information that asked the prosecutor's office to 'legally evaluate' the same articles. (The articles in question were *They are stifling the freedom of speech*, *'Aleksandr Grigoryevich will be replaced by Viktor Aleksandrovich?'*, *I will defend the authorities with arms in hand*, *Belarusian Wonder*, *Does the laurel wreath fit?*, *EU Opposition Enrages*, *Jobs for Sons*, *No 'linguists'*, *thank you*, *The last construction site of Communism*, *Diplomatic Scandal*, *No weapons should be used*, etc.). 'I believe that top level authorities made a decision to prevent at all costs the distribution of information through the newspaper *Borisovskkiye novosti* to the people of Barysau district', — said Anatol Bukas.

**On 24 November** the vice-chair of Babruisk City Executive Committee for ideology Mikhail Kavalevich banned the local newspapers to advertise the arrival of the leader of democratic Belarus Aliaksandr Milinkevich to Babruisk. According to Aliaksandr Chyhir, a deputy of Babruisk City Soviet, one of the organizers of Aliaksandr Milinkevich's visit, the democratic forces activists asked the editorial offices of the local newspapers *Kamertsyiny kuryer* and *Viacherni Babruisk* to advertise the hot telephone line of Aliaksandr Milinkevich with the city residents. One of the newspapers had even accepted advertisement charges however after the officials of the city executive committee interfered, the editorial office decided not to print the advertisement and refunded the transferred money to the hot line organizers.

**On 23 November** Ivatsevichy district post office suspended the subscription to the non-state newspaper *Gazeta dlya vas*, referring to the written order of the officials not to subscribe people to the edition till getting further instructions. According to the chief editor of the newspaper Lidziia Tsaluika, despite the fact that the newspaper wasn't included into the state subscription catalog

for the first half of 2006, the post office continued accepting the subscribers till 23 November. In September the editorial office received from Brest branch of the state-owned distribution net *Belposhta* to present information about the edition for defining its subscription cost. The newspaper followed the proposal and presented the necessary information. After it the editorial board received from Ivatsevichy district post office the information about the subscription costs, but suddenly stopped the subscription.

**On 28 November** it became known that more than 1 200 citizens of Hrodna signed the letter to the information minister with the demand to restore the broadcasting of the Polish TV channel TVP-1. In the letter it was stated this TV channel let citizens of Hrodna region receive timely information about the life of their neighbors which favored the establishment of good relations and strengthened the friendship between the peoples of Belarus and Poland.

**On 28 November** the state-owned company *Minharsaiuzdruk* cancelled the agreement with the non-state newspaper *Salidarnasts*. According to this agreement *Minharsaiuzdruk* undertook to accept the subscription to the newspaper and deliver the latter to the subscribers. The letter with information about cancellation of the agreement was signed by the company director I. Dudzich and contained no explanations. According to the chief editor of the newspaper Aliaksandr Starykevich, the newspaper couldn't commit any violations, because the term of the agreement started in 2006. The non-state newspaper *Vitebskiy kurier* received a similar letter from the director of *Vitsebskabsaiuzdruk* L. Iuzhyk. There it was said that the company cancelled the agreement with the newspaper since 01 January 2006. *Vitsebskabsaiuzdruk* and *Minharsaiuzdruk* are a part of the system of the Ministry of Information. They sell printed editions accept subscription to periodicals and deliver them to subscribers.

**On 28 November** it became known that Minsk printing house *Chyrvonaia Zorka* wasn't going to prolong to 2006 the agreement for printing the newspaper *Narodnaia volia*.

**On 1 December** Homel Regional Executive Committee deprived the journalist Alena Paskannaia of accreditation. The official letter about it, signed by the vice-chair of Homel REC Piatro Kirychenka, was sent to *BelaPAN* information agency the journalist works for. There it was said the correspondent was deprived of accreditation for violation of the accreditation rules. Iauhen Pabalavets, press secretary of Homel REC, stated the correspondent was deprived of accreditation for being biased and non-objective (she allegedly referred to the ideology department of the REC in one of her publications, but allegedly didn't come to the department for information). Ales Lipai, *BelaPAN* director considered the decision of Homel REC groundless. Deprivation of ac-

creditation means Homel REC won't admit the journalist to its councils and other officious events.

**On 1 December** the editorial office of the non-state newspaper *Brestskiy kurier* received an official letter signed by the chair of Brest branch of *Belposhta* H.Tsitou. By this letter the editorial office was informed *Belposhta* wouldn't prolong the agreement for distribution of the newspaper that ended on 31 December 2005. Earlier the newspaper wasn't included into the subscription catalogue for the first half of 2006. According to the information of Mikalai Aliaksandrau, shop-assistants referred to the appropriate order of the authorities and said two goods managers regularly checked whether this order was executed.

**On 1 December** Baranavichy district post office refused to prolong the agreements for distribution and delivery of the non-state newspapers *Intex-press* and *Miastsovy Chas* to 2006. It was stated in the official letter, sent to Uladzimir Ianukevich, director of *Intex-press* Publishing House Ltd by the head of Baranavichy district post office Stashynski.

**On 2 December** it became known that Hrodna branch of *Belposhta* broke the agreement with for distribution of *Hazeta Slonimskaia* and its delivery to subscribers since 31 December 2005. The chief editor Viktor Valadashchuk was informed about it by the letter signed by the vice-head of Hrodna branch of *Belposhta* enterprise S.Kazukevich and dated 28 November 2005. It's quite interesting that the week before S.Kazukevich personally sent to heads of the district branches of *Belposhta* the official order to introduce the newspaper in the subscription catalog for the first half of 2006 and attached to the letter the subscription costs.

**On 2 December** Viktor Valadashchuk, chief editor of the non-state newspaper *Hazeta Slonimskaia* found out from S. Dziarechy, director of Vaukavysk inter-district department of Hrodnaablsaiuzdruk state distribution net that it wasn't going to conclude the agreement for the sale of the newspaper in its kiosks in the first half of 2006.

**On 2 December** *Belsaiuzdruk* state distribution net distributed the agreements for 2006 with the editorial offices of the non-state newspapers *Salidar-nasts* and *Zgoda*. It was stated in the letters signed by the *Belposhta* director Mikhail Padhainy. The texts of the letters were almost identical and nothing was said about the reasons for such decision.

**On 2 December** the administration of *Belposhta* decided to exclude *To-varishch*, the newspaper of the Party of Communists of Belarus, from the sub-

scription catalog for the first half of 2006. The newspaper's editorial office informed about this decision by the letter that was sent by Belposhta director Aliaksandr Charniak. Unlike other independent editions, the newspaper was included into the subscription catalogue for 2006, but will be crossed out of it. The official reason is that it wasn't issued in January-March 2005. The editorial office, in its turn, reminds it happened because Belarusian printing house broke the agreement with the newspaper and other printing houses refused to print the newspaper. As a result, the edition wasn't printed till April 2005, when it concluded an agreement with Smolensk printing house (Russia). By the way, earlier *Belposhta* didn't raise such question and included the newspaper into the subscription catalogue for the second half of 2005.

During the **2 December** meeting with journalists Stsiapan Sukharenka commented on the bill that introduced harsher penalties for actions 'directed against the human and public security': 'Foreign media will lose their accreditation and deported in the event of providing knowingly untrue information about Belarus', said Sukharenka. He also advised to the Belarusian journalists working for foreign media to read the law and think it over. 'We didn't pursue the aim to limit somebody's activity, we only want it to be civilized, law-obedient and non-harmful to the state interests', he added.

**On 3 December** the member of the United Civil Party Mikalai Koush came to the office of one of the Brest-based public organizations. Suddenly the local police inspector entered the office and said Koush violated the rules of parking and there was information that there were drugs inside Koush's car. Mikalai Koush drove to Brest Maskouski Borough Board of Internal Affairs together with the policeman. Despite the search of the car the drugs weren't found. Instead of drugs the police found several copies of the non-state newspapers *Narodnaia volia*, *Brestskiy kurier* and the brochure *Choose Your Way* by Vasil Liavonau. The police detained Mr Koush for 1,5 hours and made him give explanations about the printed production.

**On 5 December** the administrative commission of Vileika Town Executive Committee started the consideration of the administrative case against the leader of the local UCP branch Uladzimir Maliarchuk and the activist of the Belarusian Language Society Mikalai Susla. The case was brought for handing of the informational bulletin about the Solidarity Day action.

**On 6 December** a police inspector paid a visit to Andrei Pachobut, chief editor of *Magazyn Polski 'in emigration'* and *Gios znad Niemna 'in emigration'*. The policeman brought the summons to the prosecutor's office, but the journalist could not receive it because he had no passport (it had been confiscated by the Belarusian boarder guards). The policeman explained the prosecutor's

office conducted a check-up on the application of the Committee of national and religious affairs concerning the issue of the magazine and the newspaper.

**On 6 December** it became known that by 20 December the heads and the vice-heads of enterprises on ideological work of Dziarzhynsk district of Minsk region had to submit to Dziarzhynsk District Executive Committee their reports concerning the results of the departmental and individual subscription to a number of state editions. This was stated in the official note, dated 15 November and signed by A.Kadet, chair of Dziarzhynsk DEC. 'Due to the beginning of the subscription campaign for the first half of 2006 and taking into consideration the political importance of this action' A.Kadet asked the addressees to 'personally control the situation of the departmental subscription to *Sovetskaya Belorussiya, Respublika, Zviazda, Minskaia prada, Stsiah Kastrychnika*, etc. The files with these newspapers must lie in the places accessible to all workers at every workplace,' he emphasized.

**On 6 December** Viktor Valadashchuk, chief editor of *Hazeta Slonimskaia* non-state newspaper, stated Vaukavysk branch of *Hrodnaablsaiuzdruk* refused to sell the newspaper in its kiosks in 2006 and Slonim branch refused to distribute it by subscription and returned the money to the subscribers. The post officers recommend them to subscribe to the state newspaper *Slonimski vesnik* instead. The workers of Slonim branch explained their actions with the official fax that contained about 20 titles of newspapers the cooperation with which wasn't advised by the authorities.

**On 6 December** the editorial office of *Nasha niva* received the information that *Belsaiuzdruk* and *Minablsaiuzdruk* state enterprises intended to stop distribution of the newspaper since 1 January 2006. They explained this decision with the law demand of the weekly.

**On 6 December** in the Ice Palace of Homel an unknown person in plain clothes detained the BPF activist Siarhei Tryfanau for handing out flyers with information about the candidate to presidency Aliaksandr Milinkevich. This man passed Tryfanau to the police, who took him to a police station. There they confiscated from him 67 fly-sheets without composing any reports about it. They also made the detainee write an explanatory note.

**On 6 December** the Council of the Belarusian Association of Journalists issued a statement regarding the refusal of the state enterprises *Belposhta* and *Belsaiuzdruk* to cooperate with the non-state media that elucidated political issues. 'We think that by its actions the state enterprises *Belposhta* and *Belsaiuzdruk* demonstrated self-will. The liberty of expression and the civil right to receive and distribute information (articles #33 and #34 of the Constitution

of the Republic of Belarus) were violated. Article #3 of the law of the Republic of Belarus *On press and other mass media* that guarantees the support of all mass media by the state was disavowed by such actions. There were also violated the regulations of the law of the Republic of Belarus *About postal communications* that oblige *Belposhta* to distribute printed periodicals. We are sure that the real intention of the Belarusian authorities is to conduct a total cleansing of the informational space on the eve of the presidential election of 2006 stand behind the actions of *Belposhta* and *Belsaiuzdruk*,'stated the BAJ Council. The organization also applied to the Constitutional Court with the request to evaluate the compatibility of the amendments to the Criminal Code with the Constitution and the international undertakings of Belarus and to the Soviet of the Republic – with the urge to decline the draft law *On introduction of changes and amendments to some legal acts of the Republic of Belarus with the aim to increase the punishment for crimes against individuals and public security*.

**On 6 December** the council of the Belarusian Association of Journalists adopted a statement regarding the refusal of the state monopolists *Belposhta* and *Belsaiuzdruk* to cooperate with all non-state public and political editions. 'We believe that by their actions the state enterprises *Belposhta* and *Belsaiuzdruk* manifested self-will. The constitutional rights of citizens to liberty of speech, receiving and distribution of information have been violated (articles #33 and #34 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus). The articles of the law *On press and other mass media* that guarantees the liberty of press and declares the state support to all mass media, has been in fact disavowed. There were also violated the provisions of the law *On mailing* according to which *Belposhta* is obliged to distribute printed periodicals. We are sure that behind these lawless actions of *Belposhta* and *Belsaiuzdruk* stands the intention of the Belarusian authorities to conduct a real clearing of the informational space on the eve of the presidential election of 2006,' runs the statement. The organization also applied to the Constitutional Court with the urge to assess the compatibility of the new amendments to the Criminal Code to the Constitution and the international undertakings of the Republic of Belarus and to the Soviet of the Republic – with the urge to set aside the draft law *On introduction of amendments to some legal actions of the Republic of Belarus with the aim to increase the punishment for activity directed against man and social security*.

**On 7 December** several dozens of the UCP activists sued *Belposhta* for the refusal to include *Narodnaia volia* into the catalog of periodicals for 2006. The leader of the United Civil Party Anatol Liabedzka, the chair of Minsk city UCP organization Ihar Shynkaryk, the members of the UCP National Committee Antanina Kavaliova, Vadzim Kaznacheieu and Ihar Arlou were among the plaintiffs.

**On 7 December** it became known that Minsk City Executive Committee forced private firms to subscribe to state editions. The documental evidence for it is the official letter signed by the vice-chair of Minsk CEC N. Bury and sent to one of the capital's firms. In it Mr Bury asked the chair of the private enterprise to sign for the newspaper of the presidential administration *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* and the newspaper of Minsk CEC *Minskiy kurier* and provide the confirming documents to the ideological department of Minsk CEC by 19 December.

**On 8 December** the editorial office of the Pinsk-based the non-state newspaper *Miastsovy chas* received a letter from the administration of *Sport* hotel informing about the annulment of the rent agreement since 31 December. The administration of the hotel that belongs to Belarusian Defensive-sportive Association didn't explain its decision. The agreement was to have ended in July 2006. The editorial board regularly paid for the rent and the public utilities and didn't receive any pretensions from the lenders. The chief editor Viktor Iarashuk said it was another step of the local authorities aimed at liquidation of the independent edition.

**On 8 December** in Navapolatsk there started the campaign on support to the periodicals that were excluded from the state subscription catalogue for the first half of 2006. Belarusian Language Society and other public organizations started distributing sample appeals to the *Belposhta* administration in defense of the constitutional right to receive information. Besides, signatures under collective letters with similar demands were gathered at large enterprises and the local university.

**On 9 December** at the railway station of Hrodna the border guards detained the pensioner Stanislaw Klimovich who wanted to hand the newspaper *Gios znad Niemna 'in emigration'* to the driver of a Polish electric train. They led the pensioner into the building of the railway station and asked him where he took the newspaper. Mr Klimovich answered he had bought it at a market. They asked how much it cost and who sold it. Then they called an interpreter from Polish. She saw there was an interview with Klimovich in the newspaper. The police asked him where the interview was taken. The interrogation lasted for 3,5 hours. Then the police let the pensioner go, but said they would summon him again.

**On 15 December** the Court of Appeal left in force the verdicts on the suits of *Narodnaia volia* against *Minabsaiuzdruk*, *Belsaiuzdruk* and *Minskhar-saiuzdruk* who had broken the distribution agreements since 1 October 2005. We should remind that on 17 and 21 November Minsk City Economic Court rejected the suits of *Narodnaia volia* to these state enterprises.

**In the evening of 10 December** the Belarusian border guards didn't let in Belarus the camera crew of the Polish Public TV without explaining the reasons. The journalist Agnieszka Romaszewska was going to Minsk together with driver and cameraman in order to establish there the regular bureau of the TV. She had all the necessary documents, including visa and the accreditation, issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus. Despite it, the border-guards of Kuznica-Bruzgi customs office kept the Poles' passports for 1,5 hours and then stated Agnieszka Romaszewska couldn't enter Belarus. Two other members of the camera crew decided not to go to Belarus without her and also returned to Warsaw. Agnieszka Romaszewska said she would demand explanations and would try to get to Belarus one more time.

**At 4 p.m. on 10 December** in Hrodna the police detained Vital Kursa for alleged handing-out fly-sheets. He was taken to a police station, where the police inspector Melnichak confiscated from him six informational bulletins and 350 fly-sheets of the United Civil Party. The put down the places of his work and study and in 1,5 hours they let him go.

**At 7 p.m. on 11 December** the riot police detained the activist of the public movement BPF *Adradzhenne* Siarhei Levanovich and the member of BPF Party Valery Kisel. The policemen said to Mr Kisel he was detained on suspicion in production of false documents and confiscated from him a fly-sheet with the opposition's only candidate for the presidential election Aliaksandr Milinkevich, the list with the numbers of houses, 2 brochures *Undisclosed crimes of the newest history*, 4 UN brochures on human right and the map of the city district in which the detention was conducted. Having composed the report and taken explanations they let the detainees go.

**On 12 December** Ihar Stankevich, journalist of the policy and economy department of *Mir* TV Company stated he was made to retire on suspicion in contacts with the opposition. The reason was the demonstration of a documentary during the Congress of Democratic Forces. The secret services suspected that a journalist of the state mass media presented the tapes to the opposition activists so that could use them for their chronicle of the political events in Belarus. Ihar Stankevich stated he didn't give the tapes to anyone. He considered it as the beginning of the campaign on dismissal of politically unreliable journalists from the state mass media: 'I believe, the clearing that started from non-state mass media will proceed to state ones. There are facts that witness it. For instance, a girl who belonged to Protestant denomination worked at the state radio. She searched information about Protestants on the web. When the administration found it out, she was fired. My own story is an eloquent example as well.'



district received the orders signed by M. Tolkach, chair of Hlybokaie district consumer society, to subscribe to the state newspaper *Vesnik Hlybocchyny*. The following text was printed there: 'It is necessary that you individually subscribe to the district newspaper *Vesnik Hlybocchyny*. The name and surname of the addressee were put in manually'.

**On 13 December** entrepreneurs from Vitsebsk, Orsha, Polatsk and Navapolatsk started collecting signatures in support of the popular non-state newspaper *Vitsebski kuryer*. In their letter in support of the newspaper the entrepreneurs pointed the pressurization of the newspaper by the authorities was a direct violation of the constitutional right of citizens to receive information and the situation was aggravated with the absence of alternative system for distribution of printed editions because of the monopolization of this kind of activity by the state. The entrepreneurs emphasized that the refusal of the state distribution net to distribute *Vitsebski kuryer* could lead to liquidation of this newspaper, the circulation of which was 7 000 copies, which was quite a large number for a regional periodical.

**On 13 December** Agnieszka Romaszewska, journalist of Polish TV, wasn't let out of the National Airport *Minsk*. On 10 December she wasn't let into Belarus when going there by car with her camera crew. She considered it to be a mistake. This time the border guards also checked her documents and stated that according to the law on stay of foreign citizens in Belarus she didn't have the right to enter the country. The border guards tried to send her back by the same plain, but the pilot refused to take her onboard without the ticked and the deportation documents. Then the border guards took away her passport. Ms Romaszewska had to spend night in the room for deported persons, situated in the border zone of the airport. The Polish Consul, who met with the journalist, couldn't understand such actions of the authorities.

**On 14 December** the public TV of Poland expressed its indignation at the deportation of its correspondent from Minsk. Jaroslaw Szczepanski, representative of the TV Company, said everything would be done to get the permission for work to Agnieszka Romaszewska.

**On 14 December** Hrodna journalists, members of the Belarusian Association of Journalists, adopted the appeal to the Belarusian authorities in connection with the deportation of the correspondent of the Polish TV channel *TVP-1* Agnieszka Romaszewska. 'We are convinced that the real reason was that Agnieszka Romaszewska worked in accordance with the professional standards of journalism without trying to please the Belarusian authorities. She elucidated the sharpest issues of the civil and political life in Belarus: the conflict between the authorities and the Union of Poles in Belarus, the Congress of

democratic forces and the situation of political prisoners in Belarus', reads the statement.

**On 14 December** it became known that since 1 January 2006 the sale of the non-state newspaper *Homan Barysaushchyny* by the kiosks of *Belsaiuzdruk* would be stopped. According to the newspaper's editor Mikhail Miatselski, this decision was taken by Barysau branch of *Minskablsaiuzdruk* because the newspaper was allegedly in low demand.

**On 14 December** the Supreme Economic Court didn't grant the complaint of the non-state enterprise *Press-service*, founder and publisher of the newspaper *Kurier iz Borisova*. As a result, the newspaper ceased to exist. The complaint was considered by the college board of the Supreme Economic Court with the judge Liudmila Kalesnikava at the head.

**On 14 December** 180 citizens of Salihorsk signed the petition to the Belarusian authorities in defense of the non-state newspaper *Narodnaia volia*. They sent the petition to the Constitutional Court, the Chamber of Representatives, the prosecutor's office the Ministry of Information and the office of the OSCE mission in Minsk. The citizens demanded to stop the lawless actions against the daily and demanded to give the legal evaluation to the actions of the director of the printing house *Chyrvonaia Zorka* Ihar Malaniak and the director of *Belsaiuzdruk* Mikhail Padhainy who broke the agreements for the printing and distribution of the newspaper, violating the Belarusian legislation. According to the chief editor of *Narodnaia volia*, hundreds of subscribers kept applying to court, demanded to return the newspaper to the kiosks and introduce it to the subscription catalogue.

**On 15 December** the international journalist organization Committee to Protest Journalists adopted a special statement with regard to deportation of the Polish journalist Agnieszka Romaszewska from Belarus. 'We are indignant at the deportation of Agnieszka Romaszewska and demand that the journalist be allowed to get back to Belarus and freely work', said the executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists Ann Cooper.

**On 15 December** in Vitsebsk the police detained Barys Khamaida, Uladzimir Pleshchanka and Aliaksandr Salauian. At the moment of the detention Mr Salauian held a small white-red-white flag and Mr Pleshchanka distributed flyers of the Conservative-Christian Party BPF. The police attention was attracted mostly by Barys Khamaida who handed out *Zgoda*, *Narodnaia volia* and other newspapers – they kept him at Vitsebsk Chyhunachny Borough Board of Internal Affairs for 1,5 hours and thoroughly searched his personal belongings. Having failed to find any violations to incriminate to the detainees they let

them go and explained that the reason for detention was a telephone call from a vigilant citizen who was dissatisfied with manifestation of political opposition-mindedness.

**On 15 December** Minsk Economic Court, presided by Alena Melnikava, ruled to stop the case brought on the suit of *Narodnaia volia* against the state enterprise *Belposhhta* because of the alleged non-liability of the case to court consideration. Being asked by Iosif Siaredzich which court consider the case, representatives of *Belposhhta* answered the case wouldn't be considered anywhere.

**On 16 December** Tatsiana Chabatarova, a *Vitsebski kuryer* correspondent, wasn't admitted to the session of Vitsebsk City Deputy Soviet. She twice asked for permission to be allowed to the 13<sup>th</sup> session: first, the head of the ideology department of the city executive committee Natallia Tsarova and then personally to the head of the city executive committee Henadz Hrytskevich. The representative of the city executive committee noted that the list of the invited periodicals only had three state-owned Vitsebsk newspapers, and the chair of the executive committee advised the *Vitsebski kuryer* to look for some other topics, and finished off recommending to 'have a rest from this session'. Neither was Tatsiana Chabatarova able to get inside the session room without permission: at the entrance a security guard stopped her after looking at her journalist ID. For the same reason the head of the regional branch of the BPF Party Kanstantsin Smolikau could not get to the session of the city executive committee. Before that the chair of the city executive committee had refused him saying that the session room did not have any vacant seats. Willing to stand, Kanstantsin Smolikau was not allowed to proceed any further.

**On 17 December** in Pinsk Aliaksandr Vasilieu was beaten for distribution of the non-state newspapers *Narodnaia volia*, *Salidarnasts* and *Belgazeta* near a shop. The head of the shop came up to him and ordered him not to hinder the work of the shop. Mr Vasilieu answered he distributed the newspaper outside the shop and therefore couldn't hinder to anyone. Then the shop loaders came up to and started beating him. He phoned to the police. The police arrived and... composed on him a report for hooliganism, stating he clang to the people that passed by the shop and initiated the fight. The loaders also wrote applications to the police. The policemen detained Vasilieu and took him to a police station.

**On 19 December** the official warning that the contract between the printing house *Intex-press* and the Trading Republican Unitary Company *Brestabsaiuzdruk* wouldn't be prolonged was received by the director of the publishing house Uladzimir Ianukevich. According to the letter dated December 16 2005

and signed by Director of *Brestabsaiuzdruk* Mr Mareika, the contract for the year 2006 'will not be prolonged on the basis of article #391 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Belarus'.

**On 19 December** the senior editor of *Narodnaia volia* Iosif Siaredzich stated he wasn't going to calm down and the newspaper would continue to reach the readers: 'We have a license to sell the newspaper in the editorial office. So he appealed to the readers: if you want to receive the January issues, transfer advanced payment and we will deliver you the newspaper.' The alternative system of subscription was also being created by the non-state newspaper *Nasha niva*. According to the senior editor Andrei Dynko, every day dozens of private donations arrived at the editorial office from the people who wanted to read *Nasha niva*.

**On 20 December** it became known that Vitsebsk citizens collected more than 1 500 signatures in support of the newspaper *Vitsebski kuryer*. After *Vitsebskabsaiuzdruk* refused to sell the newspaper in its kiosks, in Vitsebsk there was established the initiative group that composed letters of protest against the pressurization of the newspaper. These letters were submitted to Vitsebsk Regional Prosecutor's Office, Vitsebsk Regional and City Executive Committees, the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly and the presidential administration. These letters were signed by the writers Uladzimir Arlou and Iryna Zharnasek, the actors of the Belarusian academic theater and the theater *Lialka*. 167 signatures were sent by citizens of the town of Orsha. Entrepreneurs of Polatsk and Navapolatsk held a trade-union assembly in support of the newspaper. According to the members of the initiative group, several times more signatures could be collected: many citizens of Vitsebsk wanted to support the newspaper, but were afraid of harassment at the places of their work in the conditions of the contract system of employment (that had been introduced on the whole territory of Belarus).

**On 22 December** the Embassy of Czech in Belarus disproved the information that was distributed on 18 December by the program of the Belarusian TV *In the focus of attention*. According to the Embassy's note, the journalists of the Belarusian TV 'showed the work of the consular services of the Embassy of Czech and other EU countries in a wrong light... We categorically refuse to accept the statement that our applicants must take part in oppositional actions in order to get visa. The propagandist reports that weren't supplied with real facts negatively influence the relations between Czech and Belarus,' reads the note.

**On 23 December** the editorial office stopped the issue of the non-state trade union newspaper *Salidarnasts*. The senior editor Aliaksandr Starykevich

explained this by saying that the authorities deprived *Salidarnasts* of all possible sources of income – the newspaper couldn't get subscribed for or delivered via *Sauizdruk* system. 'In this situation we simply did not have any possibility to organize distribution because this also requires money and some amount of patience which we have not had for the past two years and a half. We have worked as a small team - 3-4 people, working 'on the move' so to say. I believe that the prospects of legal independent periodicals will remain very modest in the near future. If we continued, without subscription and distribution, there would be new reprisals, and the result would be the same. Our nearest prospect is the Internet and self publication,' said Aliaksandr Starykevich.

**On 26 December** the editorial board of the non-state newspaper *Borisovskiyе novosti* received an official letter from the chair of the ideological department of Barysau City Executive Committee who informed the chief editor of the edition Anatol Bukas about the necessity to submit information on the published advertisement materials for each month to the reception room of Barysau City Executive Committee. The ideologist referred to the council of the vice-prime-minister Kabiakou that took place on 29 September.

On 27 December Minsk City Economic Court turned up the suit of the chief editor of *Borisovskiyе novosti* Anatol Bukas against *Belposhhta* that didn't include the newspaper into the subscription catalog for the first half of 2006 and refused to conclude an agreement for the delivery of the newspaper to the subscribers. Anatol Bukas sued to the court as a private entrepreneur to make *Belposhhta* conclude the agreement. On 1 December the court informed him the suit was accepted and a case was brought. However, at the trial representatives of *Belposhhta* solicited for closing of the case. The judge Aksana Bradko satisfied their petition because the consideration of the case was allegedly beyond the competition of the court.

**On 29 December** the worker of the Tractor Plant Raisa Katsko was fined for selling books and newspapers in improper place. She was selling newspapers and books at the entrance of the tube station *Uskhod*. A worker of a district executive committee came up and looked through the book *Aliaksandr Lukashenka. Political Biography* by Aliaksandr Fiaduta. He called for the police and said this was insult of president. They police detained Raisa Katsko and confiscated the books and newspapers she had. The judge of Minsk Per-shamaiski Borough Court Harbatouski also ruled to fine her 58 000 rubles for trade in improper place.

**On 29 December** in the town of Belaaziorsk (Brest region) the police detained Uladzimir Kazeka, chair of Ivanava district headquarters of Aliaksandr Milinkevich. He came to Belaaziorsk to receive the certificates of members of

the initiative group of Aliaksandr Milinkevich. Having received the certificates, he returned to his car. The police searched the car and confiscated about 800 copies of the newspaper *Narodnaia volia*. Uladzimir Kazeka was detained at a police station for about six hours.

**On 31 December** in Homel the police detained the activist of the Party of Communists of Belarus Anatol Iliinchyk for throwing the newspaper of the party *Tovarishch* and fly-sheets about the Congress of Democratic Forces and Aliaksandr Milinkevich into the post-boxes of multi-store houses in Malaichuk St. The policemen confiscated from him the fly-sheets, but left the newspaper, and took explanations. They also warned that the administrative case against him would be passed to the administrative commission of Homel Chyhunachny Borough Executive Committee.

## 6. State ideology, censorship and pluralism of opinions

**On 18 January** the painting *Portrait of Vasil Bykau* (famous Belarusian writer) by the artist Ales Pushkin was removed from the art exhibition *Long Road Home*. The painters who took part in the exhibition took their paintings away to express their solidarity with Pushkin and the exhibition had to be closed. The director of the contemporary art center said that she received a special order from Vitsebsk Regional Executive Committee to remove the painting.

**On 20 January** during the college assembly of the Ministry of Education the minister Aliaksandr Radzkou stated that it was necessary to continue the ideological work that was conducted in the higher educational establishments of Belarus and make it 'more concrete and accessible to every teacher and student'. He also pointed that the ministry departments were to be more consequent and purposeful in the development of ideological, civil, patriotic and spiritual upbringing of students and said the content of the educational and upbringing process among youth and the scientific and methodological provision of educational and ideological work were improved and there were also defined the criteria and indicators of its successfulness. According to him, the results of this work manifested during the parliamentary election and the referendum. They showed the youth thought in the state categories, believed the government and supported it.

**On 21 January** it became known that Baranavichy State University worked

for almost a week without Rehina Ventsel, provost on upbringing. She and the vice-provost on upbringing Ivan Kitsun were fired for the president-related joke of the five-year students during the performance in the *Club of the Jolly and the Cute*. Ivan Kitsun was fired immediately, R.Ventsel and other representatives of administration received admonitions. Later R.Ventsel was fired as well. The university administration doesn't reject the fact the provost and the vice-provost were fired in connection with the students' joke. However, in Rehina Ventsel's service register it said the contract was annulled on agreement of the sides. Leanid Tsupryk, vice-chair of Brest City Executive Committee on education, said: 'Those who are responsible for upbringing of youth were to have checked their performance and told the students that disrespect to the president, who did so much for the city and their educational establishment, is inadmissible.'

**On 21 January** students of the philological department of Frantsysk Skaryna Homel State University were invited for a talk concerning the future distribution. In fact, that's the way the administration arranged their meeting with activists of the pro-governmental Belarusian National Youth Union (BRSM). The first secretary of BRSM Aliaksandr Laurynenka said its aim was "to make students know more than they used to know before". Then he started quoting from Lukashenka and said 'the great number of BRSM members witnesses the trust of the youth to the present president' and almost complete absence of BRSM members among the fifth-year students of the philological department was a result of 'incorrect information'. He justified the forcible distribution of the graduates (mostly to the radiation-polluted territories) with the necessity to return the money the state spent to educate students (!) and wished students to 'be more courageous going the new way'.

**On 24 January** students of Mahiliou Pedagogic University were obliged to subscribe to a number of state editions. The students of humanitarian departments of the university were told to come to credits and exams on state ideology with the subscription bills. Future teachers of history and social science had to subscribe to *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* and *Mahiliousskia vedamastsi* (the newspaper of Mahiliou Regional Executive Committee).

**On 26 January** students of Baranavichy State University were informed that scenarios of all their performances would undergo the ideological expertise of the university administration and also that it was prohibited to participants of the *Club of the Jolly and the Cute* to mention the surname Lukashenka and the word 'president' and also to imitate his voice. That's how the administration tried to save itself from new firings (recently the provost and the vice-provost on education were fired for the joke concerning Lukashenka, staged by the university students). The education minister Aliaksandr Radzkou also

ordered his subordinate to strengthen the upbringing activities at higher educational establishments.

**On 27 January** it became known that on 3 February Vasil Verabiu had to stop working as the dean of the journalism department of Belarusian State University. The official reason is that he decided to leave the position on his own free will. However, the department workers said he was fired on the order of the authorities, because of the recent celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the university, to which he invited well-known oppositional activists, and also for admitting to the university Hleb Labadzenka, activist of the liquidated humanities lyceum movement.

**On 28 January** Uladzimir Padhol, author of the book *Bullet for President* was summonsed to Minsk City Prosecutor's Office by the investigator Aliak-sandr Pikarau. Mr Padhol called it presentation of his edition. He told the investigator about the content of the book and even gave one copy as a gift to workers of the prosecutor's office.

**Since 1 February** all higher educational establishments of Belarus have to teach to students the course *Fundamentals of the ideology of the Belarusian state*. Lukashenka spoke of the necessity to increase the ideological work at the seminar for duty officials that took place on 27-28 March 2004. In 2004 the Ministry of Justice established the administration of personnel and ideological work with the aim to increase the ideological work in the organs of justice. The ideology department was established at the Academy of Government. The persons, who attend courses for the unemployed, are also taught ideology which increases the time of their studies for at least two weeks. In the beginning of January there ended the first stage of the contest for the best draft textbook *Fundamentals of the ideology of the Belarusian state*. One of the books, about 700 pages, was prepared under the supervision of Stanislau Kniazeu, rector of the Academy of Government and the doctor of political sciences Siarhei Rashednikau, director of the Institute of Government. The second was composed and even issued by the whole staff of the National institute of the High school of Belarusian State Pedagogic University (educational aid for ex-mural courses for administrative personnel and specialists of the system of education) and edited by the chair of the Constitutional Court Ryhor Vasilevich and the institute provost Iadviha Iaskevich. The third one, *Fundamentals of the ideology of the Belarusian state (history and theory)* was prepared by the department of philosophic sciences of the Academy of Government. Five more were written by the following authors: the philosopher Leu Kryvitski, the deputy of the Chamber of Representatives Ihar Katliarou, Vasil Shynkarou and L.Vartanova, Iadziha Iaskevich, V.Patapau. It was planned to make the course *Fundamentals of the ideology of the Belarusian state* more



than 10 lectures long. By the middle of February the special commission of ten scientists of the National Academy of Sciences was to define the best book that would become the official textbook for higher educational establishments.

**On 4 February** a fire started in the house where the famous Belarusian poetess Larysa Heniush lived. Neighbors noticed it and managed to smother the fire and through the clothes of the drunk dwellers out of the window. The house is more than hundred years old. It used to belong to Larysa Heniush's father in law Ian Heniush. Larysa Heniush lived there two years before World War II and after she returned from GuLAG camps – since 1956 till 1983 when she died. Vasil Bykau, Mikola Iermalovich, Uladzimir Karatkevich, Zianon Pazniak, Maksim Tank and many other famous people came there to see the poetess. Five years ago Zelva citizens filed a letter to the executive committee with the request to rename Savetskaia Street to Larysa Heniush Street and open a literary museum in the house where she lived. The executive committee didn't answer.

**On 3 March** the Ministry of Information put to its web-site the list of the authors and performers that were to be broadcast by the Belarusian radio-station. Taking into account the insufficient development of the national show-business and the ensuing lack of Belarusian songs that could permit to provide 75% of Belarusian music, the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Culture proposed to consider as national performers the ethnic Belarusians who lived abroad and also to consider as Belarusian music cover-versions of foreign songs, musical programs that were prepared by Belarusian DJs and songs of the bands some members of which were Belarusians. On the other hand, workers of FM radio-stations, musicians and journalists demanded from the Ministry of Information to publish the black list of the prohibited performers. However, it wasn't published, and the officials continued to orally prohibit broadcasting of certain bands and singers who demonstrated their views at oppositional actions.

**On 18 March** Navapolatsk city toponymic commission refused to name a street in honor of the famous Belarusian writer Vasil Bykau. The commission didn't support the initiative of the local citizens, who wanted to pay a tribute to the writer. Patriotically minded citizens proposed to change the name of one of the streets (for instance, Kirau St., named in honor of a communist official of the 1930-ies). However, the commission members refused to large financial expenses and to the fact this initiative wasn't publicly discussed.

**On 18 May** the concert-presentation of the popular comic duet *Sasha i Sirozha* in Belarus was prohibited. The concert was appointed on 19 May and was to have taken place at Reactor club in Minsk. However, on 18 May the

club administration broke the rent agreement with the concert organizers, refusing to tell the reasons. The art-director of the club said: 'I was told to take off the concert posters, which I did. I don't know why the concert was prohibited and would also like to find it out.' According to the producer of the duet Iauhen Kalmykou somebody phoned the club director and said not to hold the concert. The director of *Sasha i Sirozha* Vital Drazdou said: 'State officials are very afraid of everything and always try to save themselves'. Comic duet *Sasha i Sirozha* is the cooperative project of the artist Ales Khatskevich and the leader of the rock-group *Liapis Trubetskoy* Siarhei Mikhalok. In 2003 they even had their own program at Belarusian TV, called *The Loony*. However, after the interview to a Russian TV channel in which the comics joked over some Belarusian events, the program was closed down. Now *Sasha i Sirozha* are TV and radio hosts in the Ukraine.

**On 25 May** it became known that the concert of the Belarusian band *Krambambulia* that was to have taken place in the House of Literary Worker on 8 June was cancelled. The musicians stated it was done on the order of the authorities.

**On 22 June** Polatsk intellectuals received the answer to their collective letter, in which they asked the authorities to make everything possible to leave Frantsysk Skaryna's name to the main avenue of Minsk. The answer was written in Russian and signed by V.Kurash, chair of the culture department of Minsk City Executive Committee. The intellectuals were informed that the avenue started from the Square of Independence, every year the Victory Day and the Independence Day were celebrated there and in 1944 there took place the famous partisan parade. That's why it was decided to rename the avenue into Nezalezhnasti (Independence) Avenue. The intellectuals promised to preserve this answer for their descendents as an eloquent example of epistolary casuistry.

**On 30 June** on the 28th kilometer of the Minsk-Maladechna highway a historical and cultural complex *Stalin's Line* was inaugurated. About 10 thousand people who were gathered for the ceremony saw a large dramatized show with pyrotechnic effects, planes and tanks. An unprecedented show of military equipment was deployed on the complex territory (40 hectares). The veterans invited to the inauguration of the complex received from representatives of the Belarusian National Youth Union (BRSM) a collection of articles *Europe, bow to Stalin* recently published in Minsk. Aliaksandr Lukashenka, who attended the ceremony, said that *Stalin's Line* should become a self-supporting complex. Prior to the inauguration of the complex, some Belarusian historians evaluated the reanimation of *Stalin's Line* as a yet another move to rehabilitate the crimes of the Stalin era at the state level. Busts of Stalin also

stand in the settlement of Svislach in Hrodna region and in Slutsk, in the yard of one of the building trusts. According to the decision of Minsk City Executive Committee about restoration the word 'Stalin' is repeated for more than 10 times on the facade of Suvorou Military College in Minsk.

**On 4 July** the artist Ales Pushkin was taken to Minsk Leninski Borough Board of Internal after at 5a.m. outside the Arts Museum he put the portraits of the kidnapped Belarusian activists that were covered with black clothes and tied with red chains, on the stairs of the Art Museum. In the eyes of passers-by who were going home after the firework arranged by the authorities he started to uncover the portraits. The police didn't let him continue the action and detained him. He resisted to them, that's why they put his hands in handcuffs and carried him face to the ground to Minsk City Police Board in Karl Marx St. Together with him the police detained Siarhei Hryts, photographer of *Associated Press*, and Iulia Darashkevich, photographer of *Nasha niva* newspaper. The police also detained them for three hours, though they showed their journalist certificates. According to the photographers, the police abused their official powers because they had been shown all the required documents.

**On 7 July** it became known that the internet site of the organization *Martyaloh Belarusi* was going to display more than 50 000 names of the people repressed in Minsk during the rule of Iosif Stalin. These lists were obtained from a KGB officer. The site tells of the crimes and victims to Communism in Belarus in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It exhibits more than 6 000 names of the repressed people of Belarus, and several hundreds of names of those involved in punitive actions, several dozens of photos from Kurapaty and also books about the history of political reprisals in Belarus. Stalin is being rehabilitated in Belarus, the topic of political reprisals is hardly covered by the mass media. That's why the work in this direction acquires a still more substantial value.

**On 20 July** a metal-made cross installed in Mahiliou in commemoration of the Chernobyl victims was bent to the ground. The Chernobyl cross was installed by Mahiliou democrats on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the disaster on a hill outside Lausany cemetery, where the people who had suffered the consequences of radiation catastrophe were buried. Vandals two or three times destroyed a wooden cross, however two years ago a new sign was installed - a metal-made one solidly cemented in the ground, with a granite slab that read 'May Chernobyl Victims's Memory Live On Forever'. However, they attempted to destroy this cross as well. Ryhor Kastusiou, the leader of the regional branch of the BPF Party in Mahiliou, and Pavel Usau, a representative of the Mahiliou Social Democrats, appealed to Mahiliou Kastychnitski Borough Executive Committee. They asked the authorities to find out who attempted to destroy the Chernobyl cross and why and also to help to restore the memorial sign, if possible.

**On 21 July** a year passed since a concert staged at Minsk Square of Banhalor, which was attended by Belarusian rock groups and performing artists. They included *N.R.M.*, *Neuro Dubel*, *Palats*, Aliaksandr Pamidorau and other. The musicians performed in support of the rally under the slogan: 'No to the third term' and was allowed by the city administration. However, the authorities launched persecution against the concert participants. The *N.R.M.* leader Liavon Volski said: 'Secret bans occurred earlier. After the same concert there appeared 'black' lists on the radio, television and in other state-run media. A number of groups are not shown on Belarusian television. Sure, there is a general line now, which makes organization of a concert very difficult. And when a concert does not happen, it is very difficult to prove it has been banned. Because the bureaucratic system functions almost flawlessly'. Yet another concert participant, Aliaksandr Kulinkovich, the leader of *Neuro Dubel*, also said that the authorities had always sought to destroy Belarusian rock music, and the concert at Banhalor Square was just an excuse for further assault. The banned rock musicians unanimously say that they do not regret taking part in the so-called 'opposition' concert. They only benefited, because all of what happened only brought them closer to each other, said the *Palats* leader Aleh Khamenka.

**On 2 August** the administrative commission of Hrodna Kastychnitski Borough Executive Committee fined the democratic activist Andrei Ianushkevich about 12 US dollars for handing out fly-sheets with the demand to authorities to rename one of the streets to Vasil Bykau St., which was considered as violation of part 3 of article #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations of the Republic of Belarus.

**On 5 August** Zelva Town Executive Committee did not allow to celebrate the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the famous Belarusian poet Larysa Heniush, who would not adopt the Soviet citizenship, remaining a citizen of the Belarusian People's Republic. One of the organizers, M.Skobla, had previously arranged about the presentation of Heniush's book *The Epistolary Heritage* in Zelva School of Arts. However, two days before the beginning Zelava authorities turned down the Union of Belarusian Writers' application. M.Skobla was told that the school' roof had a leak, local musical school was closed for repairs and the cinema was sealed by a fire-brigade. Still, the organizers decided not to cancel the celebration, but to hold it in the open air.

**On 9 August** the culture department of Minsk City Executive Committee prohibited the concert of the folk-band *Palats* that was to have taken place in *Belaia Vezha* club in Minsk on 18 August. The officials rejected this information, and the musicians stated that the former conceived their actions and secretly expanded their black book. This concert was to have been the first

one after the concert of 21 July 2004 at the oppositional meeting in Banhalor Square. A similar incident happened to *Krambambulia* project in Reactor club in Minsk. Liavon Volski, one of the project founders, said: 'We have received prohibitions before, but after the appearance of black books many groups don't play anywhere. Most probably, it is a part of the general policy. Now it is very difficult to hold a concert, because the bureaucratic command system functions quite well.' Aleh Khamenka, the leader of *Palats* band, was also the author and the host of the *Nastaunitskaia* (Teachers') program at the *Lad* channel of the Belarusian TV. However, after the concert in Banhalor Square the program was prohibited and the band was fired from *Belconcert*. Aliaksandr Pamidorau, another participant of that concert, was fired from STV channel where he hosted Technology program. This year the concerts of *N.R.M.* and *Neuro Dubel* bands at Reactor club have been prohibited as well. The musicians addressed the authorities with an open letter, asking to explain the reasons for persecution, but got no answer.

**On 15 August** Pinsk Town Executive Committee did not allow the non-state newspaper *Miastsovy chas* to stage a concert to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> issue. The concert to be attended by Pinsk singers was to have been held on 21 August in the city part of culture and rest. The preliminary oral agreement was made with the chair of Pinsk City Executive Committee Aliaksandr Hordzich who reassured the *Miastsovy chas* editor Viktor Iarashuk that the concert would be held and that he 'saw no problems there'. Despite this, the official letter signed by the vice-chair of the town executive committee Aliaksandr Kaneuski said that the town executive committee does not allow the 'promotional action of the periodical'. Before the issue of the 100<sup>th</sup> number, the editorial office of *Miastsovy chas* started to face the newspaper distribution problems. Private distributors of the periodicals stopped taking the newspaper for sale in the busiest parts of the town, referring to the town executive committee's warning about possible consequences. The oral directive from the executive committee banned the sale of *Miastsovy chas* in the town kiosks of the state company *Belsaiuzdruk*. The attempt of the *Miastsovy chas* editor Viktor Iarashuk to advertise the newspaper articles on the local radio also failed. On 17 August Mr Iarashuk brought his application to the radio and on 19 August the materials were sent back with a short inscription made by the director of the local communications node Mikalai Rabkavets: 'Return'.

**On 16 August** UCP informed that over the past days the official party site had been hacked three times. The UCP leader Anatol Liabedzka explained at [www.ucpb.org](http://www.ucpb.org) that the site contained information received from sources in the 'vertical' of Lukashenka about the clan struggle in the power structures in Belarus: 'I think that this is a very nervous reaction to this information. So long they kill the site, which is good news. Living people do not get killed'. At the

beginning the visitors to the site simply could not access it, during the last time the hackers placed their own view of the recent developments in the country. The same happened to the internet site of the human rights organization headed by Liudmila Hraznova. The acting head of the press service of UCP Katsiaryna Tkachenka said: 'We know that KGB has created a special service responsible for viewing opposition sites, the communications and all forums. The best programmers available in Belarus were offered jobs in this service.'

**On 2 September** it was announced that the traditional Frantsysk Skaryna Book Festival would not be held in his home town this year. Polatsk authorities named financial deficiency as the main reason for the decision.

**On 4 September** the Days of Belarusian Literature started in the town of Kamianets in Brest region. The organizers of this official measure didn't invite to it members of the Union of Belarusian Writers that is considered to be 'opposition' to the official literary associations. Ales Paskevich, chair of the Union of Belarusian Writers, thusly commented on the situation: 'The authorities divided Belarusian writers into loyal and disloyal ones. The latter group is not represented at the official days of poetry, state magazines and literary weeklies, which is harmful for literature and contemporary Belarusian culture. Ordinary citizen doesn't ask why the writers weren't invited, he simply decides that there's no contemporary Belarusian literature, no famous writers. He thinks so because he doesn't see them come to traditional literary feasts.'

**On 15 September** Minsk City Court refused to grant the complaint by the residents of the Belarusian capital who complained against the renaming of the central avenues and streets in Minsk by A.Lukashenka. A group of Minsk residents filed a complaint against the renaming of the streets in Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court, but this court refused to deal with their complaint saying that it was not competent to consider the acts taken by the head of state. The claimants viewed this position as not corresponding to the law, and filed a complaint with a higher level court, Minsk City Court, which, however, also took the line that the Belarusian court system does not have the right to review decrees issued by Lukashenka.

**On 3 October** in his speech to the House of Representatives the minister of education Aliaksandr Radzkou said that the Ministry of Education was to care that the educational process 'was not politicized'. That's how he commented on the document for official use 'On measures for prevention of attempts to involve pupils and students into illegal activity of political kind' that was issued by the ministry at the end of May 2005. Mr Radzkou stated this document could by no means limit the constitutional rights of students. According to him, they 'have the right to participate in political life, but educational

establishments institutions aren't places for declaring one's approaches and political views'.

**In the beginning of November** in Minsk near building #27 Handlioavaia St pickets against the destruction of the cultural and historic monument of the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century took place. Such was a record about that building in the list of historical places of Minsk. The building was situated on the hillside from Svabody square to river Svislach. Minsk City Executive Committee gave permission to destroy the building in order to build on its place Russian Orthodox Church Seminary. In the building #27 there was a dwelling house. Its front was decorated with balconies with rare ornamented banisters made from metal. Later this building became a student dormitory where Ales Adamovich lived during his student's years. In spite of great hue and cry of the public the historical monument of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was ruined.

**On 10 November**, 10 the rector of Frantsysk Skaryna Homel State University Aliaksandr Rahachou told about the strengthening of propaganda in his report at the field session of Homel City Executive Committee. Before that the employees of the executive committee, ideological workers and heads of educational institutions visited the students' hostels as well as youth and sports complexes. A regional assistant of the head of state Viktor Shchetska took part in the discussion of the report. The head of ideological department of Homel Regional Executive Committee Anatol Katsila proposed the heads of the university to strengthen the primary organization of Belarusian National Union of Youth (BRSM), to organize radio broadcasts in in the students' hostels and to increase the subscription to state periodicals in the core of teachers and students. A special attention is also given to high schools. Now the leaders of education departments are strongly concerned with decorating the room corners with state symbols. This demand comes from the regional education department. The head of the education department of Homel Savetski Borough Executive Committe Natalia Zhgirova said: 'In every classroom there should be the State Emblem and Flag. And in the school, in the foyer, when you enter the school, it is necessary to have state symbols. The way places of honor are decorated - the Emblem, the Flag and the Anthem'. The main specialist of the education department Alena Surava specified how the places of honor with the symbolics should look like: 'These shall be the corners of a kind they decorate, for example, in military units.'

**On 28 November** in Kurapaty memorial unknown vandals again defiled the Memorial sign 'From the people of the US to the people of Belarus for remembrance' that was installed by Bill Clinton during his visit to Belarus in 1994. The upper plate was torn off the bearers and thrown on the ground. The vandals also broke more than ten crosses, damaged the tablets at the so-

called 'Polish cross' and some other crosses. Icons were torn off from many crosses. The vandals drew a swastika on the icon of Our Lady of Kurapaty by the artist Aliaksei Marachkin. They also tore off the tablet 'To victims of Stalin's repressions' from Kurapaty stone.

**On 1 December** the ambassadors of the EU country paid a visit to the burial ground in Kurapaty forest. They expressed their indignation at the acts of vandalism in the place of mass fusillades of victims of Stalin's regime.

**On 7 December** the public sitting on preservation of the Kurapaty memorial took place. Members of the International human rights association *Memorial*, Association of victims of political repressions, well-known historians, archeologists and politicians decided to collect signatures under the public note and demand from the authorities to give the legal evaluation of the vandalism acts in Kurapaty. The assembly also ruled not to remove the desecrated crosses and monuments and wait for the authorities to do it. The local police started patrolling Kurapaty and brought a criminal case on the acts of vandalism.

**On 12 December** the architect Leanid Levin, author of the memorial complexes *Khatyn* and *Iama*, condemned the acts of vandalism that were committed in the burial ground Kurapaty and urged the authorities to properly investigate the case and punish the guilty. 'It is our common task. Drawing on these stones and crosses they draw on our hearts. I think it is not only a challenge to Jews, Moslems and Christians. It is a challenge to all of use and the authorities who do nothing. For us Kurapaty, Khatyn, Trastsianets and Iama are parts of our memory about the dead,' said Mr Levin.

**On 21 December** the state TV channel *BT-1* started broadcasting the documentary *Generalissimos* about Stalin. Having watched its first part a number of historians described the film as tendentious. Ihar Kuzniatsou, historian who does research on Stalin's repressions, pointed: 'Actually, it is rehabilitation of Stalin and the ideas of Stalinism on the territory of Belarus. Stalin is a positive character. He tried to do good, but didn't manage to because of the associates who weren't that positive... The film features justification of Stalin and search of enemies among representatives of other nationalities. The anti-Semitic orientation is also clearly visible.'

**On 27 December** the founders of the unregistered *Free Theater* stated the authorities manifested their intention to push the theater out of Belarus. Not only was it prohibited to hold place where they were held earlier, but even the pressurization of the owners of the flats where the plays were staged. The manager of the theater Natallia Kaliada said that such obstacles were rather connected with the name *Free Theater* than the content of the plays. The founder



of the theater Mikalai Khalezin pointed: 'The theater must work in underground because it has other stylistic language... All private initiatives in the field of culture are put under state direction so that they could be pressurized. They don't manage to do it with *Free Theater*. They tried not to notice us, but after a tour abroad, especially the resonance in Riga, they started 'catching' us wherever we appear.'

## 7. Persecution of NGOs, political parties and their activists

**On 10 January** it became known that the housing authorities of Hrodna ordered Hrodna organization of Belarusian People's Front to leave its office in Karl Marx St. by 17 January. Allegedly, the house where the office was situated, needed serious repairs and there was even the danger of its collapse otherwise. The head of Hrodna BPF organization Mikola Voran stated such actions of Hrodna authorities put the future existence of the organization in danger and were a part of the clear-up connected to the future presidential election.

**On 6 January** the Ministry of Justice sent to the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party *Narodnaia Hramada* a letter *Concerning the exclusion of U.Malashka, Iu.Markouski, U.Nistsiuik and M.Statkevich*. The letter was signed by the Justice Minister V.Halavanau. The letter stated that the Ministry of Justice had received materials concerning the exclusion from BSDP NH its chairman M.Statkevich, the first vice-chair U.Nistsiuik, the vice-head U.Malashka and the member of the central council Iu.Markouski and checked the legality of their exclusion. During the check-up the ministry found that the decision of Minsk city committee of BSDP NH of 8 December 2004 to exclude from the party U.Nistsiuik, V.Malashka and Iu.Markouski was illegal. What concerns the decision of Minsk City Committee of BSDP, dated 11 December and related to exclusion of Mikola Statkevich, the ministry considered it legal. As a result, U.Nistsiuik became the acting chair of BSDP NH.

**On 13 January** the Supreme Court rejected the review complaint of the Belarusian Student Association that asked to reverse the liquidation verdict, issued on 3 December 2001. 'The BSA has become even more active, working without registration, which again confirms the conviction of its members that one can deprive organization of registration, but can't liquidate thousands of students, who are united with a common idea,' commented the BSA Council. 'BSA became the first organization, liquidated by the Ministry of Jus-

tice within the limits of the campaign aimed at clearing the legal field from NGOs'.

**On 14 January** the deputy of Hrodna Deputy Soviet Siarhei Antusevich submitted a deputy inquiry to the chair of Hrodna Leninski Borough Executive Committee in connection with the eviction of Hrodna organization of the Belarusian People's Front *Adradzhhenne* from its office. He demanded from the authorities to present to him the documents that witnessed that the building where the offices of Hrodna branches of BPF and the Party of Communists of Belarus were really in the state of emergency. Siarhei Antusevich also stated the BPF had always actively participated in all kinds of political campaigns and nominated observers to elections, which would be hard to do after the eviction.

**On 17 January** representatives of Hrodna housing administration visited Hrodna office of the BPF *Adradzhhenne*. They stated the building could collapse and it was necessary to get out. However, the party members ignored their demands. The following day the following note was put on the office door: 'It is prohibited to enter house 11 in Marx St. due to its dangerous state'.

**On 18 January** the Belarusian National Fund *Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation* made a statement to reprove the information, distributed by Belarusian TV on 13 January. For instance, some of the commissions of the fund that were situated in capitals of Belarusian regions were charged with groundless refusals to accept documents for financial compensation that were filed by victims of fascism. As a result, the administration of German Federal Fund *Memory, Responsibility and Future* adopted the statement where all accusations of Belarusian TV to Belarusian National Fund *Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation*. According to the Federal Fund, Belarusian Fund has always effectively defended the interests of all victims of national-socialist persecution in Belarus, delicately treating their hard fates and all the check-ups of the fund proved it.

**On 18 January** it became known that many associations that worked under the supervision of the housing services of Vitsebsk, were closed down. It was stated the local clubs were closed for the failure to achieve their aims and expensiveness of their activity. The organizations that worked with children were either closed or passed to the education board. For instance, the association of regional studies *Spadkaiemtsy*, several artistic coteries, puppet theatre, organization of collectors, the group of psychological aid, the club of family upbringing and the sportive section were evicted from the rooms that belonged to Vitsebsk Kastrychnitski borough housing administration.

**On 18 January** the head of the housing service of Hrodna Anatol Litvin

demanded from four public organizations, including the BPF *Adradzhenne* and the historical and cultural club *Pahonia* to leave the premises in Karl Marx St. 11 because of the emergency state of the building and also informed that the housing services had no free rooms for lending to these organizations. Members of the organizations were astonished with such situation. They also said that a shop of building materials was situated in the same building and it wasn't demanded from it to leave the building, but only recommended to repair the roof and the ceilings. It's worth mentioning that organizations cease to exist if they lose their juridical addresses, which can happen as a result of eviction.

**On 24 January** Hrodna Regional Economic Court started considering the suit of the head of the exploitation service Anatol Litvin for eviction of four public associations from the building in Karl Marx St. 11. Anatol Litvin referred to the conclusion of *Hrodna Civil Project* that the building was in the state of emergency and its further exploitation without repairs was impossible. He asked the court to break the agreement with the public associations and evict them from the occupied premises.

**On 25 January** the citizen of Zhodzina, former candidate to deputy position and activist of the United Civil Party Aliaksandr Vauchanin applied to the Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko. In his appeal he stated that Belarusian secret services and authorities presented danger to his health and life. In his appeal Vauchanin also mentioned his participation in the orange revolution in Kyiv. By the way, the month after his return from Kyiv Zhodzina officials checked for what money he went there and why he didn't work those days.

**On 26 January**, as a result of the check-up of the Belarusian Union of Youth and Children's Public Associations *Rada* Minsk Tsentralny borough tax inspection ruled to exact from the organization the non-paid taxes, economical sanctions and a fine. The total sum is more than 125 million rubles, which is the record volume of financial sanctions against Belarusian NGOs. The reasons for such huge fines were found by the vice-head of Minsk Tsentralny borough tax inspection V.Miranovich and the tax inspector Ie.Pshanichnaia during the last year's check-up of the organization. They concluded that in 2002 and 2003 *Rada* paid no taxes from the international technical aid, received from European commission on TACIS program and also in UNICEF program of the UN. It's worth mentioning that in 2004 tax officials had such pretensions concerning TACIS programs to the Belarusian Helsinki Committee and *Will for Development*, situated in Slonim). In that case all court instances confessed that the TACIS means were exempt from taxes and were used according to Belarusian legislation.

**On 27 January** Homel Chyhunachny Borough Court started preparing to

the trial on the suit of the representative of the Fund of facilitation to the local development Viktor Karniaienka against Homel Chyhunachny borough passport and visa service. The matter is that since autumn 2004 the police refused to put the permissive seal for foreign travels to the plaintiff's passport, because they allegedly received information from Homel Savetski borough tax inspection that he didn't pay his debt to the state. This is the debt of the public organization *Civil Initiatives* that was headed by Mr Karniaienka and liquidated in 2003. 'I would pay a fine if the court sentenced me to pay it. In the case *Civil Initiatives* still existed, it would pay to the state as well. According to the Belarusian legislation, citizens aren't responsible for the debts of the organizations they are members of. That's why I consider the actions of the duty officials as limitation of my civil liberties,' commented Viktor Karniaienka.

**On 31 January** residents of Kastrychnitski borough of Vitsebsk protested against closing down of the local clubs. They collected more than a thousand signatures in defense of the club *Doblest* (Valour). At the beginning of the year Vitsebsk City Executive Committee ruled to liquidate the local clubs for economy of the finances. The housing economy passed them to the educational establishments, but many coteries, sportive sections and studios where adults and children used to spend their leisure, disappeared as a result. *Doblest* served habitants of a populous area and had about one hundred visitors. There were a number of children's coteries, knight club and theater of fashions, studies of aerobics and Chinese gymnastics, meetings of veterans, and free legal aid. This club was considered one of the best and received many diplomas at different competitions and exhibitions.

**On 31 January** the circuit election commission of Hrodna election circuit #52 issued a warning for distribution of fly-sheets to the initiative group established for nomination Iaraslau Ramanchuk, vice-chair of Hrodna branch of the United Civil Party, as a candidate to the parliament, and ordered them to take the fly-sheets out of the postboxes. The peculiarity of the situation lies in the fact that, according to Iaraslau Ramanchuk, the fly-sheets were distributed on 13 January, before the registration of the initiative group: 'We distributed legal production with the program of our party in the beginning of the month, when there weren't any initiative groups at all! The distributed fly-sheets contain the data-line, as the law demands, and are a part of the official production of our party,' he said.

**On 31 January** the chair of the BPF Party Vintsuk Viachorka gave publicity to the following information at the sitting of the party: 'Despite the insistent attempts of the local branches of our party to re-register the legal addresses, only 10% of the registered branches managed to find substitutes to their legal addresses in non-residential premises, as it was demanded by the Ministry of

Justice on 18 October 2004. We were directed to auctions of rent with the costs that we weren't able to pay, or to private houses, where either firemen or health services didn't give us the necessary documents so that we couldn't register. It is evident for us the authorities ordered not to register local structures of the BPF in any case. However, we will continue acting in any conditions. We aren't going to adapt to the authorities. Their actions actually create the preconditions for eviction of the party to underground.'

**On 2 February** Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Court started proceedings on the suit of Mikhail Varanets, chair of the Slonim-based public association *Will for Development* to the 1<sup>st</sup> National channel of Belarusian TV concerning protection of his honor, dignity and business reputation and also the honor, dignity and business reputation of the NGO. The matter is that on 16 March 2004 *Panarama* program of Belarusian TV showed the spot, prepared by Hrodna journalist Mikola Melnichenka. There it was stated that Mikhail Varanets evaded from paying the taxes from the grant, received by *Will for Development* on the TACIS program of the EU. In particular, Mikhail Varanets was said to have spent the grant means on financing the opposition and Slonim tax inspection allegedly stopped his illegal activity by arresting the property of the NGO and fining it chairman 34 million rubles. According to Varanets, the tax inspection wanted to exact only 14 million rubles, the whole sum of the grant being 25 million rubles. He complained against this decision to Hrodna Regional Economic Court which satisfied his complaint because TACIS grants were exempt from taxation by the state. That's why Mikhail Varanets applied to the administration of the 1<sup>st</sup> National TV channel with the request to disprove the information. Being indignant at the answer that TV wouldn't disprove the lies because it didn't receive any pretensions in the court order, on 27 November 2004 Mikhail Varanets sued to the court.

**On 2 February** Krychau organization of Belarusian Social-Democratic Party *Narodnaia Hramada* received second warning from the justice board of Mahilou Regional Executive Committee for absence of new juridical address.

**On 4 February** in his interview to the state newspaper *Respublika* Aleh Slizheuski, chair of the department of public associations of the Ministry of Justice, disproved the accusations that the Ministry of Justice deliberately didn't register new public associations and stated that in 2004 it registered 155 organizations. He stated that the main obstacles to registration were the incompetence of their organizers and incorrect composition of the registration documents.

**On 4 February** Homel police officers together with representatives of the traffic police had stopped a taxi that was taking Deputy Dzmity Shkulkou to

the railroad station and searched his personal belongings. In the deputy's bag the police officers found flyers of the *Partnership* initiative about the reform of the housing and utilities complex in Belarus. They took the deputy to a police station, confiscated the fly-sheets and composed a report on illegal production of printed materials. Aliaksandr lauseienka, chair of Homel regional branch of Belarusian Helsinki Committee, and Sviataslau Shalamau, chair of Homel regional branch of *Partnership*, came to the police station to support the deputy. When the police released the deputy, they returned to their office in 50 Hod BSSR Street. However, the police followed them. They started knocking on the door, ringing and finally turned off the electricity. They beset the office in 50 Hod BSSR St. 21 for more than two hours. The police group was headed by Aliaksandr Koshman, senior lieutenant of Homel Chyhunachny Borough Board of Internal Affairs.

**On 7 February** the Justice Department of Mahiliou Regional Executive Committee issued a written warning to the Council of the public association *Bialynichy Area Studies Society*. The Council of the association was requested to bring its legal address in line with the related legislation by 1 March for the fear of its liquidation.

**On 8 February** Hrodna Regional Economic Court considered the suit of Hrodna Leninski Borough housing service for eviction of Hrodna city council and Hrodna regional council of the Belarusian People's Front *Adradzhenne* from their office in Karl Marx St. 11. The suit against Hrodna city BPF council was considered first. At the very beginning of the trial judge Siarhei Kulakouski said that in suit the housing service asked to break the rent agreement that was concluded with the BPF organization and evict it from the house. The BPF council was surprised with it because the rent agreement had been prolonged in November 2004. The housing service refers to the emergency state of the building. At the trial the head of Hrodna City BPF Council Mikola Voran expressed his doubt concerning the expert conclusion about the emergency state of the building. Then the court proceeded to the suit for eviction of the regional BPF council, the office of which is situated in the same building, Karl Marx St. 11. Finally, the trial was suspended till 21 February so that the court could gather the necessary materials related to the case.

**On 8 February** the Central Election Commission left in force the warning to the initiative group of Iaraslau Ramanchuk. The Central Election Commission considered the fly-sheets of the United Civil Party that were thrown into post-boxes in Hrodna were untimely agitation for Iaraslau Ramachuk, vice-head of the UCP. Iaraslau Ramanchuk, who tried to become a candidate to the Chamber of Representatives at Hrodna election circuit #52, explained that his party conducted a large agitation campaign connected with the future presidential

election and the campaign occasionally started from Hrodna region. However, CEC rejected this explanation.

**On 8 February** the justice board of Minsk City Executive Committee authorities proposed self-liquidation to the Analytical Center *Social Technologies*. The NGOs existed for less than five years and received three warnings for a year, which would bring on its liquidation. According to the head of the center Aliaksandr Fiaduta, this decision was a result of the purposeful campaign against the third sector. *Social Technologies* concentrated on a number of projects, including the issue of *Belaruski shtohodnik* (Belarusian Yearly Periodical) with the monitoring of the most important events; the web-site *Nasha merkavanne* (Our opinion) [www.nmn.by](http://www.nmn.by), where the analytical materials of Belarusian and foreign experts were placed. Mr Fiaduta expressed the hope that the liquidation of the center wouldn't stop these projects, because the analytical materials were in a high demand.

**On 8 February** the Ministry of Justice filed to the Supreme Court the suit for liquidation of the public association Belarusian Women's Movement *Revival of Motherland*. The suit was signed by the Minister of Justice Viktar Halavanau on 27 January 2005 as a result of a long-run check-up of the organization. Among the alleged reasons for the liquidation there are violations of the accountancy rules and contradiction of the content of certain documents to the reality. According to the ministry, the organization didn't provide the necessary documents for the officials who conducted the check-up and answered the letter of the Ministry of Justice (dated 2 July 2003) with the demands to provide information and documents too late. By the way, at that time such letters with demands to provide the complete information about their activity were sent to hundreds of Belarusian public associations. It is also stated in the suit that the agenda which was registered in the minutes of a sitting of the organization didn't correspond to the real agenda (some numbers of the points in the agenda were wrong and the decisions to exclude some persons from the organization were drawn in the wrong way). Among the gross law violations the Ministry of Justice the justice mentioned that on 21 December 2003 (the eve of the Christmas and the New Year) the council of the organization ruled to 'prepare congratulations to the organization members' but didn't mention the names of the holidays in its ruling.

**On 9 February** Mikola Astreika, chair of the *Partnership* monitoring net, was summonsed to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs and charged with activity on behalf of unregistered organization (violation of article #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations).

**On 10 February** the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political

Studies (IISEPS) complained against the warning that was issued to it by the Ministry of Justice for the refusal to provide the questionnaire of a social poll, conducted by the institute. The peculiarity of this trial was that the IISEPS scientists defended their right to hold free social polls, preserving the anonymity of the interviewers and the respondents that guaranteed the objectivity of the results. The Ministry demanded a copy of the questionnaire and warned the IISEPS for non-presenting it. The ministry representative Aliaksandr Kharyton stated at the court that the ministry wanted the IISEPS activity to be transparent, whereas the IISEPS director Aleh Manaieu said the ministry tried to control the sociologic polls and the people who took part in them.

**On 14 February** the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus found legal the warning of the Ministry of Justice to the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS). Judge Valiantsina Kulik ruled to leave the warning in force. The judge referred to article #25 of the law *On public associations* and stated that all documents and materials related to the statute activity of public associations must be presented to the Ministry of Justice. As far as sociologic polls are a kind of the IISEPS statute activity, all materials of the polls including filled questionnaires had to be saved and presented to the registering state bodies if required. That's how the court puts the anonymity of sociologic polls in danger. The judge also explained that the ministry had the right to check the information which was commercial secret (for instance, if the institute conducted marketing polls). The IISEPS director Aleh Manaieu said: 'This decision has created a precedent which increases the state control of the civil society with the assistance of the Ministry of Justice.'

**On 14 February** Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Court decided that in *Panorama* program the Belarusian State TV and Radio Company and the journalist Mikola Melianichenka distributed false information about the activity of the public association *Will for Development* the its head Mikhail Varanets. The court sentenced the Belarusian State TV and Radio Company to read the operative part of the court verdict in *Panorama* program, pay all court expenses of the plaintiff on this case and disprove the statement 'According to some information, beside the teenage club Mr Varanets created so-called resource center with the aim to finance opposition structures and ran so mad about it that the teenage club became an underactor... If international funds don't give any financial support to this misfit businessman, his shady activity will stop.' During the trial the defendants didn't present any evidence that this information was true and had to confess it was their personal opinion. The labeling nature of this information was evident to all participants of the trial.

**On 15 February** the Union of Belarusian Writers received from the presidential administration the letter that ended with the warning about the eviction



from the premises in Frunze St. 5. This was a response to six writers, war veterans, having earlier asked for Maxim Tank's study in the House of Literary Worker to be converted into a memorial room in honor of the former chair of the Writers' Union. In the House of Literary Worker the Union now had only this study with a reception room, half of the library, and three small rooms for keeping the organization's documents. The writers didn't plan to leave these rooms. The writers left several rooms in the House of Literary Worker after in 1997 the entire house had been transferred by the Chief Executive's decision into the ownership of the Main economic department of the presidential administration. In February the writers were forced to leave these rooms because they allegedly had no documents proving they could stay there and also threatened to exact from the organization 113 million rubles of debt for the public utilities.

**On 16 February** Homel Chyhunachny Borough Court granted the suit to the famous politician Viktor Karneienka against the district passport and visa agency. Judge Larysa Kazyrevich, who had reviewed Viktor Karneienka's suit, ruled that the passport and visa service of Homel Chyhunachny Borough Board of Internal Affairs give Mr Karneienka permission to temporarily leave Belarus. The Board of Internal Affairs of Homel Regional Executive Committee should compensate to the politician the legal costs worth 120 thousand rubles. The court ruling had been preceded by three sessions. Mikola Pryimachuk, the acting head of the passport and visa service of Homel Chyhunachny Board of Internal Affairs, explained it to the court that Viktor Karneienka had been denied permission to leave the country because Homel Savetski borough tax inspection had sent to the Migration and Citizenship Department a notice saying that the politician had not paid a governmentally awarded fine. The legal proceedings highlighted that the officers employed in the passport and visa agency had not performed verification required to find out whether Mr Karneienka should be restrained in his ability to leave the country. The officers had violated the law and the departmental instruction regarding the order of Belarusian nationals leaving Belarus. Valiantsin Krylou, head of Homel Savetski borough tax inspection, had no ground to report to the regional department of migration and citizenship the fine the politician had allegedly failed to pay. In fact, the tax inspection had grievances against Karneienka-led civil association *Civil Initiative*, whose closure was initiated by the taxation committee. According to the court, the board of the internal affairs was sentenced to pay 120 000 of the court expenses.

**On 16-17 February** the leaders of the Belarusian People's Front, the United Civil Party and the Party of Communists of Belarus were warned by the Ministry of Justice for the failure to transfer the legal addresses of their branches to non-residential premises. The ministry demanded from the parties to do

it within one month or liquidate the branches that have legal addresses in flats and houses. In January leaders of the parties applied to the minister of justice with the proposal to meet and discuss the conflict situation. They received his agreement after the ministry issued the warnings. The meeting at the Ministry of Justice was appointed on 22 February.

**On 18 February** in Vitsebsk five activists of the United Civil Party were detained at the check-point of *Chyrvony Kastyrychnik* shoe factory for handing out fly-sheets and newspapers. They held a meeting with the workers and handed out about 800 fly-sheets *Five steps to better life* and the Russian *No-vaya gazeta*, that compared the official results of the referendum and the information of the Gallup institute. Together with the UCP activists the police started to detain the people who received the fly-sheets for 'insult of the president'. Members of the United Civil Party with the vice-chair of Vitsebsk branch Alena Zaleskaia at the head refused to go to Vitsebsk Katrychnitski Borough Board of Internal Affairs, proving there was no crime in handing out printed materials with data-line. Then the police called to an 'expert' and in several minutes there appeared a man in plain clothes. Having looked through the fly-sheets and the newspapers he ordered to release the detained UCP members and passers-by.

**On 18 February** the administrative commission of Rahachou District Executive Committee headed by Valiantsina Zaitsava, Executive Committee head for affairs, imposed a fine of 120 000 rubles on Dzmitry Shkulkou, a deputy of Rahachou District Deputy Soviet and a member of the United Civil Party. The deputy was accused of illegally producing flyers covering the reform of the housing and utilities complex. The report registering the violation allegedly committed by Shkulkou arrived from Hrodna Chyhunachny Borough Board of Internal Affairs. On 4 February Homel police officers together with representatives of the traffic police had stopped a taxi that was taking Deputy Shkulkou to the railroad station and searched his personal belongings. In the deputy's bag the police officers found flyers of the *Partnership* initiative about the reform of the housing and utilities complex in Belarus. A report registering the distribution of flyers whose content allegedly aims to damage the state and public order was drawn up. After Deputy Shkulkou said at the sitting of the administrative commission that he could not be possibly going to Homel to distribute the flyers as he had been in a taxi, the commission fined him for illegal production of flyers.

**On 21 February** Ms Sakalouskaia, a judge of the Supreme Court, ruled to liquidate the public association Belarusian Women's Movement *Revival of Motherland*. The liquidation had been based on the inaccuracies in the record-keeping and in the minutes of the organization's governing board found by the

Justice Ministry consultant A.Kharyton, as well as the failure to promptly provide information required by the Justice Ministry about the activities of the association. Also, the court ruling argues that the organization has violated its own charter during the organization and conduct of the round table seminar Issues of Gender Balance in Contemporary Society in December of the last year, as well as when discussing the issues of education work with children at a sitting of the organization's Council. Zinaida Hantsuk, leader of the BWM *Revival of Motherland*, said that from the very start it was clear what the court ruling would be like: 'We know there is an order requiring liquidation of our organization on account of some of our activities. That is why we did not even attempt a strategy of defending ourselves because the presence of the political order overshadows all the other legal aspects of the case.' The Belarusian Women's Movement *Revival of Motherland* was founded in 1997. It focused on helping women implement their political, civil and social rights.

**On 21 February** Hrodna Regional Economic Court held a session to consider a suit filed by the Hrodna Leninski borough housing service against the city branch of the BPF. Siarhei Malchyk, chair for the regional branch, appeared in court for BPF. At the session the plaintiff case was represented by Aliaksei Litvinau, head of the housing service. He spelled out the position of the company in the eviction case against the BPF party. 'Mr Litvinau reiterated that they do not have any new premises which they could provide to us as a replacement option. In turn, I introduced a petition saying that I would represent the city branch, and asked for the session to be postponed so I have a chance of familiarizing myself with the case materials and preparing a response,' said Siarhei Malchyk. 'However, what I know for a fact is that the ruling will be tailored to the order from above. Telephone justice. The situation is the same for common courts and economic courts. All the same, we have to fight on.' The court granted the petition filed by Malchyk and put off the court session to 24 February.

**On 22 February** there took place a sitting of the council of the Union of Belarusian Writers. The organization declined the ultimatum of the presidential administration that demanded to move out of the majority of the rooms in the House of Literary Worker. The organization occupied 614 square meters, whereas the authorities wanted to leave only 58 m<sup>2</sup> to it. 'In this case the organization can lose its library, the chairman's office and the access to the small hall', stated the UBW chair Ales Pashkevich. 'We won't have any room for thousands of personal dossiers of writers, starting from Ianka Kupala and Iakub Kolas, and writers' archives. They offered us to pass these dossiers and archives to a state archive, but how can an organization exist if its files are passed to an archive? So we don't hurry to appear in archives.' According to Mr Pashkevich, in the case of refusal the state threatened to evict the organization

and also exact from it 133 million rubles as debt for the public utilities. The council of the UBW didn't recognize this debt and also argued other demands of the presidential administration. The majority of writers said the authorities wanted to evict the organization from the house and make it stop its activity. The Council entrusted its leaders to apply to the Belarusian and the universal community for support and answer to the officials that considered their demands insulting. According to the representative of the presidential administration Alena Malaia, this situation wasn't caused by a political order and the authorities didn't intend to liquidate the UBW, but wanted to treat it equally to other public organizations to which the state guarantees 70 m<sup>2</sup> of office room with reduced rent tariff.

**On 22 February** representatives of the oppositional parties met with Aleh Krautsou, vice-minister of justice. The meeting was attended by representatives of the BPF Party, the United Civil Party, the Party of Communists of Belarus, the Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada, the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party *Narodnaia Hramada* and the women's party *Nadzeia*. All these parties were warned by the Ministry of Justice for the failure to transfer of their regional structures to non-residential buildings by 1 February, as it was demanded by the ministry. The opposition leaders explained to the vice-minister that this demand was illegal and was impossible to execute, because branches of their parties registered their legal addresses in flats and private houses in accordance with the laws that acted during the registration and no laws could be retroactive. According to leaders of the parties it was also impossible to execute the ministry demands because the owners of office buildings wouldn't like to lend the offices on reduced tariffs that are guaranteed by the law. Aleh Krautsou asked to elaborate concrete proposals for solving the situation and pass them to the Ministry of Justice.

**On 22 February** the police attempted to detain Vintsuk Viachorka, chair of the BPF Party. Police officers attempted to detain Vintsuk Viachorka to forcedly take him to the prosecutor's office for interrogation. The attempt at detaining the party chair occurred in the Justice Ministry immediately after the meeting with the vice-minister of justice Krautsou. V. Viachorka was released after he had promised in a telephone conversation with the prosecutor's office investigator Kukharonak that he would appear in the prosecutor's office on his own free will.

**On 25 February** Mahiliou regional justice board warned the women's public association *Liubava*, based in the town of Horki. The authorities stated the NGO office was situated in an apartment house and had to find another building for it. The public activists were surprised at such demand, because the legal address of their organization was registered in a private house, not a

many-stored apartment house, and had two separate exits. *Liubava* was registered in 2001 and is one of the most famous town organizations and organizer of many social actions for orphans and socially undefended families.

**On 3 March** the leaders of six political parties submitted to the Ministry of Justice their proposals concerning 'putting the registration of the organization structures of parties and their legal addresses in conformity with the letter and the spirit of the Constitution'. The document was signed by the leaders of the United Civil Party, Belarusian People's Front Party, Belarusian Social-Democratic Party *Narodnaia Hramada*, the Party of Communists of Belarus and the Belarusian Green Party. We should remind the Ministry ordered the parties to register the addresses of their units in non-residential premises by 1 February. However, none of the parties managed to do it. That's why the leaders of the parties proposed to the Ministry of Justice not to spread its new demands on the units that were registered before and also separate the demands concerning the legal addresses to the organizations that had the right of juridical bodies and that didn't have such rights. The letter also contained the demand to introduce the necessary amendments to the Law *On political parties* and the Housing Code for regulation of the existing legal collision and abolish the warnings that were issued to the parties for the failure to find new legal addresses. The authors of the letter also proposed to establish a public council with participation of representatives of the ministry and members of the parties in order to discuss the problems and elaborate proposals concerning the activity of political parties.

**On 4 March** the direction of the National public association *Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies* (IISEPS) distributed a statement in which it was said the state declared a real war against the civil society of Belarus, with no moral norms and juridical rules. According to the IISEPS vice-director Aliaksandr Sasnou, on 24 February four workers of the Ministry of Justice paid a visit to the administrative building of Fanipal mechanical repairs factory where the organization rented a room for legal address (the office was situated in another place). They entered the office without permission. 'We didn't keep there any documents', said Aliaksandr Sasnou. 'Nevertheless, they composed an act, the content of which remains unknown'. According to Sasnou, this action witnessed the continuation of the assault of the state on the independent institute, the results of whose research dissatisfied the Belarusian authorities. 'However, we state once again – as long as we live here and are free, we will continue investigating what Belarusians think of their life and familiarize them with their own opinion', reads the statement.

**On 4 March** it also became known that the administration of the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies prepared a complaint to

the prosecutor's office, accusing workers of the ministry of justice in trespassing their office. The Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies was registered in Fanipal and its office was situated at mechanic repairs factory. According to the vice-director Aliaksandr Sasnou, in the beginning of March four workers of the Ministry of Justice visited the office: 'They intimidated the secretary and the manager into opening the door in absence of the director', said Sasnou. Representatives of the factory have the right to visit the office for security reasons even in the absence of the owners. However, in this case the ministry workers could get there only together with the police.

**On 15 March** the national public association *Frantsysk Skaryna Belarusian Language Society* complained to the Supreme Court against the written warning that was issued to it by the Ministry of Justice on 16 February. The ministry motivated its actions by the fact that certain BLS branches had their legal addresses registered at private flats and thereby violated the Housing Code. The first vice-chair of the organization Siarhei Kruchkou stated these legal addresses were registered by the authorities after the enforcement of the Housing Code atwart its demands. 'That's why during the registration of the BLS branches it was the local authorities who violated the law, not the organization branches', pointed Kruchkou.

**On 17 March** the BPF Party received a letter from the Ministry of Justice of Belarus saying that the BPF Party congress that nominated Siarhei Antusevich a candidate for Parliament in Hrodna electoral circuit #52 was illegitimate. The letter was signed by the head of the public associations department Mr Slizheuski. The letter says that after examining the congress-related documents the Ministry of Justice spotted several violations. First, the Justice Ministry officials believe that 'the Soym of the BPF Party has attempted to conceal from the registration agency the following fact – most of the minutes of the meetings of the party branches or excerpts from the corresponding minutes were faxed to the Party Governing Council'. Second, most of the minutes of the party branches 'have no information regarding the names of those who attended the corresponding forums'. Also, 'a comparison of the signatures made in the registration lists on behalf of several individuals reveals they do not correspond to the signatures in the minutes'. 'We view this as political pressure, an attempt to stop Mr Antusevich's rather powerful campaign. Also, polls reveal he leads in this electoral district. Naturally, all of this has been prearranged for political reasons', this is how Uladzimir Labkovich, chair of the organization and legal commission of the BPF Party, commented on the letter.

**On 18 March** in Minsk the police detained the car that carried several thousand of promotion booklets of the United Civil Party. The driver, UCP ac-

tivists Ihar Shynkaryk, was detained for three hours. The booklets were arrested because of absence of the covering documents.

**On 19 March** the uniting assembly of the Belarusian social democrats was to have taken place. Its organizers had the following plan – members of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada join the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party *Hramada*, after which the administration of the new united party is elected. It was intended to elect its chair the former rector of Belarusian State University Aliaksandr Kazulin. However, the administration of the camping hotel not far from Minsk, where the assembly was to have taken place, suddenly broke the agreement, referring to absence of electricity, though the delegates didn't need it as it was intended to hold the assembly at 12 a.m. That's why it was decided to postpone the assembly and 180 delegates went to Minsk complex *Zhuravinka* for dinner. At first the waiters brought salads, but then representatives of the secret services arrived and the complex refused to serve the delegates, who had to go away to their regions.

**On 22 March** the leadership of the women's public association *Liubava* from Horki decided to launch a self-liquidation process. The reason was that the organization cannot fulfill the requirement of the regional department of justice demanding that the legal address of the public association should be changed. According to the information provided by our portal earlier, in February 2005 *Liubava* received a warning for violating the eighth article of the new Housing Code. According to Mahiliou officials, the Horki-based public association has its legal address in a high-rise residential building, which was in breach of the effective legislation. Tatsiana Kiraienkava, the association leader, said that after receiving the document from the regional department of justice, *Liubava* leadership attempted to bring its legal status in conformity, all of the attempts, however, failing. 'In such a situation it simply does not make any sense waiting for sanctions or fines', said T.Kiraienkava. 'We want no litigation or scandals implicating our people. We are very sorry that the situation turned as it did, because we had earlier invested so much effort into getting registered'.

**On 25 March** the Supreme Court of Belarus, presided by A.Zabara, ruled to liquidate the Association of Belarusian Scouts on the suit of the Ministry of Justice. It was one of the oldest public associations. It existed for 13 years and 3 days. Among the pretensions of the Ministry of Justice there were violations of the demands concerning the legal address, illegitimacy of the assembly that was held in 2002 due to the insufficient number of the registered structure units. The ABS counselor Kanstantsin Khadyka, who represented the organization interests at the trial, didn't agree with the pretensions and stated it was useless to oppose the Ministry of Justice, which turned into a punitive organ. According to him, it was necessary to discuss and colligate the ABS experience and knowledge to be ready to the future work.

**On 31 March** the judge of the Supreme Court Natallia Kulik appointed on 14 April the trial on the suit of the BPF Party against the warning that was issued by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus. The ministry accused the party of registration of more than 80 branches at private flats, which, according to the ministry, was violation of article #8 of the Housing Code. According to this article, flats were to be used only for habitation. Therefore the ministry proposed to the BPF to liquidate the 80 branches. The lawyer Uladzimir Labkovish thusly commented on the situation: 'The process of liquidation of units of political parties that was started by the Ministry of Justice has nothing to do with the Belarusian legislation and is politically motivated. No laws contain the demands for the organizational structures of political parties to have legal addresses. The BPF Party decided to take part in the trial to prove once again that political parties were discriminated in Belarus.'

**On 5 April** Frantsishak Skaryna Belarusian Language Society complained against the warning, issued by the Justice Ministry for the registration of its units in private flats. A number of other parties and organizations, the fate of which would depend on the results of this trial, have also submitted such complaints. The Housing Code was often mentioned at the trial that started at the Supreme Court on 5 April. Aleh Trusau, chair of the organization, thinks that the fate of the organization is decided there together with the fate of other public organizations and political parties. Dozens of them have recently received warnings from the Ministry of Justice for registration of their structures at private flats of their members. The Housing Code prohibits it – it was the Ministry of Justice who allowed it in 2000. The permission letter explained it with the wish to 'prevent the tension of the public and political situation'. Five years have passed and the things that had been allowed became a violation for which one can be punished. BLS is one of the first organizations that complained against the issued warning. Its activists insistently proved their right to judge Halina Zhukouskaia, pointing at difficulties with registration of their structures, and said they were ready to register the new structures on legal addresses in accordance with the last demand of the Ministry of Justice. They also said that the Ministry of Justice actually confirmed that the law violations took place on its initiative. Aliaksandr Kharyton, representative of the Justice Ministry, partially confirmed it. For instance, he called the letter of 2000 that permitted the registration of structures in private flats, 'judicially worthless'. According to him, the letter wasn't revoked by any other order or instruction and no one was punished for acting according to the 'judicially worthless' letter. Today the court listened to both sides and studied the documents of the case. The final sitting was appointed on 7 April.

**On 5 April** the Supreme Court listened to the arguments of the authorities of the Party of Communists of Belarus and left the court hall for a council.



Siarhei Kaliakin, first secretary of PCB, is sure that the warning is groundless: 'The ministry had no grounds to state such claims to the party. Moreover, the law on political doesn't contain such norms as 'legal address of party structure' and since 1999 our organizations have been registered by the Ministry of Justice without any problems.' The leader of Belarusian communists is deeply convinced that the law is on the side of the parties. 'If the Supreme Court is governed by the law, PCB wins the trial, otherwise any result is possible', he said.

**On 7 April** the Supreme Court of Belarus turned up the complaint of Frantsysk Skaryna Belarusian Language Society against the warning that was issued to the organization by the Ministry of Justice. Two days were enough for the judge Halina Zhukouskaia to take such decision.

**On 7 April** the Supreme Court left in force the warning to the Party of Communists of Belarus (PCB). The warning was issued for non-execution of the demand of the Ministry of Justice to transfer the party structures to non-tenantable buildings by 1 February 2005.

**On 8 April** the Ministry of Justice warned the Union of Poles in Belarus for the non-presentation of the results of the organization's 6<sup>th</sup> assembly that was held on 12-13 March in Hrodna.

**On 12 April** Asipovichy district organization of the Belarusian Language Society faced the threat of liquidation. The reason was that the organization had its legal address registered at the private flat that belonged to its chair Tatsiana Barel. She visited the chair of the ideological department of Asipovichy District Executive Committee Mr Kulakouski, who proposed to rent office to the organization without any discounts. The organization didn't have such means.

**On 12 April** the trial on liquidation of the national public association *Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies* (IISEPS), one of the leading analytical centers in Belarus, started at the Supreme Court. The trial was initiated by the Ministry of Justice. The state pressurization was a result of the publication of the results of the social polls, related to the referendum that took place in October 2004. At the end of 2004 the Ministry of Justice warned IISEPS for non-presentation of questionnaires from one of the nationwide polls. The institute tried to complain against the warning, considering such actions of the ministry an attempt to interfere with the organization's internal affairs, but lost the case. In its suit to the Supreme Court the ministry accuses the organization of repeated action for which it had been warned, — refusal to present questionnaires. All in all, the suit consisted of ten pages with different pretensions. IISEPS director Aleh Manaieu expected such develop-

ment of the events: 'We don't violate any laws and norms, neither legal, no moral ones. We execute the function that has been in our statute from the first days of our existence, the beginning of 1992: facilitation to the forming of civil society, democracy and market economy in the independent Belarus with the means of social polls. It became the main irritant for the authorities after the October referendum.' The representative of the Ministry of Justice at the trial was Aliaksandr Kharyton who has personal relation to the liquidation of a number of public organizations. At the trial he wanted to achieve his aim: 'It was decided to liquidate this juridical body for the following reasons. The first – it wasn't situated on its legal address, the second – they often failed to present the necessary information and documents. The third – the organization has non-statute organ, supervisory council. The fourth – they often used incomplete name of the juridical body. My speech is over,' said Kharyton. He also revoked a part of his pretensions, for instance that in the results of their research IISEPS distributed false information. In his commentary the IISEPS head Aleh Manaieu disagreed with the accusations. Some of them he called 'evidently absurd' and other ones — 'deceitful'.

**On 12 April** there started the trial on the suit of the Belarusian People's Front against the Ministry of Justice that had issued a warning to BPF with the demand to liquidate the party structures that had been registered in flats. Uladzimir Labkovich, chair of the organizational-judicial commission of BPF and its member Lury Chavusau represented BPF at trial. The representative of the ministry Liudmila Kliachka couldn't even answer a single question, which irritated even the judge of the Supreme Court Natallia Kulik. As a result the judge postponed the trial to 13 April so that the ministry representative could get ready to the trial.

**On 13 April** the trial on the liquidation of the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) continued. The Ministry of Justice states that the institute wasn't situated in the place of its legal address, didn't submit the necessary information about its activity, had a non-statute governing body and used imprecise name. Judge of the Supreme Court Larysa Fili-manikhina studied these accusations. The IISEPS representatives expressed impeachment to her, but the judge declined this move. Then she listened to the witnesses who told her how the institute used its office that was situated at Fanipal Mechanic Repairs Factory and proceeded to the documents that contained the institute's name. The representative of the Ministry of Justice Aliaksandr Kharyton presented to the court the institute ballots where it wasn't mentioned that the Institute of Independent Socio-Economic and Political Studies was a public association. According to the present legislation, it is a violation. Then the court discriminated what was the role of the supervisory council in the organization structure. The Ministry of Justice stated it was a governing

body that was established atwart the statute. It is also considered as a violation that can lead to the liquidation of the organization. Aleh Manaieŭ, chair of the institute, said: 'Imagine, that the council has only seven members, one of them is the vice-prime-minister of the Ukraine, another is a chair of an organization in New-York, one more – president of a Fund in Warsaw and so on. How can these people from different continents govern an organization in Belarus? Ask yourself about it and it will become clear that it is only a group of expert consultants.'

**On 14 April** the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus left in force the warning issued to the Belarusian People's Front by the Ministry of Justice. Let us remind that the Ministry of Justice accused BPF in placing of more than 80 organizational structures in private flats, which (according to the ministry) is a violation of article #8 of the Housing Code. As a result of the trial the court didn't satisfy the BPF complaint against the warning and only made admonition to the ministry for violation of the acting legislation during registration of the structures of BPF Party. The court verdict results in liquidation of about 80 organizational units of BPF all over the country. The lawyers only managed to defend the registration of a number of branches in Homel and Brest regions. It's worth mentioning that yesterday the Ministry of Justice replaced its representative Kaliachka with Zinkevich, because of 'heart problems'. Uladzimir Labkovich commented: 'This decision is doubtlessly the continuation of the political process on liquidation of the organizational structures of parties'.

**On 14 April** the Supreme Court of Belarus ruled to liquidate the public association *Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies* (II-SEPS). Judge Larysa Filimanikhina completely satisfied the suit of the Ministry of Justice for liquidation of the institute. She agreed with the opinion of the ministry officials that the institute workers repeatedly violated different laws, including the law *On public organizations*. In particular, she agreed that the institute really didn't submit to the ministry the documents he had to submit, used improper name and created obstacles to the legal activity of the Ministry of Justice. The head of the institute Aleh Manaieŭ called the court verdict 'unfair and politically motivated'. He reminded that the institute had acted since 1992, conducted dozens of sociological studies that were highly appreciated by scientists and the results of which were used in Belarus and abroad. According to Manaieŭ, the court executed the order of the Belarusian authorities who don't want people to know about the real situation in Belarus. The workers of the institute stated they would complain against the liquidation.

**On 19 April** it became known that according to the information disclosed at the recent session of the UN Human Rights Commission, in 2003 out of about 2 thousand public associations in Belarus, 50 were liquidated. In 2005 the

authorities shut down around ten organizations, including the Union of Belarusian Scouts, the Women's Movement *Revival of Motherland* and the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies. However, the Ministry of Justice argues that the closure of the public associations is not a political campaign but a result of measures taken to control observation of laws. As evidence they present registration of new public associations. Are the losses in the public sector really compensated for by the creation of new organizations? The human rights activist Ales Bialiatski shared his observations: 'Unfortunately, this process, however, does not yield equal figures. Associations do get registered, but... For example, the Assembly of Non-Governmental Organizations analyzed the registration attempts made by independent organizations and found out that out of ten organizations that have submitted registration documents, only one gets eventually registered. And those getting the registered status pursue activities in the field of area studies, or sport or are professional associations.'

**On 21 April** the US Embassy adopted the following statement regarding the liquidation of the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS): The United States Embassy expresses its deep disappointment over the ruling by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus on 15 April, which liquidated the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) for quite dubious reasons. By shutting down IISEPS, an authoritative organization devoted to the conduct of professional polls and questionings of the public opinion, the Belarusian authorities made yet another step toward depriving Belarusian society of sources of independent thought and dialog. The Belarusian government again demonstrated absolute disregard for the principles of the democratic community, which Belarus is supposed to defend as an OSCE member. The United States urge the Belarusian authorities to honor its commitments to OSCE, and cancel the decision adopted in violation of these commitments.

**On 3 May** there took place the first sitting of Minsk City Economic Court on the suit of the Belarusian union of youth and children's associations *Rada* against the tax inspection. The reason for the suit was that the tax inspection ruled to exact 100 million rubles from the organization for the use of the technical aid within the limits of the TACIS program. *Rada* didn't agree with such a ruling and sued to Minsk City Economic Court.

**On 13 May** Zhodzina branch of Frantsysk Skaryna Belarusian Language Society received a letter that was signed by the first vice-chair of the town executive committee Uladzimir Siamashka. There it was said that unless the public association changed its legal address 'that meets the requirements of the housing law', 'the town executive committee would pass a deregistration

decision'. According to the head of the Zhodzina branch of BLS Aliaksei Lapitski, the organization has been looking for premises in a non-residential building since it was registered: 'We filed official requests with the executive committee that responded negatively. We were told that the town does not have any unoccupied premises for our organization,' noted Mr Lapitski. Having received yet another request from the BLS, the executive committee chair replied that the town still had not free premises. After the BLS sent an official letter to the residential maintenance company, its head replied in the same way. 'In fact, the situation is like this: there are available premises leased to some services, which cannot make any decisions without the executive committee's permission because they do not have the right to dispose of the premises', said A.Lapitski. 'The executive authorities have full control over available premises. And they say there are no premises'.

**On 17 May** the investigator of Minsk Maskouski Borough Board of Internal Affairs paid a visit to Mikola Stakevich in order to find out who paid for the office of Statkevich's party, whether there was any property on the party balance, etc. He informed Statkevich Minsk City Prosecutor's Office ordered him to conduct another investigation (in February there was conducted a check-up on the application of Mr Liaukovich, who asked to draw Mikalai Statkevich to criminal responsibility). Mr Statkevich stated that new criminal case could lead to liquidation of the regional structures of the party.

**On 20 May** under the pressure from the ideology department of Minsk City Executive Committee, the managers of the *Belarus* Hotel, where a contact Belarus-Sweden conference was due to take place on 20-22 May, refused a rental agreement. And at the last minute the Belarusian Embassy to Sweden refused visas to the Swedish participants of the contact conference. The conference organizers were the Swedish center for developing international cooperation of civil organizations *Forum Syd* and the Minsk department of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Sweden in Moscow. A total of 100 Belarusian public associations appealed for taking part in the conference, only 30 were selected. Also, today about 17 representatives of the Swedish non-governmental organizations were to have arrived in Minsk. 'Limiting contacts of Belarusians with the foreign partners from democratic countries so rudely implemented by the authorities will not remain unnoticed and causes indignation. The fact that we are deprived of the opportunity to legally conduct meetings with foreign partners does not mean that we are going to refuse any of such contacts in the future. We will be looking for new ways to implement our rights. Each of the foreigners encountering such attitude from the Belarusian authorities to themselves and Belarusians usually starts to do more to change the situation in Belarus,' Siarhei Matskevich, the Chair of the Working Group of the NGO Assembly, commented on the ban of the conference.

**On 27 May** the Supreme Court of Belarus ruled to liquidate two district branches of the BPF Party in Hrodna. The reason for the liquidation was that the branches had their legal addresses registered on residential premises. 'Mopping up before the elections', commented Siarhei Malchyk, the chair of the city branch of the BPF Party. 'The authorities are doing all they can to minimize the effect the BPF Party might legally exert on the election process. Liquidation of the party structures is the first move. However, the party structure that is already there will continue whether or not it has legal registration,' he said.

**On 30 May** the citizen of Brest Ihar Maslouski was summonsed to Brest Regional Prosecutor's Office. There he received an official warning, signed by the prosecutor Valery Amelianiuk. The prosecutor's office referred to the conclusion of the Ministry of Justice, according to which the materials about the public initiative *Will of The People* that were printed in *Narodnaia volia*, didn't meet the legal requirements. In particular, Ihar Maslouski, who was the initiative's coordinator in Brest region, was warned about the inadmissibility of activity on behalf of unregistered organization. Ihar Maslouski said he wasn't afraid of such threats, but they led him to certain conclusions: 'I think the present facts witnesses that any civil initiatives will be destroyed, because the authorities need it. This warning is an eloquent example. The authorities are afraid of people's associations.'

**On 1 June** Hrodna citizen Frants Audzei was officially warned by Hrodna District Prosecutor's Office for activity on behalf of the civil movement *Will of The People*. The prosecutor's office referred to the conclusion of the Ministry of Justice which stated that the information about the movement that was published by *Narodnaia volia* didn't meet the legal requirements. The same day Masty Town Prosecutor's Office issued a similar warning to the public activist Iazep Palubiatka.

**On 2 June** Minsk City Economic Court started the trial on the suit of the Union of Youth and Children's Associations *Rada* against the pretensions of Minsk Tsentralny borough tax inspection which demanded from the organization to pay taxes from the international support, received in 2002-2003 from the EU and the UN. The total sum demanded from *Rada* was 140 million rubles (about 70 000 US dollars). However, the organization activists referred to the international agreements according to which technical aid was exempt from taxation. Representatives of both sides spoke at the trial. The court debates were delayed till attachment of all the necessary documents.

**On 2 June** Bialynichy District Executive Committee informed the local structures of the national public associations *Maladaia Hramada* and *Union of Poles*

in Belarus about deprivation of registration. So, two more NGOs became illegal in Mahiliou region. Human rights activists stated 15 public associations of the region suffered because of the campaign on re-registration of legal addresses that was initiated by the Ministry of Justice.

**On 6 June** at the building of the Czech Senate in Prague there was presented the international association *Civil Belarus* that was established for supporting the Belarusian NGOs who were harassed and/or liquidated by the Belarusian authorities. The association was established by Vaclav Gavel and other well-known Czech politicians. It was intended to obtain the registration for the *Civil Belarus* in Czech Republic and the EU and make activists of the prohibited Belarusian organizations its representatives in Belarus.

**On 7 June** it became known that all oppositional parties of Belarus failed to execute the order of the Ministry of Justice about the transfer of the legal addresses of all offices of parties and public associations to non-residential premises. Only 2 of 90 units of Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada were situated in non-residential premises. Even the central office was registered in a flat. The party was financially unable to execute the order and transfer its branches to non-residential premises, because, according to Stanislaw Shushkevich's calculations, the office rent would be 8 000 Euro office rent monthly. Mr Shushkevich argued the latest decisions of the Ministry of Justice in the letter to the minister Halavanau. Shushkevich called Halavanau's explanation of the Housing Code illogical, lawless and unfair, 'economical pressurization that makes the existence of political parties impossible'. Other parties, such as the Party of Communists of Belarus, also lost up to 50% of their branches. The leader of the PCB Siarhei Kaliakin said the party could lose 20 district branches and it will be problematic to conduct there electoral campaigns. The Ministry of Justice confirmed that all branches that were registered in residential premises were deprived of registration. The ministry representative Aleh Slizheuski reminded the authorities did it after numerous reminders about the necessity to make the legal address conform the provisions of the Housing Code. According to Slizheuski, these provisions were violated by the majority of the political parties and 10% of public associations.

**On 7 June** Vitsebsk Regional Court ruled that the non-governmental organization *Usiaslau Charadzei* should be deprived of registration because it didn't 'operate from its registered office'. *Usiaslau Charadzei* started having problems with 'registration' since it was re-registered in 1999. The non-state organization formally lost its registered office in the Center of Handicrafts and National Culture. Earlier the heads of this organization did not mind NGOs having registered offices on its premises. But, according to Vasil Khramtsou, chair of the public association of cultural and enlightenment initiatives Usia-

slau Charadzei, the culture department of Navapolatsk City Executive Committee was pressurized from above – they received an order barring NGOs from having registered offices in the Center of Handicrafts. Renewing ‘registration’ on the old premises or finding suitable premises elsewhere proved to be an impossible task. ‘The executive committee officially guaranteed that we would keep our registered office at 1 Parkavaia St., the Center of Handicrafts’, said V.Khramtsou. ‘In fact, the authorities did not deliver their promises. We continuously appealed to the city administration with complaints, where we asked for the promised premises that could be paid for at a reduced rate.’ At the same time the justice department repeatedly issued warnings, reminding the NGO that it did not have a registered office. Finally, the head of the department Pranik filed a liquidation suit against *Usiaslau Charadzei*. On 7 June the court ruled not only to liquidate the organization. It also ruled that *Usiaslau Charadzei* had to pay for Themis’ services – 127 500 rubles.

**On 10 June** the authorities of Hrodna branch of Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada received a letter from the justice department of Hrodna Regional Executive Committee, signed by the chair of the justice department A.Senkevich. In the letter it was stated that Hrodna city organization of BSDH and the organizations of Leninski and Kastrychnitski boroughs of Hrodna were registered at residential premises and therefore were deprived of registration on 1 June 2005. It was proposed to the authorities of these organizations to pass the registration certificates and other supporting documentation to the justice department till 15 June 2005.

**On 14 June** the chair of Brest regional organization of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (Hramada) Heorhi Rutski received the answer from Brest Regional Executive Committee concerning the possibility to hold an extra-schedule assembly of the regional structures of the party. In the letter signed by the chair of the committee Leanid Tsupryk it was said that solution of this question was beyond the competence of the committee. Before that the activists of BSDP (Hramada) twice had to hold the assembly in Minsk and its suburbs, but didn’t manage to conclude agreement for renting any room for it.

**On 21 June** the administrative commission of Polatsk City Executive Committee reviewed the materials on Mikhail Bautovich received from Vitsebsk Pershamaiski Board of Internal Affairs. Police officers accused the chair of the Polatsk historical club *Vytoki* of distributing the bulletin *Polatski krai* which was issued by non-governmental organizations of Polatsk, without the required imprint. Mikhail blamed the police, saying colonel Ivanou first asked for a copy of one of the issues and then they accused him of violating of part 3 of article #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations of the Republic of Belarus. The committee ignored the statement filed by Mikhail Bautovich saying that article



#172 of the Code of Administrative Violations concerned printed publications with a print run of more than 299 copies. *Polatski krai* was printed as internal documentation and its distribution could not be qualified as violation of the law. The police did not produce any evidence showing that the bulletin had been printed in excess of the allowed quantity, because they only confiscated 11 copies. The committee issued the activist a warning for violation of part 3 of article #172 with the confiscation of the taken copies of the bulletin.

**In the morning of 27 June** visitors to the BPF headquarters saw the following dirty picture: the doors of the room were stained with black paint (most probably, the 'authors' had tried to achieve the tarring effect), outside the doors on the pavement the following words were written in red: *Pack up – Railway Station – Warsaw*. This message was written by the abbreviation NBP that stands for the National-Bolshevik Party. The goals this extremist Russian party wanted to achieve are unknown, but what is characteristic is that the act of hooliganism on behalf of a foreign organization was unrestrictedly committed in the city center, meters away from the Police Academy.

**On 1 July** there was presentation of the analytical review *Main Trends of the Belarusian Third Sector*, where activists of the Assembly of NGOs said that since 1 January 2004 till 1 June 2005 38 public organizations were deprived of registration by court or had to quit their operations. The review authors noted that in the past three months the authorities launched a large scale attack on public associations. For many the serious problem was getting a legal address according to the Ministry of Justice's decision that ordered the branches of the parties and public associations to move to non-residential premises. Many associations received official warnings, dozens of regional branches lost registration. The lawyer of the executive bureau of the Assembly of NGOs Iury Chavusau said in the near future the authorities could increase the repression of public associations. The changes and additions recently adopted by the House of Representatives to the Law *On public associations* significantly facilitated the suspension and closure of organizations. On 1 July Aliaksandr Lukashenka signed decree #302, which fundamentally restricted the activity of funds.

**On 8 July** the authorities again did not allow the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (*Hramada*) to conduct a constituent assembly. Uladzimir Nistsiuik, the first vice-chair of the party, said: 'We were again refused. They said there was going to be a festival of Belarusian music. And as part of this festival - both Park 50-hoddzia Kastyrychnika and Banhalor Square will host festival activities...' The party leadership again planned to make yet another attempt at an assembly on 10 July. The three earlier attempts did not meet with success – by the way, the Ministry of Justice did not recognize as legitimate the assembly

held on 10 April outside the House of Culture in Senitsa, Minsk district, which elected Aliaksandr Kazulin head of the party.

Late in the evening **on 9 July** about 15 people, with most of them in plain clothes and several people uniformed as police, forced their way inside the privately-owned house of the chair of the Minsk city branch of the BPF Party Uladzimir Kishkurna. At that time there was only Kishkurna's son who could not in any way prevent the actions of the so-called law enforcement agencies. The unauthorized entering into privately-owned housing was grounded on alleged information regarding distribution of drugs. Without a search warrant, the police smashed the window open, broke the door, saw the locks off the shed locks and the cellar. They carefully rummaged through the papers of the house owner – all of which was done without witnesses and called simply inspection. As a result they found a printing press, which was confiscated, and detained Uladzimir Kishkurna's son Anton without bringing any charges. The human rights activist Ales Bialiatski commented on the events: 'This is a flagrant violation of the human rights and laws, and procedural regulations. In fact, an unauthorized search was conducted – this is a really large-scale operation. Absolutely faked-up charges have been brought against the son of the opposition party activist. Obviously, the main reason for the search was the printing equipment, whatever the Belarusian authorities might say. It was confiscated illegally'.

**On 10 July** BT and ONT, channels of the Belarusian TV showed a report in the news about how officers of Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs searched the house owned by the chair of the city branch of the BPF Party Uladzimir Kishkurna and detained the owner's son Anton. The report claimed the opposition not only prints anti-government fly sheets but also keeps a stock of weapons and drugs. They took from Uladzimir Kishkurna's son a hunting cartridge and also two magazines for a Makarov pistol, and one for a sniper rifle. In a shed attached to the house the police found a printing press. Anton Kishkurna was detained and placed into a detention center. According to the lawyer Aliaksandr Halieu, Anton told the police that he was going to hand over the cartridges to the police within the *Arsenal* operation. He denies his involvement in the distribution of drugs. Also, Anton's lawyer said that so far drug distribution charges have been brought against the detained man. Uladzimir Kishkurna's wife Valiantsina explained: 'These are three cartridges that he has collected in his entire life. He just forgot all about them. He found one cartridge in a hunting house, and one – in his uncle's place. The uncle wanted to throw them away but Anton saw them and begged the uncle to give them to him. He took them home, put them somewhere and forgot all about them'. On 11 July Valiantsina Kishkurna filed with the prosecutor's office a statement asking that the son be released under a written undertaking not to leave the

city. Uladzimir Kishkurna is indignant at the illegal actions of the authorities and believes this action is a provocation that targets himself and his family. He says that he did not print any fly sheets and newspapers in his home, a friend leaving the equipment at his place for a while. Also, the search was completely illegal because it was not authorized by the prosecutor.

**On 12 July** the newspaper *Mogilyovskkiye vedomosti*, which was founded by Mahiliou Regional Executive Committee, published a list of branches of the political parties, public associations deregistered by the justice department of Mahiliou Regional Executive Committee in the first six months of 2005. The list of the branches deregistered for various reasons includes 35 names. It contains 5 branches of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party *Narodnaia Hramada*, 13 primary units of the United Civil Party, 3 primary units of the Belarusian Liberal-Democratic Party, 1 city branch of the BPF Party, 6 district branches of the Belarusian Party of Communists, 2 primary units of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada, 2 primary units of the Social Sport Party, one primary unit of the Belarusian Party of Women *Nadzeia* and 2 public associations.

**On 12 July** Anton Kishkurna, 22, was officially interrogated. During the interrogation, the son of the BPF Party activist Uladzimir Kishkurna was officially charged. This is the information disclosed by Anton's lawyer Aliaksandr Halieu: 'During the interrogation he was charged by terms of part 2 of article #328 and part 2 of article #295. These articles concern illegal distribution of drugs and ammunition storage. Anton only pleaded guilty to the storage of ammunition. He found them in a hunting house, and did not know that this was a crime. As regards the illegal distribution of drugs, he does not admit the guilt'. Aliaksandr Halieu said that the printing press found in the house and taken away by unidentified people in plain clothing was not mentioned in the criminal case materials. After the charges to his son were announced, Uladzimir Kishkurna said: 'Apparant lies! I am the chair of Minsk city organization and they want to set up the BPF Party. They want to discredit and scare us.'

**On 19 July** the authorities cancelled a summer camp for human rights for Belarusian law students The Innovative Foundation of Legal Technologies had planned to organize the camp in Vileika District, however, a day before the opening the administration of the *Nadzeia* center, which had earlier approved of a rental agreement, refused to provide accommodation and board. *Nadzeia* quoted sanitation violations allegedly found in the tent summer camp. The camp organizers had planned that the event would be attended by 48 students of law departments from all over Belarus. The program included a ten day curriculum providing for various courses in the field of human rights. The leadership of the Innovative Foundation of Legal Technologies appealed

to international organizations, requesting help with the camp organized outside Belarus.

**On 26 July** in the evening in Pinsk they detained the chair of the Brest regional branch of the United Civil Party Stsiapan Navaselchan. On one of the Pinsk streets he was approached by police officers who said they had information about drugs in the car of the UCP activist. During the inspection of the car the police found several newspapers and bulletins dedicated to the coming electoral campaign. The police drew up a report registering the alleged violation committed by Stsiapan Navaselchan – distribution of printed periodicals in violation of the law, and then he was let go.

**On 27 July** three members of the BPF Party were detained in the evening by border guards in the village of *Znamenka*, Brest district. According to the chair of Brest City Branch of the BPF Party Dzmitry Shymanski, the teacher Uladzimir Krasko, the students Vital Koush and Iury Aseievich distributed among the village residents printed materials regarding the nomination of the united candidate from the democratic forces of Belarus for the coming presidential elections. The police made reports on the BPF members for violating the rules of stay in the border zone. The real goal of the detention was only mentioned verbally, without getting documented anywhere.

**On 30 July** in Dokshytsy after a meeting of democratic activists the police detained the car with the chair of the BPF Party Vintsuk Viachorka and a member of the BPF Council Aliaksei Kavalets. Aliaksei Kavalets who had to give up his driving license went off to 'provide explanations' and Vintsuk Viachorka, despite the threats from the police chief, refused point-blank to get out of the car unless he was told what his offence was. The police 'searched' the car and found officially registered newspapers there and also fewer than 300 copies of the party bulletins. After three hours the Front leaders were released. Vintsuk Viachorka commented on the events in Dokshytsy: 'Nine people were 'engaged' with us, including seven senior officers. At the same time we heard that a robbery had taken place in the district, however because our law enforcement agents were 'busy' they spent a lot of time deciding who should go to the scene of crime. I feel sorry that the Belarusian police are so humiliated, being made to fulfill political orders rather than do police work respected throughout the world. By the way, at the end we parted with the Dokshytsy police in a good way. We have to live together in this country'.

**On 10 August** the regular council of democratic forces applied to Aliaksandr Lukashenka with the request to give room for holding of the National congress of democratic forces. The congress organizers decided to do it after all local administrations refused to lend any building to them. They submitted

such request to 21 executive committees and 51 recreation houses all over the country. The officials either responded with come-offs, writing they couldn't lend any buildings for unknown reasons, or didn't answer at all. The room was to be large enough to accept 800 candidates. Two weeks before the congress organizers wrote even to Lury Kulakouski, chair of the Chamber of Representatives, but didn't receive any answer from him.

**On 18 August** in Loieu the police with major Khmelianok at head arrested vice-head of Loieu district branch of the United Civil Party Uladzimir Katsora and the secretary of a regional branch of the party of Communists of Belarus Uladzimir Siakerka. The activists were charged with breaking the rules of entering the border area (Loieu district borders on Ukraine). At first their car was stopped at the entrance to town but after checking the documents they were released. However, they were arrested later on. Lieutenant U.Dzemidzenka drew up the violation reports.

**On 27 August** it became known that Vitsebsk branch of Leu Sapeha Foundation was evicted from its office. According to the letter of Vitsebsk Pershamaiski Borough Executive Committee, the branch was ordered to leave the two-room flat in Charniakhouski St. by 1 September. The order was signed by the chair of the Pershamaiski borough housing economy Uladzimir Ivanou, who also stated it was impossible to prolong the rent agreement because it was decided to lend the premises to other persons. The chair of the council of Vitsebsk branch of Leu Sapeha Foundation Khrystafor Zhaliapau stated the authorities had other reasons to evict the organization: 'We are evicted not because somebody needs this premises. As a matter of fact, our eviction will let the authorities close the branch because of absence of the legal address.'

**On 1 September** the presentation of the National Report on Human Development in 2004-2005 *Belarus' Economy and Society: Imbalances and Perspectives of Development* was held in Minsk. This is the eighth report prepared by the UN Office in Minsk together with national experts and Belarusian citizens. It is totally advisory. The quotients of poverty 'depth' and 'acuity' in Belarus are rather low, but the amount of people with incomes insufficient for the support of life and people living relative poverty aggregates over a quarter of the Country's population – nearly 29 %. It is for the first time that the UN experts have analyzed the state and activity of Belarusian NGOs. They have found a lot of problems in this sphere: limited resources, extremely complicated and expensive procedure of NGOs' registering and working, total control over their activity by the state – endless inspections, warnings, close-downs etc. NGOs' cooperation with foreign partners is also controlled by the state, it is very difficult to obtain a permission for free foreign aid. D.Sultanaglu, a UN/UNDP representative in Belarus, said: 'One of the recommendations of the

report is the necessity to widen the space for individual initiatives and civil society development. Belarusian citizens should be given more opportunities to solve their problems independently.'

**On 8 September** Aliaksandr Lukashenka gave the permission to Minsk authorities to lend a building for holding of the National Congress of Democratic Forces that was appointed on the beginning of October. This question was discussed during the meeting of A.Lukashenka with the chair of Minsk City Executive Committee Mikhail Paulau. Mr Paulau said this event was outside the committee's competency, but it was ready to lend one of the appropriate buildings for holding this event at a high level. A.Lukashenka gave his agreement. Aliaksandr Bukhvostau, chair of the organizational committee of the Congress of Democratic Forces, reminded that before it the organizational committee submitted applications to state organs all over the country with the request to lend a building for the congress, but before Lukashenka's permission all replies were negative. That's why Mr Bukhvostau said: 'For Lukashenka it was a question of political prestige. Otherwise it would be would have very few arguments to prove he isn't a dictator'.

**On 8 September** the Ministry of Justice demanded from the Union of Belarusian Writers to exclude the people who live abroad, threatening to liquidate the organization otherwise. Among the foreign members there are the professor of Warsaw University Alexander Borszczewski, literature critic from Moscow Alexey Kavka, poet and journalist from Poltava (Ukraine) Inna Snarskaya, scientist from St. Petersburg (Russia) Valentin Gritskevich, etc. All of them write in Belarusian. Some of them joined the Union of Writers during the Soviet rule. Ales Pashkevich, the chair of the union, said nobody would be excluded from it because the membership in the union didn't contradict to its statute. He also considered this demand as just a formal reason for liquidation of the union.

**On 16 September** Aliaksandr Bukhvostau, chair of the organizational committee of the Congress of Democratic Forces, said he received a letter from the chair of Minsk City Executive Committee Mikhail Piatrushyn with the official permission to hold the congress the Palace of Culture in Minsk on 1-2 October. The only thing left was to conclude the agreement with the palace administration and pay the rent.

**On 20 September** outside the Kiruski settlement in Vitsebsk district the road police stopped two cars going from Vitsebsk to Navapolatsk. In one car Aliaksandr Milinkevich and head of the regional branch of the BPF Party Kantstantsin Smolikau were driving, in the other car – a member of the same party Khrystafor Zhaliapau. After the road police checked the documents, the first car continued on, and the second car was detained by the police because of

several copies of the bulletin BPF News and fly sheets which Mr Zhaliapau had been planning to distribute in Navapolatsk. All of the printed production was confiscated, filmed and Mr Zhaliapau was made to write explanations: where he got bulletins and fly sheets and what he was going to do with them. The period from detention to making of the report took about five hours. Khrystafor Zhaliapau arrived in Navapolatsk late, where he informed his colleagues of an expected subpoena to court or administrative committee, because the police report registered that the fly sheets he had been carrying with him did not have any imprint.

**On 26 September** it became known that Hrodna Branch of the BPF *Adradzhenne* had to pay 1 440 000 rubles of litigation fees until 30 September. The leadership of the city branch received a notification to this effect several days before. The fees were imposed after the organization lost the case regarding the eviction of the Front branched from the premises at 11 Marx St. in Hrodna. The emergency state of the building was named then the eviction reason. More than half a year has passed since the eviction, there were attempts to put the building on sale, however, repairs weren't started in the meantime.

**On 1 October** in Minsk there took place the Congress of democratic forces. Heads of the diplomatic missions of the USA, the Great Britain, France, Italy and Czech Republic, thousand delegates, and representatives of political parties of the European countries took part in it. The hall was decorated in white and red colors, a large white-red-flag hanged there as well. The slogans of the congress were 'Together for freedom and changes' and 'We love Belarus'. Some provocations happened during the event: in the morning the delegates to the Congress saw on the walls of the Culture Palace of Minsk Car Factory where the congress was taking place, large inscriptions in Russian, made with a red paint: 'Glory to Union, No to European Union!', 'No to Selling Opposition!' and 'Hands off Belarus!', hammer and sickle abbreviation NBP (National-Bolshevik party, Russian extremist organization). During half an hour the workers of the palace painted over these inscriptions. Several hours before the beginning to the Congress a group of actors was brought to the Culture Palace. They were dressed as heroes of the children's cartoon film *Crocodile Gene*. The actors sang the song *Gay Car* and posed before the cameras of the Belarusian state TV channels *BT*, *ONT* and *STV*. Then men in wigs approached the cameras and started to kiss one another. TV reporters started asking passers-by what was their attitude to unisex marriages? Representatives of the unregistered organization *League of Sexual Minorities* called it a provocation on behalf of gays and lesbians with the aim to discredit the congress that was held with the aim to elect a single candidate from the united democratic forces. The leader of the association gays and lesbians Eduard

Tarletski stated that the action had been planned by the authorities in advance. According to him, two days prior to the Congress several activists of the movement received telephone calls from the journalists who asked them to tell whether they would support the candidate of the united democratic forces in the case he supported unisex marriages. The activists received to give any comments. According to unofficial sources, the persons who kissed an embraced in front of the TV cameras were non-staff actors of *Belarusfilm* who usually participate in crowd scenes of different films.

**On 2 October** the Congress of democratic forces adopted the Resolution on illegality of participation of Aliaksandr Lukashenka in the presidential election of 2006. In the Resolution it was said that the referendum of 17 October 2004 was been appointed and lead with infringement of the Constitution and the Electoral Code. The delegates to the Congress of democratic forces also stated the following claims to the Belarusian authorities in connection with the presidential election of 2006:

- To provide access of opposition to the state mass-media and to create equal conditions for the activity of mass media of different kinds of property;
- to make the present legislation (including the electoral legislation) conform to the democratic standards;
- to restore the principle of the division of powers;
- to hold the presidential election of 2006 without A.Lukashenka's participation;
- to investigate the disappearances of well-known people –Viktar Hanchar, Anatol Krasouski, Iury Zakharańka and Dzmitry Zavadzki and bring to account the persons guilty of these crimes and to stop the political prosecution of the regime's opponents.

**On 6 October** the youth initiative *Voka* decided to stop its activity. The decision was connected to the fear of repressions and was taken after the order of the Ministry of Justice that obliged all coalitions and initiatives to state registration.

**On 7 October** the Ministry of Justice the third time for the last 1,5 years refused registration to the Freedom and Progress Party (FPP). The reasons of refusal became discrepancy in reports on nomination of delegates to the constituent assembly of the party and consideration of 45 signatures of the party founders as invalid by the ministry. 'The majority of the reasons that are specified in the letter of the Ministry of Justice is groundless and is beyond any criticism. We have submitted all the documents necessary for registration including the ones they demanded additionally, but for some unknown reason two reports were lost in the ministry. They also received 1 031 signatures instead of 1 006 we sent to them,' commented the FPP chair Uladzimir Navasi-



ad. 'I can only guess where they could take 25 more signatures from. Almost everything that is stated on the three pages of the refusal is a consequence of carelessness or purposeful ignoring of the submitted documents. Of course, the Belarusian authorities have no need in a liberal party, but it is necessary to have such a party for the Belarusian citizens. That's why, despite the state intimidation from the side of the state they have put their signatures under the constituent documents for the third time.'

**On 17 October** the department of citizenship and migration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus declared the legal entities and individual businessmen who would within the next five years have the right to find employment for the citizens of Belarus abroad. Of the former half a hundred firms, there remain only a dozen. And even this number is mostly represented by branches of the Belarusian National Youth Union (BRSM). The department summed up the re-registration results declared half a year ago. Thus, only 10 organizations and companies out of the earlier 50 managed to meet the Ministry's criteria. The list of the legal entities that are allowed to send Belarusians abroad starts with BRSM with its branches in the regional centers and in the capital. Number 2 on the list is the Youth Center *Headquarters of Student Teams*, an organization related to BRSM, and contrary to logic, will serve as a 'base' for workers sent to Czech rather than supervise the student teams. The majority of the remaining firms said they orient at construction specialties in Russia.

**On 20 October** the BPF Party received a letter from Aleh Slizheuski, the head of the department of public associations of the Ministry of Justice *On provision of information*. As becomes obvious from the letter, the justice officials launched search for the representatives of the public associations that had attended the Congress of Democratic Forces. The officials got hold of the bulletin of the United Democratic Forces, distributed during the Congress. A.Slizheuski noted that one of the bulletin articles mentioned the active participation of such organizations as *Perspective* and *Right Alliance* in the district gatherings conducted to nominate delegates to the Congress. Both structures organized several gatherings and managed to nominate their delegates to the Congress. The Justice Ministry demanded that the BPF Party submit a list of delegates from these organizations. According to the organization and legal commission of the BPF Party, the party does not have such information, which was reported to the Ministry of Justice.

**On 22 October** in Minsk there took place the conference *New legislation on NGOs: experience of influence on adoption of political decisions in Belarus*. The event was dedicated to the results of a regular stage of the campaign to promote the interests of public associations in 2004-2005. The conference

brought together the NGOs that had taken part in the *Our Solidarity* campaign. The conference participants familiarized themselves with the results of the appeal to the Deputies of the Chamber of Representatives of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Convocation with the previously discussed and agreed proposals for changes in the NGO legislation. These appeals were sent to all deputies of the lower chamber of the Parliament and concerned the position of the public sector with respect to the Law *On public associations*, the new version of which was considered by the Parliament in spring 2005. All members of Parliament were informed of the NGOs' needs in the sphere of the legal regulation of the 'third sector', of the European standards in this field, of the current ungrounded limitations in the Belarusian legislation that prevent the unimpeded development of public activity. Several deputies then expressed their positive attitude to the proposals of the public activists and declared their intention to initiate consideration of these proposals in the course of their lawmaking activity. However, this intention was not translated into practicalities: the new version of the Law *On public associations* proposed by the government was adopted as a matter that required urgent action and in violation of the traditional parliamentary rules. The deputies, in fact, shirked lawmaking functions in this bill and adopted it without consideration. Thus, the attempt to lobby the NGOs' interests through public pressure on the lawmakers had no results. Though voters approached their deputies with requirements, the deputies did not pay attention to these proposals and neglected their deputy obligations. Because of this, the conference participants, after considering the results of the recent radical reform of the law on public associations, stated the virtual uselessness of this line of legal activity. The proposal to close *Our Solidarity* campaign with a public veto of impeachment to the current Parliament was voiced.

**On 24 October** Vitsebsk Pershamaiski borough residential maintenance company sent a letter to Leu Sapeha Foundation informing it that the rental agreement would not be renewed because the office occupied by the non-governmental organization would be used for other purposes. The company proposed that the NGO leave the premises before 1 September. Following up on the letter from the residential maintenance company, the chair of the local branch of Leu Sapeha Foundation Khrystafor Zheliapau appealed to Vitsebsk City Executive Committee, requesting that the rental of the office occupied by the NGO for about ten years be renewed. The CEC answered that the question was passed to the residential maintenance company instead of consideration. That's how the city administration evaded from responsibility, letting the residential maintenance company continue their actions on eviction of the organization from the office.

**On 27 October** it became known that the authorities didn't allow Frantsysk Skaryna Belarusian Language Society (BLS) to hold its 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly at the House of Literary Worker. The economic department of the presidential ad-

ministration didn't satisfy the application for renting the hall of the House of Literary Worker. About 150 delegates from all parts of Belarus were elected to the assembly. At present the Belarusian Language Society is the largest public organization that defends the national values of Belarusians.

**On 29 October** Vitsebsk branch of Belarusian People's Front was ordered to leave its office. The head of the branch Kanstantsin Smolikau said, 'Vitsebsk BPF branch had its office and legal address at the building which is now being sold. The *Aryion* joint stock company is undergoing rearrangement. A new director has been appointed who made a statement that the new owners of the building would not lease an office or provide a legal address to our organization. We'll have to find another office to rent.'

**On 29 October** about 70 members of the public initiative *Partnership* arrived at the *Tsentrally* cinema in Minsk from various regions of the country to found the constituent assembly of their organization. The place of the meeting was so unusual because they couldn't rent any room for the assembly anywhere else. Shortly after the start, the convention was interrupted by the police and persons in plain clothes. They evicted the delegates into the street and took them to Minsk Maskouski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. Mikola Astreika, the leader of *Partnership*, stated that the assembly was held in connection with the new demands of the Ministry of Justice that banned the activity of unregistered organizations. After giving written explanations about 60 members of *Partnership* were released. The police composed the violation reports against Mr Astreika, the vice-chairs of the organization Aliaksandr Bondarau, Enira Branitskaia and one more organizer of the assembly, Sviatlana Konnava. All of them except for Mrs Konnava (who was let go because she had under-aged child) were taken to the detention center in Akrestsin St. About 20 members of *Partnership* members from Homel didn't come to the assembly as their bus was detained on the way.

**On 31 October** Minsk Maskouski District Court punished four participants of the constituent conference of the public association *Partnership*. The leader of *Partnership* Mikola Astreika, its activists Aliaksandr Bondarau and Enira Branitskaia were sentenced to 15 days of jail. Sviatlana Konnava was fined a sum equal to 350 US dollars. The court found them guilty of organizing an unauthorized meeting. Sviatlana, Enira, Mikola and Aliaksandr are graduates of the juridical faculty of the Belarusian State University. Mikola Astreika said in court, 'It's absurd. On the one hand, the Ministry of Justice requires civil initiatives to register. On the other hand, the riot police prevent such registration. This demonstrates the government's will to eliminate the third sector - not to support or regulate it, but to eliminate by all means. In practice, we are forced to go underground.'

**On 8 November** the vice-head of the Supreme Court of Belarus Valery Vyshkevich submitted a protest against the decision of Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Court. The judge considered that the first instance court has incorrectly used the law and unreasonably satisfied some of the claims of *Will for Development* NGO (Slonim) against the Belarusian State TV and Radio Company to protect the honor, dignity and business reputation of the NGO chairman Michail Varanets as well as the business reputation of the NGO itself. We shall remind that in February the court headed by the judge Lidziia Tselitsa partially satisfied the claim of this NGO. The court recognized that the information about *Will for Development* disseminated by the Belarusian TV in the program *Panorama* is the lie embarrassing honor and dignity of public activists. The court has obliged the state TV to disprove this information. The defendant has refused to execute the court decision even after the cassation instance has recognized the groundless nature of the verdict, which even has led to imposing administrative penalty on Belarusian Television management for not executing the court decision. The lawyers of Belarusian TV were lodging complaint by complaint, and finally it had a result. The judge of the Supreme Court has lodged a protest based on the idea that Belarusian Television journalists can speak out their personal opinion about the NGO having no facts to prove its grounds.

**On 8 November** the vice-chair of the public initiative *Partnership* Enira Branitskaia left the detention center after spending there 10 days of arrest. She conducted herself cheerfully in spite of the fact that in the cell her disease, stomach ulcer, exacerbated.

**On 9 November** the Presidium of Minsk City Court cancelled the decision of Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Court that Belarusian State TV and Radio Company has to disprove the information they disseminated in the program *Panorama* about the Slonim-based NGO *Will for Development*. Thus the court has satisfied the protest of the Supreme Court vice-chairman Aliaksandr Fedartsov. Commenting the decision of Minsk City Court Presidium, the head of the organization M.Varanets expressed an opinion that if the court would punish unfair propagandists, they would be less eager to execute such orders.

**At about 11.30 a.m. on 16 November** the road police of Polatsk detained in one of the city streets three cars with the united presidential pretender from the democratic forces Aliaksandr Milinkevich, members of his team and journalists. The press service of the Party of Communists of Belarus said that he police explained the detention of the cars by saying that these cars had allegedly been wanted as stolen from their lawful owners. The detention lasted for about 40 minutes. As a result, the traffic police copied the numbers of the cars and released everyone. Aliaksandr Milinkevich and the head of the political

campaign staff Siarhei Kaliakin referred to the incident as a provocation that had been planned by the local authorities.

**On 18 November** in Minsk there took place the constituent assembly of the new pro-governmental organization *Public association 'Union of Writers of Belarus'* took place. It was headed by the deputy of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus Mikalai Charhinets, chair of the regular commission on international affairs and national security who many times proved his devotion to the regime. Eduard Akulin, Aliaksandr Pashkevich and Barys Sachanka, the leaders of the Union of Belarusian Writers (which the authorities intended to close for its independent course) weren't admitted to the assembly. 'What new creative tasks can the new Union of Writers have? Will they write poems and novels another way? # Most probably the presidential administration put to them the concrete task to take the place of the existing, 'disloyal' union. Most probably, the new one will receive the office of our union in the House of Literary Worker, and probably, some financial aid from the state... And the present Union of Belarusian Writers will be possibly deprived of registration,' commented on the creation of the new Union of Writers the chair of the Belarusian PEN-center, poet Uladzimir Niakliaieu.

**On 18 November** when the vice-chair, the executive secretary of the central office of the BPF Party Viktor Ivashkevich came to the office that is located in the building well known to all of Minsk at 8 Varvashenia St., he saw a sight that became become familiar over the past few months. The entrance doors made by Belarusian artists to an order and decorated with unique ornaments were again defiled by Russian Nazis. The doors had a large swastika and *SLAVIC UNION* written on them. Vintsuk Viachorka, the Chair of the BPF Party, commented on the latest unpunished action of the Russian fascists in the center of the Belarusian capital: 'This has been the fourth case over the past time. We know that the BPF headquarters are under constant audio and video supervision of the Lukashenka intelligence services (one of the reasons why we have not been evicted so far). Also, the next building is the Police Academy, whose entrances are constantly guarded. However, the rogues calmly do their black business... That's why I have a reason to say that they are under close care of the Lukashenka authorities.'

**On 21 November** Slonim-based youth public association *Vetraz* received an official warning from the justice department of Hrodna Regional Executive Committee. According to the *Vetraz* leader Aliaksandr Masiuk, the warning was issued on the basis of the audit of the statute activity of the organization that had been performed by the justice department. The official letter signed by the head of the Office Mr Siankevich says that the reason for the warning was the absence of the document that would prove that the public association

had a legal address. Also, the official mentioned the *Vetraz* symbols that weren't been registered, and inappropriately formalized minutes of the assemblies for the years 2000 – 2004 (the earlier audits did not notice any inaccuracies). The justice department proposed that the public association *Vetraz* to make an 'analysis of the situation' and submit the materials witnessing that the 'identified drawbacks' were eliminated.

**On 24 November** near the town of Halshany the police detained Siarhei Malchyk (the head of the regional branch of the BPF Party), Anatol Khatsko (Labor Party) and the human rights activist Viktar Sazonau. They were going to Smarhon through Ashmiany and were detained for alleged violation of the border rules. The traffic police detained their car and accompanied it to Ashmiany District Board of Internal Affairs where they fined them 250 000 Belarusian rubles, and then the car of the opposition activists accompanied by the police car with beacons was accompanied to the outside of Ashmiany district. All of the operation was governed by 'plainclothes' who all the time talked over mobile phones and explained to the local police officer what and how to do.

**On 1 December** the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Belarus took explanations from the director of Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Research (IISEPS) Aleh Manaieu. The national prosecutor's office of the Republic of Belarus conducted a check-up concerning the last interviews and publications of the scientist in Belarusian press, devoted to public polls. The senior investigator Stanislau Novikau summonsed professor Manaieu in connection with his publication in *Nasha niva* concerning the rating of the candidate of the united opposition Aliaksandr Milinkevich and the publication in *Belgazeta* about the rating of Aliaksandr Lukashenka. The investigator tried to find out whether professor Manaieu didn't violate the law, acting on behalf of the organization that was liquidated by the court on the initiative of the Ministry of Justice (after this IISEPS had to obtain registration in Lithuania). Professor Manaieu explained to the prosecutor's office he acted as a private individual, scientist who facilitates holding of research in Belarus, including sociologic polls.

**On 2 December** Anatol Khatsko, head of Hrodna regional headquarters of Aliaksandr Milinkevich the candidate of the united democratic forces, and the members of this headquarters Siarhei Malchyk, chair of Hrodna branch of Belarusian People's Front and the human rights activist Viktar Sazonau complained to Ashmiany Town Court against the decision of the head of Ashmiany Town Board of Internal Affairs by the terms of which they were punished for trespassing the border zone. The plaintiffs stated the police acted lawlessly and the fines (250 000 rubles to each one) for trespassing the border zone were imposed groundlessly. According to the activists, they were detained not

on the territory of the border zone and forcibly driven to Ashmiany, where the police composed their reports without taking any explanations from them.

**On 5 December** the director of the Belarusian Literary Fund Viachaslau Korbut said the organization was threatened with eviction unless it urgently paid 17 million rubles it allegedly owed to the presidential administration for the rent. Belarusian literary fund was created together with the Union of Belarusian Writers. All members of the union automatically became members of the literary fund that is financed by members' fees and profits from publishing. The literary fund helped to old and ill writers, partially paid for their rest at literary houses and spent means on funerals. In 1997 the House of Literary Workers was forcibly passed to the presidential administration. The Belarusian literary fund was left in two small rooms with a huge rent to pay for them. The debt for the rent resulted in the conflict between the fund and the administration of the building. In the morning of 5 December the fund rooms were sealed. Several hours later the seals were removed on the condition of payment of the rent within two-day term.

**On 9 December** the Union of Belarusian Writers held a special assembly after the exhaustion of the agenda of the Literary Fund, organization, whose members also belong to the UBW. About 200 literary workers decided to discuss the situation after the establishment of the pro-governmental union of writers with the deputy Mikalai Charhinets at the head. The UBW members unanimously voted for the exclusion of 12 literary workers that joined that union: Aurutsin, Baravikova, Charhinets, Karyzna, Ales Marchuk, Martsinovich, Palikamina, Papova, Pazniakou, Ryhor Sakalouski, Sulianau and Trakhimionak. The assembly also adopted a special statement where it to expressed support to the organization leaders, stated the unity of the organization in defending the liberty of word and democratic principles of state-building, expressed its concern with the catastrophic narrowing of the spheres of the use of the Belarusian language, protested against the assault of the officials on non-state mass media, public defamation and groundless criticism towards the UBW activity by its former members, who declared the establishment of the 'correct' union of writers either because of their own ambitions or the state order.

**On 13 December** Minsk City Executive Committee prohibited to hold the constituent assembly of the public association of Belarusian pensioners *Starishyny* (Elders). In his letter Mikhail Piatrushyn, vice-chair of Minsk CEC wrote he couldn't permit holding of the constituent assembly of the organization due to absence of the appropriate room for it. Uladzimir Ramanouski, one of the assembly organizers, said Minsk International Educational Center, *Sukno* Culture Palace and Minsk concert hall refused to rent room for the assembly of

*Stareishyny*. According to Ramanouski, the authorities treated the association of pensioners (which had about thousand members) immorally.

**On 15 December** Hrodna activists Anatol Khatsko, Siarhei Malchyk and Viktor Sazonau received letters from Ashmiany District Court, signed by the judge T.Iemelianovich. By these letters they were informed that Ashmiany District Court refused to bring a case on their complaint against the ruling of the chair of Ashmiany District Board of Internal Affairs, Major S.Atrashkevich because of the non-liability of the case to consideration by the court. We should remind the activists complained to the court against the fines that were imposed on them by the head of Ashmiany DBIA for trespassing the border zone.

**On 15 December** Hrodna Regional Court considered the application filed by the justice department of Hrodna Regional Executive Committee and decided to force liquidation of the Hrodna city public association *Higher Belarusian School Association*, which was re-registered by the justice department of Hrodna Regional Executive Committee on 30 September 1999. The application filed by the justice department said that the public association *Belarusian Higher School Association* had not gone through re-registration as ordered by the decree of the President of Belarus dated May 1 2005 #247 *On additional measures to insure more consistent use of the words 'national' and 'Belarusian'*. This law stipulates that the activity of the organizations and mass media that have not been re-registered is illegal and will be banned.

**On 16 December** the Ministry of Justice of Belarus issued the official warning to five political parties: Belarusian Green Party, Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (*Hramada*), Belarusian Women's Party *Nadzeia*, the BPF Party, and the Belarusian Patriotic Party. The warnings were issued because the parties had failed to comply with part 3 of article #10 of the law *On political parties*, which was adopted on 19 July and took effect on 28 October 2005. According to this provision, the political parties registered in the Republic of Belarus must have Minsk city and regional offices in most of the country's regions (at least four regions). Representatives of the opposition considered this warning as a part of the preparation the liquidation of the parties. However, the law prohibits the liquidation or suspension of activity of parties during the electoral period.

**On 17 December** the leader of the unregistered non-political organization *Partnership* Mikalai Astreika was brought to the special detention center in Akrestsin St. The thing is that on 29 October he and 70 members of the constituent conference were detained by special police squad. Minsk Maskouski Borough Court gave Mikalai Astreika 15 days of arrest. His deputies – Enira Branitskaia and Aliaksandr Bondarau – also received 15 days each. Later the



city court reduced the term for Enira Branitskaia to 10 days. And Mikalai Astreika was taken in ambulance from the special detention center to the hospital – he had a high temperature and problems with the kidneys. After Mikalai Astreika got better, the police officers visited him home when there were no relations and took him to the special detention center. As became known from the officers of this institution, Mikola Astreika will have to spend 11 days of the unserved sentence.

**On 21 December** in Hrodna took place the constituent assembly of Hrodna regional branch of the pro-governmental Union of Writers. Nine persons took part in it and elected Liudmila Kebich the chair of the branch. The assembly was also attended by the chair of the ideological department of Hrodna Regional Executive Committee Uladzimir Amelka.

**Late in the evening of 23 December** on the way to Minsk from Homel the road police detained the car of Uladzimir Katsora, chair of Homel regional headquarters of Aliaksandr Milinkevich. The policemen confiscated from him 57 000 New Year postcards *New Year – New Opportunities!*. On the underside of each postcard there were printed Milinkevich's congratulations with the upcoming New Year and Christmas and the wishes for fulfillment of the hopes for changes to the better. The car was examined by a group of 7 or 8 policemen including the investigator Ivan Iautushenka and the lieutenant-colonel Kholopau. The chair of Zhlobin police Aleh Prakharenka said that after a check-up the case on confiscation of the postcards would be passed to the court.

**On 27 December** Hrodna Regional Court liquidated the city organization *Association of Belarusian Higher School* on the initiative of the justice department of Homel Regional Executive Committee. The chair of ABHS Ales Astrouski wasn't even invited to the court. He only received the court verdict by post. In the suit of the justice department it was stated the ABHS didn't undergo registration as required by presidential order #247 of 1 May 2005 *On additional measures on regulation of the use of the words 'national' and 'Belarusian'*. At the trial a representative of Hrodna Regional Executive Committee insisted further activity of the organization would therefore be illegal and it was necessary to close the organization.

**On 27 December** the Ministry of Justice again stated about 'gross violation of the law by a number of political parties'. Before this the ministry issued written warnings to the Belarusian Green Party, the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party *Hramada*, the BPF Party and the Belarusian Patriotic Party for violation of article #10 of the law *On political parties*. According to the new law version that was enforced in July 2005 every party was to have a branch in the city of Minsk and regional organizations in at least four regions (out of six).

Some of the warned parties didn't have the necessary number of regional organizations. According to the information of the ministry's website the ministry had to 'again turn the attention of the political parties to the necessity to strictly abide by the legislation of Belarus and their statutes'.

**On 28 December** the public association *Private Initiatives* received a letter from the department of communal property management of the economic department of Vitsebsk City Executive Committee with the proposal to 'suspend the agreement for the rent of the office'. According to the chair of *Private Initiatives* Siarhei Shelehau this letter put an end to the attempts to preserve the legal address of the organization. In autumn the authorities stated that since 13 July the organization 'illegally occupied' the office it occupied for many years and told it to get out of the office. The office was twice sealed. The administration of *Private Initiatives* twice applied to Vitsebsk CEC, but the authorities didn't listen to the requests. 'Such attitude of the authorities witness they have no wish to maintain any dialogue with the non-state sector and don't even try to understand the needs of public organizations', commented Mr Shelehau.

**On 30 December** Stanislau Novikau, senior investigator of the Prosecutor's office of Belarus summonsed Aleh Manaieu, director of the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Research that is registered in Vilnius and warned him about 'inadmissibility of law violations'. The warning was signed by Mikalai Kupryianau, deputy prosecutor general, who stated that IISEPS continued conducting public polls despite the fact it had no registration in Belarus. 'In the case you repeat the established order for conduction of social polls during the period of preparation to the presidential election of the Republic of Belarus, your actions will be considered as a law violation, for which you can be punished', reads the document. Professor Manaieu considers this warning groundless, because the prosecutor's office referred to the ruling of the Soviet of Ministers that regulated the order of accreditation of the juridical bodies that conducted polls, while he dealt with this activity as a private individual, which wasn't mentioned in any legislative act.

**At night of 30 December** in Maskouski Av. in Vitsebsk the police stopped the car of Khrystafor Zheliapau, chair of Vitsebsk headquarters of Aliaksandr Milinkevich, and searched it without any sanction. At the same time other policemen interrogated Mr Zheliapau at Vitsebsk Kastrychnitski Board of Internal Affairs, asking to tell where he received informational materials about Aliaksandr Milinkevich, his New Year congratulations to Belarusian citizens and instructions for collectors of signatures. Khrystafor Zheliapau insisted on the registration of the fact that his car was searched without sanction.

governmental public association *Union of Writers of Belarus* with the member of the Soviet of the Republic Mikalai Charhinets at the head. The administration of the Union of Belarusian Writers with Aliaksandr Pashkevich at the head demanded explanations from the Ministry of Justice, stating it was illegal to register the organization under such title, because according to the amendments to the law *On public organization* that were adopted in 1996 it was prohibited to use the word 'Belarus' in names of organizations.

**On 31 December** Zhodzina City Executive Committee ruled to liquidate Zhodzina branch of the Belarusian Language Society. According to the chair of the BLS branch Aliaksei Lapitski it was connected with the legal address of the organization that was registered in residential premises: 'Since the establishment of the organization we have applied to Zhodzina CEC in order to receive premises. In our city there was a four-room flat for extra-curriculum work with children. This flat was excluded from the fund of residential premises. However, the authorities didn't give it to us.' According to Mr Lapitski, another reason for liquidation of the organization was the upcoming presidential election: 'The month before forming of the election commissions they make the political order for liquidation of the organization that actively participated in elections and nominated its members to the commissions and also sent them to polling stations as observers.'

## 8. Civil right to peaceful assembly. Persecution of organizers and participants of protest actions

**On 30 January**, a month after the issue of the unfair sentence to Mikhail Marynich, opposition-minded citizens took part in Chains of Concerned People. In Vitsebsk about 35 local activists came to the Square of Freedom. They demanded from the authorities to release Marynich. In 40 minutes the police tried to stop the unauthorized action, but the opposition activists didn't surrender to their pressurization and continued the action for another 20 minutes.

**Since 2 February** Siarhei Malchyk, chair of Hrodna branch of the BPF Party, was prohibited to go abroad due to non-payment of the fine for participation in the unauthorized procession in honor of the Kalionouski brothers (organizers of the national uprising in 1863-1864) that took place in the town of Svislach on 31 October. S.Malchyk received a copy of the request of Hrodna

Leninski Borough Court to the board of internal affairs of Hrodna Regional Committee to limit the rights of Siarhei Malchyk to leave Belarus because of the non-payment of the fine. The decision was taken in absence of Siarhei Malchyk.

**On 5 February** about a dozen of riot squad policemen and persons in plain clothes burst into the private flat that was rented by the well-known public activist, deputy of the Supreme Soviet Siarhei Antonchyk and where public activists from different regions gathered. The police detained Antonchyk, his wife and about 20 activists. All detainees were taken to Minsk Savetski Borough Board of Internal Affairs, where the police identified them. Then they composed on Antonchyk a report for organization of unsanctioned assembly (part 2 of article #167.1 of the Code of Administrative Violations) and let him go.

**On 5 February** the police detained several members of the Christian Conservative Party Belarusian People's Front in Vitsebsk for holding the poster about creation of the initiative group concerning the nomination of Zianon Pazniak as a candidate to presidency. After a talk with the police the opposition activist Uladzimir Pleshchanka felt bad (he has chronic heart problems) and was hospitalized. When Pleshchanka felt better, the doctors let him go home. Barys Khamaida was taken to Vitsebsk Chyhunachny Borough Board of Internal Affairs for handing out the newspapers *Vybor* and *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta* but was soon let go.

**On 7 February** Minsk Savetski Borough Court started to consider the administrative case that was brought against Siarhei Antonchyk for organization of an unauthorized assembly in his flat. The court considered it necessary to listen to all the witnesses, including the policemen, who composed the reports of the administrative detention of Mr Antonchyk. That's why the trial was postponed to 14 February. The lawyer Valiantsin Stefanovich considers the detention of Siarhei Antonchyk and his friends as a gross violation of the constitution: 'It is personal right of all citizens to gather in their flats and do what they want to. They can also discuss the public and political issues.' According to Stefanovich, the new edition of the law on mass actions gives a groundlessly wide definition of assembly: 'At present even coming to a friend's flat can be considered as an assembly. However, the law demands from the police to prove that the violation really happened. In this case, the police didn't explain how they can prove that Antonchyk carried out an unauthorized assembly. According to explanation of the people that were in the flat, they gathered to drink tea and didn't hold any assemblies. That's why I consider these actions of the authorities as completely lawless.'

Democratic Hramada Mikola Artsiukhou, the *Young Front* members Anastasia Azarka, Artur Finkevich, Ihar Katkouski, Pavel Krasouski, Iryna Piarvoikina and Aliaksei Shein and the leader of the Belarusian Freedom Party Siarhei Vysotski who took part in the mass protest actions in the center of Minsk on 18-20 October were summoned to the police for interrogation. The investigators were interested not only in the events of 18 and 19 October in the center of Minsk, but also why the witnesses belonged to unregistered youth organizations and who financed them, where their parents worked, etc.

**On 10 February** the police interrogated Dzmitry Barodka, the leader of the Barysau-based public initiative *Volat*, concerning his participation in the actions of protest against the falsification of the parliamentary election and the referendum that took place in Minsk on 18-20 October 2004. A criminal case was brought on the fact of the protest actions. In order to interrogate Barodka, the policemen of Barysau City Board of Internal Affairs came to his house. They asked him how he came to Minsk, who informed him about the protest action, how he was detained in Kastychnitskaia Square on 20 October (after this detention he was sentenced to 15 days of jail). The policemen also asked where he worked and how he earned the means of subsistence.

**On 10 February**, when the beginning of the flu epidemic in Homel was officially declared, Homel City Executive Committee prohibited the appointed on 12 February meeting of protest against the increase of the fees for the public utilities. The official reason was the epidemic of influenza. The application concerning the meeting was filed by the deputy of Homel City Deputy Soviet Iury Hlushakou. At first the executive committee allowed the meeting and several organizations of the third sector decided to take part in it and invited citizens to join the action.

**On 14 February** the police detained the general Valery Fralou, former deputy of the Chamber of Representatives, and took him to Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs for a 'talk' with its chair. There they composed on him a report for organization of the protest action on 10 February, the day of the national strike of businessmen. The report was immediately passed to Hrodna Leninski Borough Court, that sentenced V.Fralou to a fine equal to 3 300 US dollars. V.Fralou denied his relation to the protest action. According to him, the court considered as evidence his signature on the fly-sheet that urged entrepreneurs to gather in the central park of Hrodna on 10 February. On 10 February V.Fralou was in Minsk. Besides, the fly-sheet also contained the signatures of the chair of *Hrodna Choice* Dzmitry Ivanouski organization and the leader of the parliamentary group *Respublika* Siarhei Skrabets.

**On 14 February** there continued the trial of Siarhei Antonchyk who, togeth-

er with about twenty people was detained in a private flat on 5 February. The police composed on him a report for organization of unauthorized meeting. The first court sitting took place on 7 February. Siarhei Antonchyk solicited for interrogation of several witnesses. As a result, the trial was postponed to 14 February. That day the judge Aksana Reliava read the testimonies of all witnesses and the police report and declared a break till 21 February, whereas Antonchyk stated he complained to the prosecutor's office against the illegal actions of the police.

**On 27 February** unknown persons in plain clothes detained Siarhei Skrabets, deputy of the Chamber of Representatives of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Convocation, who came to Hrodna for a meeting with students at a dormitory of the medical university. The students put their signatures for his nomination as a candidate to the parliamentary election, but the commission didn't register his candidacy, saying 81 electors revoked their signatures. These electors lived in the student dormitory. Siarhei Skrabets was detained in Sviardlou St., near the house where Valery Fralou lived. Having left the house, Mr Skrabets got into his car, but suddenly was stopped by another car that overlapped the way. According to Fralou, his house was watched and the telephone was bugged, that's why the police knew that Skrabets was there. He also said they could detain him in order to punish for the signature on the fly-sheet that urged businessmen to join the strike. It's worth mentioning that Fralou was already fined for it about 3 600 US dollars. Skrabets was taken to the temporary isolator and had to spend a night there.

**On 28 February** in Hrodna the former leader of the deputy group *Respublika* Siarhei Skrabets was fined a sum equal to about 2 400 US dollars for the meeting of Hrodna entrepreneurs, on the eve of which there was distributed a fly-sheets with urges to hold a strike. The fly-sheet was signed by Siarhei Skrabets, the general Valery Fralou and one of the leaders of entrepreneurs Dzmitry Ivanouski. Judge Natallia Kozel considered the administrative case against Skrabets very quickly. Though he didn't confess he was an organizer of the meeting, it was enough for her to see his surname on a fly-sheet.

**On 28 February** Dzmitry Ivanouski, vice-chair of the public association *Perspective*, was sentenced to 15 days of jail by judge of Hrodna Leninski Borough Court Natallia Kozel.

**On 1 March**, after the end of the meeting of the businessmen, the police detained the activist of the United Civil Party Maryia Bahdanovich for 'identification' and took her to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs. There they drew up a report for violation of article #167.1 of the Code of Administrative Violations (violation of the order of organization of mass actions).

**On 11 March** the action *Release Political Prisoners!* Took place in Kastychnitskaia Square in Minsk. About 50 activists of political parties and movements came to the center of the city with portraits of the prisoner of conscience Mikhail Marynich, who was kept in Orsha colony #8. Several days before he suffered a heart attack due to the failure of the colony administration to render the necessary medical assistance to the 65-year-old politician. The action lasted for about an hour and drew the attention of the highest police authorities – all heads of the main board of internal affairs of Minsk City Executive Committee were present. Three action participants were detained. Two of them, Dzmitry Dubitski and Veranika Lazouskaia, held the transparency *Release Political Prisoners!*. Maksim Viniarski was detained on the way to the city police board, to which he went to demand the release of his friends.

**On 18 March** the action in support of political prisoners was again held in Kastychnitskaia Square in Minsk. Its participants demanded to release Mikhail Marynich, the leaders of the entrepreneur movement Valery Levaneuski, Aliaksandr Vasilieu and Anatol Shumchanka and the persons who received short terms of jail for participation in protest actions – the members of the *Young Front* Artur Finkevich, Dzmitry Dashkevich and the *Zubr* member Maksim Viniarski.

**On 22 March** Homel Tsentralny Borough Court considered the suit of the deputy of Homel City Deputy Soviet Iury Hlushakou and members of the social movement *Together!* to Homel City Executive Committee. He wanted the court to make the CEC allow the meeting of citizens against the increase of the communal fees, forcible contracts, introduction of paid education and medical treatment. The court rejected the suit, referring to the fact the plaintiffs didn't complain against the prohibition of the meeting to Homel Regional Executive Committee.

**On 22 March** around 35 activists of the *Zubr* movement, the civil initiate *Charter'97*, the BPF Party and the businessmen's organization *Perspective* gathered in Kastychnitskaia Square of Minsk. They made a chain along the square and stood there holding portraits of Mikhail Marynich, and of the imprisoned leaders of the businessmen's movement Valery Levaneuski, Aliaksandr Vasilieu and Anatol Shumchanka. After the action was over, the police detained the coordinator of *Charter'97* Dzmitry Bandarenka and coordinating of *Zubr* Mikita Sasim and took them to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs. There the police drew up a report registering offences they had allegedly committed – insubordination to the police and hooliganism (articles 156 and 166 of the Code of Administrative Violations).

**On 23 March** Judge Bychko of Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court sentenced the *Zubr* activist Mikita Sasim to 10 days of jail for alleged violation of article

#156 of the Code of Administrative Violations of Belarus (disorderly conduct) and #166 (insubordination to the legal demands of the police). M.Sasim was detained on 22 March after the action *Release Political Prisoners!* that took place in Kastychnitskaia Square of Minsk. Notwithstanding the fact that the evidence given by the police witnesses contained substantial discrepancies, Judge Bychko found M.Sasim guilty. The same punishment was given to the coordinator of *Charter'97* Dzmitry Bandarenka.

**On 25 March** the senior pupils of the majority of Minsk schools, technical colleges and higher educational establishments were kept at classes till 3-4 p.m. so that they couldn't join the action that took place in Kastychnitskaia Square in Minsk. Some students were directly warned about the inadmissibility of participation in the oppositional celebration of the Freedom Day. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education assured they didn't issue any related orders, but pointed the administrations of schools and higher educational establishments could correct the schedules of their classes independently.

**On 25 March**, the Freedom Day, in Kastychnitskaia Square in Minsk there took place the action during which people demanded resignation of Lukashenka. They were called to come there by the famous politician Andrei Klimau, who declared it revolution. The center of Minsk was blocked by the riot police and the military forces. About two dozens of busses with riot police stood near Kastychnitskaia Square and about 15 cars of internal military forces guarded the presidential administration. There were also dogs and equipment of the Ministry of Emergency States. About 4 000 people took part in the action. They held national white-red-white flags and flags of the European Union, orange stripes and slogans in defense of political prisoners. Among the first persons who appeared in the square were entrepreneurs from *Perspective*, who held portraits of the detained leader of the organization Anatol Shumchanka and other political prisoners. The organizer of the action Andrei Klimau came at about 3 p.m., but the riot police didn't give him the possibility to come to the square, as well as hundreds of other action participants. The majority of them were blocked on the pavements of Skaryna Av., separated by the riot police and pushed out of the square. During the confrontation of the police and the opposition there were several fights. People started throwing ice and snowballs at the police, who answered with detentions. Several busses were filled with detainees, some of whom were beaten by the police. Several dozens persons were taken to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs.

**On 25 March** in Vitsebsk political parties, public associations and movements celebrated the Freedom Day with street actions. In the morning flyers with verses of famous Belarusian poems appeared on the walls. In the afternoon four members of the Conservative-Christian Party BPF walked through



the center of the city with the congratulation posters and white-red-white flags. They were detained and taken to Vitsebsk Kastychnitski Borough Board of Internal Affairs and then to court. Ihar Matsveieu, Barys Khamaida and Aliaksandr Salauian were warned. Aliaksandr Pazniak, who didn't hold any posters during the action, wasn't punished at all. In the evening a group of people read the poems that were posted at the bus-stops. Then about 40 representatives of *New Wave* and other informal youth associations came to the monument to Uladzimir Karatkevich in the center of the city. There they also read patriotic poems and put flowers to the monument. The police tried to disrupt the action, but the youth were brave enough not to subdue to the illegal pressurization.

**On 25 March** Dzmitry Salaiou, chair of the coordinative council of Mahiliou agency of regional development and inter-regional cooperation, together with his friends organized the traditional procession and congratulation of passers-by with the Freedom Day. They carried a bag of oranges and a sheave of congratulation flyers, but managed to congratulate only several policemen with lieutenant-colonel Iermakou at the head. The police detained six participants of the action, including the chair of Mahiliou BPF branch Vital Makaranka and the *Young Front* activist Siarhei Niahatsin. They were taken to a police station. There the police officers made them write explanations whether they had any relation to the graffiti *Long Live Belarus!* made on the ground floors of the buildings in the center of the city. The same day the police detained the chair of Mahiliou regional BPF branch Ryhor Kastusiou. They explained it with the same graffiti. After he wrote explanatory note, they let him go.

**On 25 March** in Zhodzina the police detained Pavel Krasouski, chair of Minsk Regional branch of the *Young Front*, together with three more members of the organization. The reason for the detention was that unknown persons hung white-red-white flags in different parts of the town. The police detained the persons for five hours. According to Krasouski, the policemen also threatened to bring a criminal or an administrative case against them.

**On 28 March** Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court started trying the detained participants of Andrei Klimau's revolutionary action that took place on 25 March.

1. Karen Akopau – 15 days of jail (judge Aliaksei Bychko);
2. Heorhi Baikou – 5 days of jail (judge Iesman);
3. Andrei Baranau – 15 days of jail (judge Aliaksei Bychko);
4. Uladzislau Barodka — 3 days of jail (judge Inha Labynich);
5. Siarhei Bezhanau – 3 days of jail (judge Iesman);
6. Iury Buhaieu – 3 days of jail (judge – court chair Mikola Samaseika);
7. Ivan Bykouski — 3 days of jail;
8. Iury Fabisheuski — 15 days of jail (judge – court chair Mikola Samaseika);

9. Dzmitry Harbunou – fined 50 basic units (judge – court chair Mikola Samaseika);

10. Kanstantsin Karol – 5 days of jail, craniocerebral injury as a result of the police beating after the detention (judge – court chair Mikola Samaseika). The judge ignored the medical diagnosis. At the court sitting K.Karol stated Akhramovich, riot policeman of the main board of internal affairs of Minsk City Executive Committee, threatened to torture him and tried to tear out Kanstantin's piercing. The court paid no attention either;

11. Aliaksandr Khaperskau — 3 days of jail (judge Vera Hrabouskaia-Daineka);

12. Dzianis Krauchonak — 5 days of jail (judge – court chair Mikola Samaseika);

13. Siarhei Lohinaiu — 7 days of jail (judge Aliaksei Bychko);

14. Pavel Miatlitski – 3 days of jail (judge Inha Labynich);

15. Aleh Minulin — 3 days of jail (judge Aliaksei Bychko);

16. Ihar Novikau (resident of Niasvizh) – 3 days of jail;

17. Viktor Novikau – 3 days of jail (judge Karalkova);

18. Aliaksei Padnevich – 3 days of jail (judge Iliina);

19. Piatrio Sakolchyk — 3 days of jail (judge – court chair Mikola Samaseika);

20. Viktor Savitski – fined 50 basic units (judge – court chair Mikola Samaseika);

21. Valiantsin Semak – fined 50 basic units (judge Aliaksei Bychko);

22. Viachaslau Siuchyuk – 15 days of jail (judge Aliaksei Bychko);

23. Vadzim Taptunou — 10 days of jail (judge – court chair Mikola Samaseika);

24. Anatol Tsikhanovich – 10 days of jail (judge – court chair Mikola Samaseika).

**On 28 March** the lawyers who monitored the proceedings at Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court gave their evaluation to the trials of the action participants. Valiantsin Stefanovich: 'It's quite noteworthy that our court stopped issuing warnings, leave alone closing cases for absence of corpus delicti. Courts don't warn even those who are detained for the first time and takes the blame. Even in this case the court imprisons or at least fines. On 28 March court mainly sentenced people to different terms of jail. In several cases the riot policemen who took part in the trials as witnesses couldn't tell what certain detainees did. All police reports looked alike: took part in the unauthorized procession, shouted 'Long Live Belarus!'. Judge Bychko even issued the verdict on Andrei Baranau's case without any testimonies. As a result of the mass detentions it became necessary to draw a large number of judges for consideration of the administrative cases, brought against the participants of the action of 25 March. That's why on 28 March at Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court there

worked at least five judges with the chair of the court Samaseika at the head. There were not only the judges that specialized in administrative cases, but also the judges on civil and criminal cases.' Uladzimir Labkovich: 'It is worth to point at another practice – the court doesn't read the rights to the detainees. The court completely ignores the contradictions in the testimonies of the police witnesses. For instance, during the consideration of Viachaslau Siuchyuk's case the policemen didn't manage to explain where they detained him and weren't at all sure whether they really detained him. According to the police, reports, the riot policeman Pachtsenny detained about 30 persons in different places at the same time, which can witness either his supernatural ability to be in different places at once or something else... Moreover, that at the trial of Siuchyuk Pachtsenny didn't manage to explain how he detained Siuchyuk. On 25 March there were detained some people who didn't take part in the protest action. They were imprisoned as well. During the trial of Siuchyuk the court demonstrated the videotapes where Siuchyuk could not be seen. Nevertheless, judge Bychko decided to punish Siuchyuk with the maximal term of jail, 15 days, basing on the police testimonies and videotapes.'

**On 1 April** in Minsk the police detained the member of the United Civil Party Aliaksadr Biaspaly for distribution of fly-sheets with the urge to come to Katrychnitskaia Square on 6 April in order to commemorate the political activist Henadz Karpenka, who died in strange circumstances.

**On 5 April** the trial of Aliaksandr Biaspaly, activist of the United Civil Party, started at Minsk Kastychnitski Borough Court. On 1 April he was detained by the police together with two other UCP activists for handing out fly-sheets with the urge to come to Kastychnitskaia Square on 5 April for commemoration of Henadz Karpenka. According to the law on mass actions, distribution of such flyers is considered as organization of unauthorized action. The police came to Biaspaly's home and took him to the court. He solicited for advocatory services. As a result the judge postponed the trial to 7 April.

**On 6 April** the authorities didn't allow them to hold the action *Chain of Concerned People* in commemoration of Henadz Karpenka. On the day of the 6th anniversary of Karpenka's death, his associates, activists of the UCP and other political groups, staged a Chain of Concerned People in Kastychnitskaia Square. The action in commemoration of Henadz Karpenka and the disappeared people started at 6 p.m. Around 100 people attended the event, managing to stay there for a few minutes only. Special police armed with weapons forced the people out of the square. Those who stayed were behind the Palace of the Republic. The organizers and the participants noted that the law enforcement agency's actions were unprecedented, because there is a regulation passed by the Supreme Court according to which such actions do not

require official permission. This is not the first action held on Kastychnitskaia Square, which was toughly suppressed by the authorities. The human rights activist and the vice-chair of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee Hary Pahaniaila said that the special police follow the direct order issued by Aliaksandr Lukashenka, so they completely ignore the regulations passed by the Supreme Court.

**On 6 April** the oppositional activist Mikola Statkevich received summons from Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs where it was stated that he was accused in active participation in the meeting that was held on 1 March (part 2 of article #167 of the Code of Administrative Violations). Mr Statkevich said: 'I was surprised they recollected about the meeting and decided to punish only me for speaking there, though there were about a dozen of other speakers, including the vice-prime-minister Andrei Kabiakou. The police didn't warn that the meeting was unauthorized. I wrote on the case that I considered it to be politically motivated and connected with the fact that Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (Narodnaia Hramada) and European Coalition are going to nominate me as a candidate to the presidential election. I was taken to the court. The judge, Aliaksei Bychko, behaved very rudely, he ordered me to stand up for testimony. I had to behave as the circumstances demanded and sat during my testimony. As a result, I was fined about 3,8 million rubles.'

**On 7 April** Aliaksei Bychko, judge of Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court fined Mikola Statkevich 3,8 million rubles (about 1 600 US dollars). M.Statkevich was found guilty in participation in the unauthorized meeting of businessmen that took place on 1 March. After it Mikola Statkevich was fined about 100 US dollars for insult of the judge's honor.

**On 14 April** the judge of Minsk Kastychnitski Borough Court Natallia Pratasavitskaia ruled to fine the member of the United Civil Party Aliaksandr Biaspaly a sum equal to about 2 000 US dollars. The matter was that he handed out flyers with invitation to come to Kastychnitskaia Square on 6 April and commemorate the well-known political activist Henadz Karpenka, who died in strange circumstances. The judge considered it as urge to participation in unauthorized action and punished Biaspaly as organizer of unauthorized action.

**On 21 April** it became known that the authorities of Babruisk didn't allow a picket, dedicated to the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Chernobyl tragedy in the center of the city on 26 April. The appeal for the picket authorization was filed by representatives of different political parties and organizations – the United Civil Party, Belarusian People's Front, Free Trade Union, social-democrats, etc. One of the authors of the appeal, Uladzimir Kurtukou, was visited by a delegation

from Babruisk Leninski Borough Executive Committee. He was officially informed that the permission couldn't be issued because the persons responsible for the organization of the measure weren't specified in the text of the appeal. Uladzimir Kurtukou said the reason for the refusal was a mere formality and also pointed that Babruisk activists applied to the city administration with such requests every year, and each time the latter ones found new reasons for refusals.

**On 26 April** a commemorative meeting dedicated to the anniversary of Chernobyl tragedy and protest against Lukashenka's regime took place opposite the UN headquarters in New-York. According to Zianon Pazniak, leader of the Conservative-Christian Party *Belarusian People's Front*, about 100 people, predominantly young Belarusians, took part in the meeting.

**On 26 April** Mahiliou police detained about 30 participants of the action in commemoration of the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. The detention took place outside Mahiliou City Executive Committee. One of the detainees – Ryhor Kostuseu, chair of Mahiliou regional branch of the BPF Party – informed journalists about the detentions.

**On 6 May** a picket was to have taken place in the town of Kopyl. The local activist of the democratic movement Viktor Dashkevich intended to hold it because the authorities didn't timely paid to him his disability pension. 'I applied for the official permission and said I would behave well and won't interfere with anyone. In the answer, signed by the head of the executive committee, it was said that I had no ground for picketing. Her deputy Ina Byliuk said on the phone that there's no even special place for pickets, because all the town citizens are obedient and respect the officials and they couldn't even assume a single person like me could be found here,' said Dashkevich. Ina Byliluk, vice-head of Kopyl District Executive Committee, is sure that the refusal was justified: 'The executive committee refused to him, referring to the present legislation. He received an exhausting answer to his application. In the square he interferes with the traffic and he has no right to do it,' she said.

**On 6 May** Homel Tsentralny Borough Court considered the suit of three citizens against the prohibition of the meeting of protest against the increase of the costs of the public utilities, forced introduction of working contracts, paid education and medical treatment. The defendant was Homel City Executive Committee, the plaintiffs – Maryia Bahdanovich, Dzmitry Shkrabau and Iury Hlushakou, deputy of Homel City Deputy Soviet. At first the court turned up the suit. The plaintiffs were insistent enough and filed a cassation complaint to Homel Regional Court, after which the court had to consider the suit. The representative of Homel CEC Iryna Ramaniuk explained to the court that at first

the CEC allowed the meeting, but than annulled the permission two days before the action, because the organizers posted the invitations to it before they received the decision and the epidemic of influenza was announced by the sanitary service. The plaintiffs disproved this information. They stated the sanitary service didn't prohibit any street actions that took place in the city that time. It was not the first time when Homel CEC prohibited protest actions to citizens. The announcement of the verdict was appointed on 11 May.

**On 9 May**, the Victory Day, Homel City Executive Committee didn't permit regional organizations of several oppositional parties to take part in the public laying of flowers to the monument to the fallen soldiers and partisans. Representatives of the United Civil Party, Belarusian People's Front and the Party of Communists of Belarus applied for the official permission in advance. However, the CEC permitted to lay down flowers to the monument only at 11 a.m., when the veterans of the World War II and the military units went to the Central Stadium to watch the festive show. The member of the BPF Party Anatol Paplauny commented: 'At present the authorities try to appropriate even holidays, joyful and mournful ones, as if they were the only ones who did the good and remembered the dead.'

**On 11 May** six participants of the Chain of Concerned People devoted to the sixth anniversary of Iury Zakharenka's disappearance were tried at Hrodna Kastychnitski Borough Court. Dzmitry Audzeichyk, Andrei Ianushkevich, Iury Istomin, Raman Iurhel, Artur Smiatanin and Mikola Voran were charged with unauthorized picketing. The trial didn't start for three hours – at first there were no police reports, then the judge Zinaida Bartsevich familiarized with the materials of the administrative cases. Finally, she informed the accused she would study the materials more attentively and the verdicts would be pronounced on 16 May.

**On 11 May** in Homel the court didn't satisfy the demand of Maryia Bahdanovich, Dzmitry Shkraba and the deputy of Homel City Deputy Soviet Iury Hlushakou to find illegal the prohibition of Homel City Executive Committee to hold a meeting against the increase of the cost of public utilities and forced introduction of the working contracts. The CEC representatives stated the applicants posted invitations to the action all over the city before receiving the official permission and the posted fly-sheets didn't correspond to the stated aim of the meeting and were produced with violations of the law on press and other mass media. Another reason for the prohibition, mentioned by the CEC was that the local sanitary service declared there was an epidemic of influenza in the city and mass actions could be dangerous to the public health. In his verdict the judge Viktor Kazachok repeated the explanations of Homel CEC and upheld the prohibition.

**On 12 May** Alena Zaleskaia, chair of Vitsebsk city organization of the United Civil Party complained to the prosecutor of Vitsebsk region. Representatives of other oppositional parties signed the complaint as well. Vitsebsk opposition demanded from the prosecutor's office of Vitsebsk Kastychnitski Borough Board of Internal Affairs to present the juridical documentation that prohibited standing in the street in white-red-white scarves and holding portraits, because on 7 May the police dispersed participants of *Chain of Concerned People* for it.

**On 16 May** Hrodna Kastychnitski Borough Court fined six participants of the chain of concerned people that took place on 7 May to commemorate the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Iury Zakharanka's disappearance. They were accused of taking an active part in the unauthorized picket. Judge Zinaida Bartsevich imposed a fine of about 500 000 rubles on the five participants of the actions – Dzmitry Audzeichyk, Andrei Ianushkevich, Iury Istomin, Mikola Voran and Artur Smiatanin. Raman Iurhel got the largest fine of all, about 4 million rubles.

**On 17 May** the marshal of Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Court Aliaksandra Shumeika attached furniture and some other property that belonged to the deputy of the Chamber of Representatives of the previous convocation Siarhei Skrabets. The furniture and other household items have been attached to redeem the legal expenses owed by Siarhei Skrabets. The property attachment was authorized by an earlier decision of the court. In March the Hrodna court found the ex-parliamentary guilty of organizing an unauthorized meeting of businessmen and fined him 4 800 000 rubles. The court passed this ruling though Siarhei Skrabets argued he was outside Belarus on the day of the businessmen's action. Siarhei Skrabets, who is currently unemployed, has been able to pay only 1 out of 5 million of the fine. He got a short delay, which, however, ended on 17 May. The property attached was in an apartment in Shuhaieu St., where Skrabets's parents lived and where he was officially registered. During the procedure, the ex-deputy's father, who had problems with the heart and legs, felt bad. As a result, an ambulance had to be called.

**On 20 May** a marshal of Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Court paid a visit to Mikalai Statkevich's flat and attached his property. The matter is the court sentenced Mr Statkevich to about 2 000 US dollars fine for the speech at the meeting of entrepreneurs that took place on 1 March. The leader of social-democrats considered this action as an attempt to psychologically pressurize him on the eve of the trial that would start on 23 May.

**On 20 October** Valiantsina Mikhasiova, judge of Vitsebsk Kastychnitski Borough Court, issued a warning to Alena Zaleskaia, chair of Vitsebsk organization of the United Civil Party, for participation in the unauthorized proces-

sion of 26 April. Despite the fact that nobody was detained during the procession, ten days later Vitsebsk police composed a report of administrative violation against Alena Zaleskaia and passed it to court. According to the report that was composed by the policeman Aliaksei Zakharankau, Ms Zaleskaia directed the unauthorized action *Chernobyl Way*.

**On 23 May** an action against the renaming of some streets and avenues of Minsk took place. Several dozens of people took portraits of Piatro Masherau in their hands and lined along the avenue that used to bear his name. Among the protesters there were representatives and leaders of political parties, but the main part were elderly people, some of whom came to the action from different parts of the country. The technical organizer of the action was the Party of Communists of Belarus. Valery Ukhnaliou, one of the party's leaders, thusly described the aim of the action: 'The president understands he is not an authority for the major part of the people, that's why he tries to get rid of the memory about Masherau and Skaryna. Today's action showed that the majority of the population considered such actions inadmissible. The police and workers of secret services in plain clothes watched the action, but didn't detain anybody.'

**On 26 May** Iury Istomin, one of the participants of the *Chain of Concerned People* that took place in Hrodna on 7 May, filed an appeal with Hrodna Region Court against the decision of Hrodna Kastychnitski Borough Court. 'In the first session already we filed statements requiring attachment to the case of regulations passed by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus and signed by its chair Sukala and the incumbent General Prosecutor of Belarus Miklashevich that said that people staying in the street with portraits of the disappeared politicians are not pickets. If Hrodna Region Court passes a negative decision, the action activists plan to appeal in the Supreme Court of the country,' said Iury Istomin. He also prepared appeals to file with Hrodna Regional Board of Internal Affairs, with the prosecutor's office, Hrodna Kastychnitski Borough Court of and Hrodna City Deputy Soviet against the illegal actions of Lieutenant Colonel H.Zaika of the criminal police of Kastychnitski Borough Board of Internal Affairs.

**On 27 May** court marshals confiscated the property that belonged to the United Civil Party activist Maryia Bahdanovich. Tsentralny Borough Court of Minsk imposed on her a fine of around 2 500 US dollars) for taking part in the 1 March unauthorized action of businessmen in Kastychnitskaia Square in Minsk. Maryia Bahdanovich had all of her household equipment and part of the furniture confiscated. On 1 June the other property that belongs to Maryia Bahdanovich was to be attached. She still had to pay a fine of about 1 900 US dollars for taking part in *Chernobyl Way*. According to Mrs Bahdanovich, after



they confiscated all the property but her bed and her daughter's, a table, a kitchen table and a small cupboard in the kitchen. All of the household equipment was estimated to be worth only 300 dollars. Maryia Bahdanovich said she wasn't going to appeal against the attachment of the confiscated property as she didn't have the money to pay the legal fees and didn't believe the trial could be fair. But Mrs Bahdanovich remained optimistic. On 26 May her daughter left school and Maryna received a diploma as the best mother because her daughter was the best student in the grade.

**On 30 May Valery Shchukin**, human rights activist and leader of the civil initiative *Veterans for Democracy* was arrested in Minsk in the former Masher-au Av. that Lukashenka renamed into Peramozhtsau Av. About 30 persons stood there holding portraits of the communist leader of Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic Piatro Masherau (who did quite a lot for Belarus during the Soviet rule) and demanded to return his name to the avenue. The action was dispersed by riot squad police in plain clothes.

**On 31 May** in Frantsysk Skaryna Av. in Minsk about 30 persons tried to hold an action against the renaming of the capital's streets and avenues. They held the portraits of Skaryna in their hands. The riot police immediately pushed them towards the Nezalezhnastsi Square and then to the *Dynama* stadium. The leader of the United Civil Party Anatol Liabedzka said such actions would be held every Monday and Tuesday despite of the harassment.

**On 2 June** the Commission on cases of minors of Mahiliou Leninski Borough Executive Committee considered the case of the under-aged pupil of school #22 of Mahiliou Hanna Petrakovich. The chair of the commission Valery Klepchukou demonstrated a biased attitude to the *Zubr* activist. For instance, he didn't allow her representative Barys Bukhel to familiarize with the case materials, didn't let him speak, didn't listen to her witnesses and didn't attach to the case the photos that illustrated the moment of detention. Her ruled to fine the girl's parents 51 000 rubles for violation of article #162 of the Code of Administrative Violations (malicious non-execution of parental duties concerning upbringing and education). Hanna Petrakovich was warned. At the same time, Mahiliou Leninski Borough Court with judge Panasenka at the head tried the *Zubr* activist Valadar Tsurpanau. The judge paid no attention to the arguments of the accused and his representative Barys Bukhel and listened only to the addled testimonies of the police. V.Tsurpanau was fined 765 000 rubles for violation of article #167.1 of the Code of Administrative Violations (participation in unauthorized action).

**On 2 June** it became known that participants of the action *We Remember* that was held in Hrodna on 7 May were warned they had to pay the fines they

were sentenced to within ten-day term – otherwise their property would be attached. During the action Dzmitry Audzeichyk, Andrei Ianushkevich, Raman Iurhel, Artur Smiatanin and Mikalai Voran stood for about an hour, holding photos of the missing ex-minister of interior Iury Zakhарanka who disappeared six years ago. Then they were detained by the police and tried at Hrodna Kas-trychnitski Borough Court that sentenced them to pay fines.

**On 3 June** Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court stopped the administrative case against Valery Shchukin because of absence of corpus delicti. Mr Shchukin was detained in the evening of 30 May in Peramozhtsau Avenue (former Masherau Avenue) during an action of protest against the renaming of the avenue. The trial lasted for about two hours. Shchukin was charged with hooliganism and disobedience to the police. The riot squad policemen Lepesh and Vasilkou stated they had detained Shchukin in the evening of 30 May during the protest action in former Masherau Av. They said he used four-letter words, blocked the traffic and behaved antisocially on the whole. Besides, they said he refused to go drive with them to the police station, that's why they had to use force to him. Valery Shchukin answered he didn't touch anyone and simply stood in the avenue. Several persons in plain clothes came up to him. They tore Masherau's portraits he was holding and demanded from him to get into their car. Valery Shchukin refused to do it, because he didn't know those people and they didn't introduce themselves. They forcibly took him to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs, where the duty policemen drew reports for hooliganism and disobedience to the police. In the court the 'police witnesses' gave contradictory and blurred testimonies. As a result the judge Aliaksei Bychko ruled to stop the case against Shchukin because of absence of corpus delicti.

**On 7 May** Mikalai Voran, who was fined a large sum of money for participation in the Chain of Concerned People in Hrodna that took place on 7 May 2005 and was dedicated to the sixth anniversary of Iury Zakhарanka's disappearance, received a note signed by the court officer V.Kirylovich. There it was said that in the case he didn't pay the fine, he could face the appropriate measures, one of which is confiscation of property.

**On 7 June** the Chain of Concerned People against the renaming of the capital's streets and avenues took place in Frantsysk Skaryna Avenue in Minsk. The chain participants gathered in the suburb, at the far end of Skaryna Av., near the subway station *Uskhod*. They held in their hands portraits of Frantsysk Skaryna and handed them out to passers-by. At the end of the action several buses of riot squad police arrived. The policemen demanded from people to stop the action and go away.

**On 10 June** Minsk City Executive Committee didn't authorize the assem-

bly of the initiative group that decided to hold a referendum concerning the returning of old names to the central streets and avenues of Minsk that were renamed in May by Lukashenka's order. The activists of the initiative group intended to hold the assembly on 13 June in 50-hoddzia Kastychnika Park. The place and time were specified in the application that was filed with the city authorities. However, Minsk CEC didn't answered it couldn't permit the assembly for three formal reasons: the application didn't contain such necessary information as the aim of the assembly and the number of participants and the measures that was intended to take to provide the security of the assembly participants. One of the leaders of the referendum's organizational committee Siarhei Alfer stated the initiative group didn't plan to file another application to the executive committee and the assembly would be held indoors not to violate any laws.

**On 14 June** the Belarusian opposition held another protest action against renaming of the main avenues of Minsk by Lukashenka. This time the action participants kept to a new tactics. At 6 p.m. several dozens members of different political parties gathered in front of Belarusian Academy of Arts. Several minutes later a police bus stopped near them. Riot squad policemen got out of it and began pushing the demonstrators into the yard where the dormitory of the academy is situated. The opposition activists handed out fly-sheets to passers-by. The police tore these fly-sheets out of their hands, that's why people quickly took fly-sheets and went away. Seeing the present journalists go away, the police went after them. The journalists stopped several times. The following policemen also stopped and looked at the nearest houses or their boots. Another part of the opposition, predominantly youngsters, stood near *Kastychnik* cinema. They handed out informational bulletins to people while the police dealt with those who were near the Academy of Arts. By the time the heads of Savetski borough police and riot squad policemen came up to the cinema no fly-sheets were left. The youngsters simply stood together, distracting the attention of the police. The third part of the action — about forty people — filed along Frantsysk Skaryna Av. with portraits of Piatro Masherau and Frantsysk Skaryna. Several people also handed out fly-sheets. They managed to stand there for almost half an hour. Frustrated policemen called to their colleagues for public security department and detained a student who took a fly-sheet from the picketers. When he asked why they detained him, they answered he shouldn't have taken the fly-sheet. The action participants decided not to wait for the riot squad police to come and went away a little bit earlier. They moved along Frantsysk Skaryna Av. to the KGB office, holding the portraits in their hands.

**On 15 June** the police with the major Aliaksandr Zazetka at the head detained Vadzim Bolbas, chair of Svetlahorsk city organization of the Belarusian

People's Front and Viktor Ramanishka, chair of its Homel regional organization. Both detainees were organizers of a district assembly of activists of democratic forces concerning the election of one common candidate who would take part in the presidential election in 2006 on behalf of the democratic opposition. The assembly was appointed on 7 p.m. on 15 June. The assembly took place two hours later, athwart the police interference.

**On 17 June** the assembly that was to elect delegates for the Congress of Democratic Forces in Maladetchna that will elect the single presidential candidate from the opposition was held in an alternative location after the fire service of the town required that the delegates leave the premises of the Module Center, where the opposition activists had gathered initially. The building was blocked by three fire trucks and special service agents, though there was no fire.

**On 21 June** in Mazyr a large police group with the lieutenant-colonel Leanid Chobchyts at the head tried to disrupt the assembly of the local activists on election of the delegates to the Congress of democratic forces. At about 7 p.m. four policemen with a video camera burst into the private house near Prymas-tovaia Square, where the assembly was taking place. The dwellers of the neighbor house witnessed the police drove there together with two drunk men and told them to burst into the house of Leanid Arlou, chair of the regional UPC branch. That's how they 'received signal about a fight in the house'. The provocation failed and the assembly elected its delegates to the Congress.

**On 22 June** about two dozens representatives of the political parties gathered in Svabody Square in Vitsebsk to express their disagreement at the verdict to two leaders of the Belarusian opposition Pavel Seviarynets and Mikalai Statkevich. 40 minutes after it started the action participants were dispersed by the police and riot squad. 40 minutes after the action started three cars full of police and several riot squad officers came. The action participants managed to hold back the police which ordered everyone to leave the place. The party members started leaving the Svabody Square only when the chair of the *Young Front* Ianis Chuchman was forced inside the police car. The BPF Party member Khrystafor Zhaliapau was detained when he had already left the square and was walking along Lenin St. He was grabbed by the hands and forced into the car. By the way, he was detained on the territory of Chyhunachny borough but was taken to Vitsebsk Kastychnitski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. His party associates, who noticed this violation, started phoning the prosecutor's office of Kastychnitski borough. Meanwhile, at the police station Mr Zhaliapau had to give up his mobile phone so that he could not say what was happening to him at the station. At half past eight in the evening Ianis Chuchman and Khrystafor Zhaliapau were released. The police made reports for distributing

fly sheets without imprint, the contents of which cause damage to the state regime and public order.

**On 28 June** in Rechytsa the authorities tried to disrupt the election of delegates to the Congress of democratic forces. At 7.30 p.m. the police with a major at the head burst into the private house in Zaslonau St., where the assembly was taking place. They explained that somebody informed them about an assembly of bandits in the house and demanded from the people present to show their passports, threatening to take them to a police station otherwise.

**On 29 June** Hrodna Regional Court did not grant the complaint by the UCP activists against the court ruling. We would like to remind you that on 7 May the public movement *We Remember* staged an action in commemoration of the disappeared former minister of internal affairs Iury Zakharenka in Hrodna. The action continued for an hour. Its participants stood in the street and held photos of Iury Zakharenka in hands. Then the six people out of seven were detained and taken to the police station for taking part in an unauthorized picket. On 16 May Kastrychnitski Borough Court of Hrodna imposed fines on the participants of the chain of concerned people action by terms of part 1 of article #167-1 of the Code of Administrative Violations: five were fined about 500 000 rubles and Raman Iurhel received a fine of approximately 4 million rubles for repeated violation by terms of article #167-2. Participants of the chain of concerned people went to Hrodna Regional Court complaining about the illegal ruling adopted by Hrodna Kastrychnitski Borough Court, but received the following answer: 'The punishment imposed on you agrees with the nature of the offence committed'.

**On 6 July** in the evening half a dozen of the police from Chachersk headed by the police major Tsalka came to Zalesse to disperse the district gathering that had been to elect delegates to the Congress of Democratic Forces. Justifying their visit to a private house in the village, the police mentioned their search for a murdered person and drugs. They checked the passports of all the participants in the gathering. The house owner had to give a written explanation.

**On 6 July** the five punished participants of the Chain of Concerned People staged in commemoration of the six years since Iury Zakharenka disappeared filed complaints with the Supreme Court of the country. This is a third court where they attempt to repeal the illegal decision taken by Hrodna Kastrychnitski Borough Court.

**On 12 July** the chair of Hrodna Regional Branch of the BPF Party Siarhei Malchyk was denied permission to stage a mass action in commemoration of

the 595<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gr̄nwald Battle. 'This refusal is only the last one of several others: in the past three years the city executive committee did not allow a single action, though all the papers were prepared and filed in compliance with the current law. Nevertheless, all planned actions in Hrodna always took place,' noted Mr Malchyk.

**On 16 July** Baranavichy police attempted to cancel the gathering of people to nominate delegates to the Congress of Democratic Forces. The gathering attended by more than 40 people was held in Baranavichy city headquarters of the Party of Communists. During the gathering more than 10 police officers came to the party office. They detained Anatol Liabedzka, Siarhei Kaliakin and the chair of the Minsk City Branch of the United Civil Party Ihar Shynkaryk. 40 party information bulletins were confiscated from Mr Shynkaryk, and the police also attempted to make reports registering the alleged organization of an unauthorized meeting by Mr Kaliakin and Mr Liabedzka. Both politicians refused to testify and left the police station.

**On 18 July** in Chachersk Arkadz Korkhau and Vasil Chytaieu, both United Civil Party representatives, were tried in Chachersk. They were accused of organizing an unauthorized gathering in a privately-owned house in the village of Zalesse of Chachersk district – this was a gathering to nominate delegates to the Congress of Democratic Forces. The opposition activists were fined 510 000 rubles each.

**On 18 July** the vice-heads of Brest Regional Board of Internal Affairs fined each of the residents of Belaziorsk luras Hubarevich and Dzmitry Tratsiak by terms of article #130 of the Criminal Code of Belarus because on 9 July 2005 they were in Damachava without appropriate permission, which was in violation of the rules of stay in the frontier area. We would like to remind you that in Damachava there was a gathering of people to elect delegates to the Congress of Democratic Forces. Representatives from the People's Coalition 5+ were invited to the gathering, but they could not meet the people. As they arrived in Damachava (where a Polish border checkpoint is situated), they were all detained. They first detained the UCP chair Mr Liabedzka, then within 10 minutes, Mr Shushkevich, Mrs Vanina, Mr Bukhvostau and some other people. The police made reports on everyone, some cars were examined, the books available confiscated.

**On 18 July** In Kirausk the organizer of an educational seminar was fined by judge Ulitsina. On 16 July in Kirausk, Mahiliou region, the Belarusian National Club of Voters organized an educational seminar that highlighted some aspects of the labor law. The seminar was attended by the assistant head of Kirau District Board of Internal Affairs Piatro Piatrou, and also the head of

Kirauks DBIA Mr Bizunou. After the speech delivered by the representative of the Belarusian National Club of Voters Hanna Hatavets, she was asked by the mentioned police officers for 'a talk' to Kirauks DBIA, where they made a report for committing an administrative offence by terms of article #167 part 1 of the Code of Administrative Violations (violated order of holding gatherings, meetings, street processions, demonstrations and picketing).

**On 23 July** about 60 people gathered for an assembly in Babruisk to nominate delegates to the Congress of Democratic Forces. About 15 policemen attempted to break into a privately-owned house, the location of the gathering, to write down the names of the participants. Because the police did not have official authorization to do so, they were simply denied entry.

**On 26 July** district police and several people in plain clothes visited the summer camp in the recreation center Belaie Vozera in Brest region, which was attended by about 30 representatives of the Belarusian and Ukrainian public associations and political parties. The pretext was the check of the passports, however, the police went on to make reports on some participants of the summer camp – the vice-chair of the chair of the regional branch of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (*Hramada*) Ihar Maslouski, the leader of the regional community of the Free Trade Union Valiantsin Lazarenkau, a deputy of the Belaaziorsk Town Deputy Soviet Natalia Akaronka, and also three citizens of Ukraine. They were all accused of organizing an unauthorized assembly. The people for whom the police had made reports were ordered to appear on 1 August to appear in Brest District Court, and meanwhile the summer camp was suspended though the organizers had paid taxes for the rental of the premises.

**On 27 July** the residents of Vitsebsk Barys Khamaida and Siarhei Mirkushou were fined three million each for the Freedom Day congratulations. On that day they came to the center of Vitsebsk with a white-red-white flag and a poster 'Congratulations on All with Independence Day!' This is how they decided to remind their compatriots of the State Sovereignty Declaration adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic on 27 July 1990. After 25 minutes the opposition activists were detained by police and special riot squad. After reports were made, both of the detained men were taken to Vitsebsk Chyhunachny Borough Court right from the police station, where they were found guilty of organizing a civil action without the authorities' permission. Meanwhile the festivities dedicated to the anniversary of the State Sovereignty Declaration that were authorized by the city executive committee, took place: the BPF party members that had filed an application for a festivity the authorities allowed the event. Not in the center of the city, in Svobody Square as was requested by the organizers, but in Culture and Recreation Park Maz-

uryna on the outskirts. The organizers agreed to these conditions, because in the past few years this was the first time the Independence Day celebrations initiated by the opposition representatives were allowed in Vitsebsk.

**On 1 August** more than 30 people came to Kastychnitskaia Square of Minsk to express solidarity with Sviatlana Zavadskaja, wife of the missing cameraman Dzmitry Zavadski. The action participants stood along the square, holding photos of Dzmitry Zavadski. The riot squad police ringed people and started pushing them out of the square. The officer who directed the operation ordered the policemen to behave well. The police pulled the action participants out to Niamiha St. and left there.

**On 8 August** Baranavichy police accused Mikalai Statkevich of organization of an unauthorized meeting at the corrective labor facility where he serves the term to which he was sentenced for the organization of the street demonstrations of 18 and 19 October 2004 against the falsification of the results of the parliamentary election and the referendum. The police considered as unauthorized meeting the fact that politician came to the door of the corrective labor facility in the company of members of his party and representatives of the local democratic organization who came to support him. The case was passed to Brest regional department of the Committee on punishment execution. Mikalai Statkevich said the aim of the case was to deprive him of certain liberties he had according to the internal regulations of the penitentiary institution. According to the law, if a person is found guilty of violation of the Code of Administrative Violations, it is considered as a violation of the internal regulations of the corrective labor facility. In the case a person doesn't commit such violations he/she can be permitted to live with his/her family in the case the family rents premises in the place where the penitentiary institution is situated. After three violations a prisoner can be deprived of the right to visit his/her family at the weekend. Besides, the persons who have violation records lose the right to be granted parole.

**On 11 August** Brest District Court fined Ihar Maslouski, chair of Brest regional branch of Belarusian Helsinki Committee and Valiantsin Lazarenkau, chair of Brest regional organization of the Free Trade union of Belarus were fined 510 000 rubles for organization of summer camp. The court considered the case on the basis of the police reports in which the international summer camp that was held in the end of July at Bielaie Vozera recreation place with participation of Belarusian and Ukrainian youth was defined as 'unauthorized assembly'. As a result Ihar Maslouski and Valiantsin Lazarenkau were fined. Other persons, mentioned in the police reports (including citizens of the Ukraine) didn't come to the court. Ihar Maslouski thinks that the police purposefully composed the reports against him and some other participants of the summer



camp: 'Such actions of the authorities are directed against certain activists of political opposition. When the police entered the hall where we held classes, they immediately called several surnames, including mine. It is clear they executed political order.' Ihar Masouski and Valiantsin Lazarenkau didn't take the blame and stated they would complain against this verdict. By the way, this year Mr Lazarenkau has been fined the same sum of money for alleged organization of unauthorized assembly in Brest during a strike of entrepreneurs.

At 5.30 p.m. **on 12 August** the action of support to the newspapers *Borisovskiyе novosti* and *Kurier iz Borisova* started in Barysau. These editions were first deprived of distribution through the state distribution net. Then it was prohibited to street vendors to send these newspapers outdoors. The editorial boards go to court almost every day to attend consideration of suits against their newspapers. Workers of *Borisovskiyе novosti* and *Kurier iz Borisova*, representatives of *Zubr*, *Young Front* and *Volat* movements came to the central square of Barysau, opposite the executive committee, with newspapers in their hands. Despite the cold weather several dozens of citizens came to the square to support the editorial board of the independent editions.

**On 21 August** in Ielsk the local police blocked the house in Kalinin St., where a congress to nominate delegates to the Congress of Democratic Forces was to have taken place. They stopped anyone coming near the house. The telephone communications were cut off. For three hours the police detained the driver of the privately-owned minibus Uladzimir Shytsikau who had driven Uladzimir Katsora and Andrei Tolchyn, the gathering coordinators, from Homel to the district capital. They were closely watched. The police major Aliaksei Shauchuk attempted to detain Mr Katsora and Mr Tolchyn at the market in a café where they had stopped to drink some mineral water. The guard explained that all new people coming to Ielsk arouse the suspicion of the police. But because the activists had passports with them, they had no other reason to continue detention. The gathering in Ielsk that was to have nominated delegates for the Congress of Democratic Forces did not occur.

**On 29 August** Brest District Court chaired by Judge Mikalai Senko dealt with an administrative case against a Party of Communists of Belarus member A. Novik who allegedly violated part 1 of article #167-1 (conduct of an unauthorized assembly). The police officers and then the court viewed as unauthorized an assembly of the organization structure of the PCB to nominate from Brest region delegates to the Congress of Democratic Forces, which was held on 9 July at its legal address. The court did not grant Novik's petition requesting that Uladzimir Malei appears for him in court. When the judge saw a Dictaphone in the hand of the journalist Uladzimir Vialichkin, she prohibited the recording in strict terms. In court Mr Novik explained that a scheduled assem-

bly was held at the legal address of the PCB branch, which was open and the police officers were not there, so he was surprised that the totally legal event had been classed as an 'unauthorized assembly'. The police officers called to court as witnesses confirmed that they had not attended the assembly, but saw people in the courtyard, and also referred to numerous calls of vigilant people who pointed out the organizers of the 'unauthorized assembly': Novik, Liabedzka and Shushkevich. The judge found Novik guilty and ruled to fine him 1 020 000 Belarusian rubles (about 500 US dollars).

**On 2 September** two UCP members, A.Baradaukin and V.Huliaka, were summonsed to Vaukavysk District Court. Previously, they were arrested after an authorized picket on August 27 – on the day the second 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Union of Poles was held. Neither of them attended the court. According to UCP Hrodna leader Iu.Istomin, service of summons procedures were broken. Baradaukin and Huliaka received them by mail, so the summons remained unserved personally.

**On 7 September** Vauksavysk City Court fined the disabled Vital Huliak, activist of the United Civil Party, 600 000 rubles for participation in the unauthorized picket that took place in Vaukavysk during the repeated assembly of the Union of Poles in Belarus.

**On 8 September** the court sentenced Aliaksandr Baradaukin, chair of Vaukavysk district UCP organization, to three days of jail for alleged picketing the repeated assembly of the Union of Poles of Belarus that was staged by the Belarusian authorities on 27 August. According to Mr Baradaukin, the UCP members didn't picket the recreation house. They stood there silently with black ribbons on their sleeves. However, the police reported that the picket participants shouted anti-presidential slogans and violated the public order.

**At 11 a.m. on 8 September** the members of Vitsebsk branch of the Conservative Christian Party BPF Uladzimir Pleshchanka and Aliaksandr Salauian, the oppositional activist Barys Khamaida and the redundant Siarhei Mikushou went out in Lenin Street with the following posters: 'Today is the Day of Belarusian Military Glory', 'On 8 September 1514 30 000 Belarusian soldiers won over 80 000 Moscow army', 'Hats off to Belarusian Heroes!', 'That's how one should defend the independence of fatherland!'. Citizens of Vitsebsk paid interest to the posters, whereas the riot squad police detained the picketers and took them to a court, together with white-red-white flag and the posters as evidence. Judge Hrabianchuk postponed the trial to 12 September.

**On 12 September** the judge of Vitsebsk Chynachny Borough Court Natalia Hrabianchuk ruled to fine the public activists Barys Khamaida, Uladzimir

Pleshchanka, Aliaksandr Salauian and the entrepreneur Siarhei Mirkushou 4 million rubles (about 2 000 US dollars) each for congratulation of the city's residents with Day of Belarusian Military Glory which was considered as unauthorized picket.

**On 13 September** Uladzimir Padalian, first secretary of Mahiliou Regional Committee of the Party of Communists of Belarus, was buried. The reason of death was the heart attack he had on 9 September. During the parliamentary election of 2004 U.Padalian was nominated a candidate from PCB. Being pressurized by the authorities, he had to resign from the position of the director of Mahiliou regional lyceum #2. More than a hundred people came to say goodbye to him on 14 September. The procession was ringed by the police, who shot the people with a video camera. The procession participants wanted to take the coffin with Padalian's body to the lyceum on the way to the cemetery, but the authorities didn't let it happen. They ordered the teachers to finish the classes earlier and let children go home. The road to the lyceum was blocked by the police cars and janitors who suddenly decided to clean the adjusting territory. When the procession went away to the cemetery, a police officer said the janitors they could go away as well. Four activists from Mahiliou weren't able to attend the funeral. The police blocked Ryhor Kastusiou, chair of Mahiliou regional organization of Belarusian People's Front, the human rights activist Barys Bukhel, Valiantsina Shchetnikava, activist of Belarusian People's Front and Larysa Shukaila, activist of The Conservative Christian Party BPF in Kastusiou's car for more than an hour not far from the lyceum. The operation was directed by Piatro Shashkou, lieutenant colonel from Mahiliou Kastyrychnitski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. They were released only after the procession returned from the funeral. Ryhor Kastusiou said the policemen were probably ordered to detain them so that he couldn't deliver a critical speech at the funeral.

**On 14 September** the Belarusian Diaspora activists in the USA staged a protest timed to Aliaksandr Lukashenka's visit to New York City to attend the UN session. According to Radio Liberty, the protesters stood right outside an enclosed passage for the press and UN staff to enter the UN building. All those who were entering the UN building passed the white-red-white flags and heard slogans 'Belarus – YES!, Lukashenka – NO!'

**On 26 September** Brest Regional Court did not grant the complaint filed by the activists accused of holding an unauthorized gathering. In July several public organizations with the support of the Ebert Foundation conducted a seminar on the European Union in Belaie Vozera (Brest district). Then the police drew up reports registering violation of the law *On mass events* by the head of the Brest Regional Organization of Education Workers of the Free

Trade Union of Belarus Valiantsin Lazarenkau and the head of the Brest BHC Branch Ihar Maslouski. In August Brest District Court punished the activists with a fine of 510 000 rubles each. This time the judge of Brest Regional Court N.Sianko upheld the district court ruling without any changes. It should be noted that the judge's ruling was based on the evidence of witnesses, most of whom were police officers.

**On 28 September** Brest Regional Court didn't grant the complaint of Anatol Novik, activist of Brest district organization of the Party of Communists of Belarus, who complained against the large fine that was issued to him for alleged holding of 'unauthorized assembly' in the yard of the house in the settlement of Damachava where the legal address of the party organization was registered.

**On 30 September** Pinsk City Court tried Siarhei Kastsiukovich, the chair of Pinsk city organization of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (*Hramada*) and the chair of Pinsk organization of entrepreneurs at the independent trade union. When he came to the office of the BSDP member Uladzimir Zianko, a police brigade with the vice-chair of Pinsk City Borough Board of Internal Affairs Valery Hrynko appeared there. Hrynko stated they were informed about keeping of drugs at the office. They found no drugs, but composed the reports for holding of unauthorized assembly on nine persons who were present at the office. Pinsk City Court found Siarhei Kastsiukovich guilty in organization of the unauthorized assembly and ruled to fine him about 500 000 rubles. Other persons were warned. Mr Kastsiukovich viewed it as the harassment for political and public activity.

**On 11 October** Brest District Court tried the chair of the United Civil Party Anatol Liabedzka. Mr Liabedzka was accused of organization of unauthorized assembly in the settlement of Damavana on 9 July, when the nomination of the delegates to the Congress of democratic forces took place there. The judge Valiantsina Kavenka closed the case because of absence of the corpus delicti.

**On 16 October** more than 100 000 of Belarusian citizens took part in the Day of Solidarity action. The action was also supported in many foreign countries. That's why representatives of the civil society of Belarus proposed to continue holding days of solidarity with political prisoners, missing activists, their families, independent journalists and all those who struggle for freedom and democracy in Belarus on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of each month. They urged people to turn off the lights in their houses, light candles of Freedom and put them on window-sills.

**On 30 October** more than 500 people walked to Kurapaty forest to honor

the memory of the victims of political oppression who were shot there in the 1930-ies by NKVD. The action was organized by the Conservative Christian Party Belarusian People's Front. It was dedicated to Dziady – the day when ancestors are commemorated. Following the tradition, the procession started from Chaliuskintsy Park where many innocent people were killed by the Stalin regime. The column walked 10 kilometers to Kurapaty carrying white-red-white flags, crosses and transparencies 'Let's Honor Memory of Victims of Kurapaty'. The procession and was officially sanctioned. Policemen in plainclothes were present. At the end of the procession people installed 11 crosses in the forest, burnt candles and sang the religious hymn *Mahutny Bozha* (God Almighty).

**On 2 December** the Supreme Court didn't grant the complaint of the participants of commemoration of the sixth anniversary of Iury Zakharanka's disappearance and left in force the decision of Hrodna Kastychnitski Borough Court to fine Dzmitry Andreichyk, Andrei Ianushkevich, Iury Istomin, Raman Iurhel, Artur Smiatanin and Mikola Voran.

**On 5 December** citizens of Vitsebsk started an action of protest against the disappearance of the non-state newspaper *Vitsebski kuryer* from the newspaper kiosks (Vitsebsk branch of *Belsaiuzdruk* refused to distribute it). The newspaper also published the open letter of the readers, who were indignant at the pressurization of the newspaper and stated it was violation of their right to receive objective information.

**On 7 December** Ihar Maslouski, head of Brest organization of Belarusian Helsinki Committee, received the refusal from the local authorities to his application for holding of a picket devoted to the Day of Human Rights on 11 December. Viachaslau Khafizau, vice-chair of Brest City Executive Committee, stated the CEC didn't permit the action because the application of the organizers didn't meet the requirements, containing no 'measures to guarantee the observance of the public order and security, medical service and cleaning of the territory after the action'.

**On 10 December** an action in defense of the liberty of word took place near the House of Communications in Baranavichy. About a dozen of citizens lined in front of the House of Communications, holding in their hands copies of *Narodnaia volia*, *Nasha niva* and *Tovarishch* – newspapers that had been excluded from the subscription catalogue for the first half of 2006. The action lasted for about 20 minutes. Then several persons went to the post office to subscribe to *Narodnaia volia*. They were informed the subscription to the newspaper was stopped. The people expressed their indignation and put their remarks to the complaint book.

**On 13 December** Babruisk Pershamaiski Borough Court tried the members of *Young Front* Dzianis Buinitski and Siarhei Latsinski for the second time. Buinitski and Latsinski were detained on 22 October, at the concert *Rok za babrou* for unrolling white-red-white flag. The police accused them in violation of article #156 of the Code of Administrative Violations (small disorderly conduct). The first trial over the detainees took place on 24 October in Babruisk temporary isolator. The trial was closed. The guys were sentenced to 2 days of jail they had already spent in the isolator. Closed administrative trial is an invention of the Belarusian court system. According to article #229 of the Code of Administrative Violations, administrative cases are considered openly. The code contains no norms allowing to judge persons in temporary isolators. Another invention is to judge people twice for the same deed.

**At 7 p.m. on 16 December** outside a trading center in Svetlahorsk the police attempted to stop the solidarity action *Light a candle!*, five participants were detained and taken to the police station. Among the detained were the chair of Svetlahorsk district branch of the Belarusian Language Association Telman Masliukou, the vice-head of the district branch of the Communist Party of Belarus Mikalai Mikhalkevich, and also three young activists - Andrei Muzychenka, Vadzim Danilchanka and Ruslan Liutarevich. The young activists were photographed in the station and had their fingertips printed. According to the information provided by the vice-head of the police Piatro Zykun, Mr Masliukou was accused of distributing printed materials in the name of the unregistered organization *Zubr*, but was released after giving a written explanatory note. Mikalai Mikhalkevich was accused of not following the orders of the police.

**On 23 December** the police visited Viktor Miazziak, a BPF Party member from Baranavichy, and made a report registering an administrative violation by terms of article #167 CAV (unauthorized mass action). The case concerned the action held in support of the independent press on 10 December, when the local activists of Baranavichy a chain at 12 o'clock along the main post office, holding *Nasha niva* and *Narodnaia volia* in hands. Then the police did not detain anyone, but then they started to visit people in the apartments and make reports. Two days before this the police came to Arkadz Blinkouski, Siarhei Housha and Viktor Syrytsa, who recently lost his job with the law college, for organizing in the educational institution a meeting with the united opposition candidate Aliaksandr Milinkevich. The activists didn't sign the reports made by the police.

**On 27 December** Vitsebsk Kastychnitski Borough Court started the trial of participants of the 10 December action in support of the non-state newspaper *Vitsebski kuryer*. Seven persons, who had been detained to at the action, were summonsed to the court. However, not all of them managed to come to the court: Aliaksandr Darafeieu had been arrested and taken to Minsk. At first

all of the detainees were allegedly suspected in relation to the explosions that had taken place in Vitsebsk and then – in group brigandage. The social-democrats Aliaksei Haurutsikau, Dzmitry Karatkevich, Katsiaryna Sampoieva, Ivan and Aliaksandra Tserashs and the chair of Vitsebsk regional BPF branch Kanstantsin Smolikau entered the court hall at 2.30 p.m. and left it only after 7 p.m. All of them were interrogated as witnesses. The police showed the documented video-chronicle of the action. The judge Valiantsina Mikhasiova postponed the issue of the verdict to the following day. By the way, Ivan Tserash also received a punishment before the trial – after the newspaper *Vitsebski kuryer* published a report about his detention, the administration of the heating plant warned him his working contract wouldn't be prolonged.

**On 28 December** Baranavichy City Executive Committee prohibited the picket in support to the non-state newspaper *Intex-press* that had been excluded from the subscription catalogue. The citizens of Baranavichy Siarhei Housha, Karnei Piatrovich and Viktor Syrytsa asked the CEC to permit the picket outside the local house of communications. Baranavichy CEC explained its refusal with the fact that according to its decision of 1998 all pickets could be held only in the parks. It was also stated the applicants didn't attach the written undertaking not to violate the public order during the action. Viktor Syrytsa said he would file another application following the recommendation of the state organ.

**On 28 December** the judge of Vitsebsk Kastychnitski Borough Court Valiantsina Mikhasiova issued the verdict on the case against the participants of the action in support of the non-state newspaper *Vitsebski kuryer*. She ruled to fine Aliaksandr Haurutsikau, Dzmitry Karatkevich, Katsiaryna Sampoieva and Ivan and Aliaksandra Tserashs 580 000 rubles for violation of article #167-1 of the Code of Administrative Violations (unauthorized picketing). The trial of Aliaksandr Darafeiev was delayed because of his detention at the investigative isolator of Minsk.

## 9. The right to work and social defense. Persecution of trade unions, movements of workers and private entrepreneurs

**On 12 January** the chair of the Free Trade Union of private entrepreneurs of Homel Tatsiana Marchanka was summonsed to Homel Savetski borough tax inspection. The worker of the tax inspection Dzmitry Zhdan threatened to

impose on her large fines and cessation of the activity of the trade union in the case its legal address wasn't put in conformity with the demands of the Housing Code by 1 February. According to T. Marchanka it was impossible to find a legal address, because nobody in Homel wanted to face the risk of renting an office to any oppositional organization.

**On 27 January** the police detained Mikhail Kryvamaz, former director of Minsk Factory named in honor of October revolution (one of the largest factories of engineering tools in Belarus). He headed the factory for more than ten years and lost his seat in 2004. Kryvamaz is also known as one of the founders of the Civil Party of Belarus (that is headed by Vasil Shlyndzikau) and a member of the Belarusian association *Business Initiative*, headed by Mikhail Marynich. Kryvamaz's acquaintance Vasil Shlyndzikau, former deputy of the Supreme Soviet said the former director could try to establish a modern model for production of engineering tools after he was fired from the factory, or he could be detained for membership in the association that was headed by Marynich.

**On 27 January** the administration of Palesseelektramash plant (Electric Machines of Palesse region) stated to the workers they would have to stop working till 28 February. In his order the factory director Heorhi Mitsianiou explained it with the impossibility to receive raw materials from Russia. The factory used to exchange the raw materials for its engines, but then the authorities prohibited barter operations. One of the local citizens said: 'People are very indignant – they can't even pay for their flats. Workers of the electric burner workshop received only 70 thousand rubles for November (about 30 US dollars), which is less than the subsistence wage. Now they will receive not more than 40 thousand. They won't even be able to pay for the public utilities.'

**On 28 January** the administration of Babuisk Center of Social Service refused to prolong the contract to the leader of Babruisk Pershamaiski borough organization of the United Civil Party Iryna Kachan. In 2004 the center was transferred to the contract system of employment. When the term of the contract ended, Iryna was fired from her work. She has no doubt it was a consequence of her oppositional activity – the administration of the center threatened to fire her during the parliamentary election. Iryna participated in the election as a candidate to the parliament. Her colleagues joined the initiative group and collected signatures for her. However, the center prohibited them to take the signature lists to the election commission, threatening not to prolong the working contracts to them. Iryna Kachan said that though being unemployed is very unpleasant, she didn't lose optimism and won't subdue to the official pressurization.



unions (BCDTU) appointed on 24 February a picket in Vaneieu Square of Minsk. Activists of the independent trade-union movement from all parts of Belarus wanted to express their protest against the processes that take place in the country and impair the workers' rights. Among such processes they mentioned the forcible transfer to the contract system of employment that was taking place all over the country. They also wanted to support the members of the independent trade unions that lost their jobs as a result: Vadzim Dukhomenka, the chair of the primary unit of the Free Trade Union of Belarus (FTUB) at Navapolatsk Heating Plant, the members of the FTUB Council Iury Abukhou and Iury Haichanka who in October 2004 were fired from *Belaeranavihatsya* on due to the end of the contract with Aleh Dolbik, former vice-president of the Belarusian trade-union of air-traffic controllers.

**On 1 February** in Pinsk there started the strike of businessmen. Almost all vendors of the central and *Zorny* markets joined the strike. The strikers demanded from the authorities to abolish the 18% VAT on the goods that were imported from Russia. Besides, the businessmen protested against the obligatory insurance fees to the national fund of social defense. Siarhei Kastsiukovich, head of the trade-union unit of the city's entrepreneurs, said: 'Our action is carried out under the slogans *We don't want to mark up prices* and *No – to destruction of small business*. In the case our city implements the state plans, a considerable part of entrepreneurs will become unemployed and the prices will become 40-50% higher.'

**On 1 February** Belarusian congress of democratic trade-unions filed to the International Labor Organization the statement concerning the reluctance of the Belarusian authorities to improve the situation of trade-unions in the country. ILO carried out an investigation and confirmed that the state violated the rights of independent trade-unions and demanded from the authorities to improve the situation. The authorities promised to execute the recommendations, but did nothing for it.

**On 3 February** in Pinsk there continued the strike of entrepreneurs of the central market that started on 1 February. Every morning the entrepreneurs gathered at 9 a.m. in order to discuss the plan of their activities, the latest news and events. They intended to fight till victory. On 2 February about a hundred strikers met with Aliaksandr Darashenka, vice-minister on dues and taxes, in the building of Pinsk city tax inspection. The official tried to explain to the businessmen why the 18% VAT on the Russian goods was introduced and said it was a result of the agreement that was concluded between Belarus and Russia and therefore the ministry won't take into consideration any protest actions.

**On 8 February** in Hrodna the police tried to detain Dzmitry Ivanouski, chair of

the unregistered democratic movement *Hrodna choice* because of the protest meeting of Hrodna businessmen that was appointed on 10 February. In the morning unknown persons came to his workshop and asked to let them in. 'I asked them to introduce themselves', said Dzmitry Ivanouski, 'but they didn't do it. After this the car with policemen in plain clothes kept duty near the workshop for a day.'

**On 9 February** Aleh Tychyna, the leader of the entrepreneurs in Lepel and member of the public association *Perspective* received summons to the prosecutor's office. According to it, he was to go to the prosecutor's office on 10 February and give explanations. On 10 February there was appointed the strike of businessmen.

**On 10 February** Anatol Shumchanka, chair of the national public association *Perspective* was sentenced to 10 days of jail by Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court under article #167.3 of the Code of Administrative Violations (organization of unauthorized procession). He was detained in the evening of 9 February on suspicion in having knocked down a pedestrian. The police took him to Minsk Partyzanski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. At 10 p.m. it became known the police composed on him a report for violation of unauthorized meeting. He spent the night at the BBIA. In the morning he was taken to the detention center of the main board of internal affairs of Minsk City Executive Committee and from there – to the court. He was sentenced to 10 days of jail for handing out the bulletin *Kommersant* at Zhdanovichy market on 5-9 February. The bulletin contained urges to join the preventive strike on 10 February.

**On 10 February** a spontaneous meeting of individual entrepreneurs took place in Minsk. More than 2 000 people gathered near the business department of the Ministry of Economy. They insisted on meeting with the ministry workers and demanded to liquidate the 18% VAT. When the Ministry of Economy gave its written refusal to take part in the round table with the entrepreneurs, the people went to the governmental house in Savetskaia St. 9. Then the vice-prime-minister Andrei Kabiakou spoke to the meeting participants and stated that it was impossible to liquidate VAT for individual entrepreneurs: 'It is an international agreement and therefore it has priority before every internal law. You pay the import VAT which Russian entrepreneurs pay as well.' After this speech eight representatives of the entrepreneurs were invited for negotiations with the ministry. The negotiations lasted for three hours. As a result it was decided to establish the working group that would decide the problem by 20 February and would consist of representatives of the government and members of the public association *Perspective*. About 30 000 persons signed the petition for the tax abolishment.

Homel region (the cities of Homel, Rechytsa, Svetlahorsk, Rahachou, etc.). Almost 3 000 small entrepreneurs of the central market of Homel didn't work. At 10 a.m. many of them signed the petition for abolishment of the tax. In the afternoon they passed their demands to Homel Regional Executive Committee that was attended by the duty officials of the Ministry of dues and taxes.

**On 10 February** in Hrodna more than 4 000 of entrepreneurs took part in the action of protest. According to *Pahonia* newspaper, the democratic movement *Hrodna Choice* urged people to gather in Zhyliber Park at 11 a.m. on 10 February. At 10.30 a.m. the riot squads with the vice-head of the board of internal affairs of Hrodna Regional Executive Committee Iury Chabanau at the head were standing there. The police called the people to disperse and not to violate the law of the Republic of Belarus. The action participants moved to the central square of the city. The road was overlapped by internal military forces and riot squads, but the demonstrators managed to break through the cordons and in several minutes united with the column of the entrepreneurs who didn't manage to get to the park because of the police. When the demonstration arrived to the central square, the head of Hrodna Regional Executive Committee Aliaksandr Antonenka spoke to the people. He said the executive committee had no powers to liquidate the VAT, but the deputies of the city deputy soviet would lobby this question. The entrepreneurs were also interested to find about the fate of the leader of the democratic movement *Hrodna Choice* Dzmitry Ivanouski whom the police tried to detain on 9 February. Antonenka said the city's administration wouldn't do anything against the law. In 1,5 hours the meeting was over. When people started to disperse, persons in plain clothes tried to detain the most active participants of the action.

**On 10 February** in Vitsebsk entrepreneurs took their appeals for abolishment of VAT to all three borough administrations of Vitsebsk. All three borough administrations were actually blocked by entrepreneurs for several hours. The officials were shocked. More than thousand entrepreneurs took part in the action. Policemen with rifles arrived to the administrations.

**On 10 February** there took place the first sitting of Hrodna Leninski Borough Court on the suit of Vaukavysk entrepreneur Mikola Autukhovich against Hrodna state TV and Radio Company. He demanded from the defendants to disprove the false information that was distributed by the TV and radio company, publicly apologize to him and give 40 million rubles as compensation of the moral harm. The entrepreneur stated the TV channel insulted his honor and dignity in the TV spot that was thrice shown on 28 and 29 September 2004. He also put pretensions to the journalist Volha Maksimchyk, who put to doubt his charitable support to the children's home and stated he evaded from paying taxes that could be issued on 'real' support to children. At court Mr Autukhovich

stated that neither the journalist nor the TV and Radio Company applied to him when preparing the information. He also presented the official letters from the children's home and other institutions to confirm that he really gave support to it. Autukhovich sued only against Hrodna state TV and Radio Company, but the judge also drew to the trial Volha Maksimchyk and Hrodna regional tax inspection, because the journalist stated she made the TV spot on the basis of the information that was provided by that organ. The next court sitting was appointed on 23 February.

**In the evening of 11 February** the vice-head of the National public association *Perspective*, entrepreneur Anatol Zmitrovich was detained in the city of Svetlahorsk. Three policemen in plain clothes confiscated from him 75 Xerox copies of the first page of *Narodnaia volia* newspaper with an article about the meeting in Minsk and the strikes of entrepreneurs in the regions of Belarus. The vice-head of Svetlahorsk police Mr Zykun took part in drawing of the police report against the detainee.

**On 11 February** the administration of Homel joint-stock society *Lokan* fired the member of United Civil Party, legal advisor Leanid Sudalenka. Leanid Sudalenka commented on it in his interview: 'My director insistently proposed to me to retire. They have no pretensions to me as a lawyer. The demand to fire me comes from the authorities. The director said that if I wasn't fired she would lose her job. I had to retire. This kind of pressurization demonstrates the wish of the authorities to show oppositional activists as idlers who don't work anywhere.'

**On 17 February**, after the fruitless negotiations with the authorities at the business department of the Ministry of Economy, Belarusian entrepreneurs stated they would prepare to new protest actions. During the negotiations the authorities proposed to establish the working group for long-run decision of the conflict issues. However, this agenda didn't satisfy the leaders of the public association *Perspective*. Aliaksandr Lapotka, vice-chair of this public association, told the duty officials the demagogic nature of the negotiations didn't correspond to the tension that existent in the business environment. The head of the governmental delegation Andrei Tur stated the officials had no powers to abolish the 18% VAT. He informed the businessmen that the government sent a letter concerning this tax to Aliaksandr Lukashenka and waited for his answer. At the same time, A.Tur said he didn't expect Lukashenka to refuse from the tax. Members of *Perspective* decided there further negotiations were senseless and went away.

**On 18 February** Belarusian entrepreneurs declared their intention to complain against the introduction of the 18% VAT to the Constitutional Court. Ac-

According to the businessmen, the application to the Constitutional Court is a form of their protest against this tax. It was initiated by the Belarusian union of entrepreneurs and the trade-union *Sadruzhnasts* (Commonwealth).

**On 18 February**, during the assembly at *Zorny* market in Pinsk the local entrepreneurs decided to continue striking till 1 March. In the morning the entrepreneurs of *Tsentralny* and *Zorny* markets gathered to the assembly where they listened to their colleagues that on 17 February took part in the negotiations with the authorities concerning the 18% value added tax on the goods that were imported from Russia. The assembly participants were also going to support the trade union leader Siarhei Kastsiukovich at court, but found out the police revoked the administrative report for organization of unauthorized assembly they had composed on him.

**On 19 February** in Biaroza there started the strike of workers at the joint venture *Trans-Express*. The enterprise specializes in procession of the shrimps that are taken to Belarus from the Netherlands and Germany. The raw materials that came to the factory in wintertime were of very low quality. The workers had to work 12 hours a day in order to executive the daily norm. The enterprise had about 200 employees, the main part of who were citizens of Biaroza, Ivatsevichy and the surrounding villages, where it was difficult find any other work. The workers said the factory administration pushed them to the wall.

**On 22 February** the Belarusian entrepreneurs gathered for a council in Minsk. They stated their intention to take part in the termless nationwide strike starting from 1 March with the aim to protest against the introduction of the value-added tax. In most Belarusian regions the entrepreneurs informed the local tax inspections about suspension of payment of taxes since 1 March, but the tax inspections didn't react to it. Siarhei Eismant, representative of the press-service of the Ministry of Dues and Taxes, thusly commented on the situation: 'Introduction and abolishment of taxes is beyond the competence of the Ministry of Dues and Taxes. We execute the law. It was stated that the individual entrepreneurs who pay the common tax, also had to pay the 18% value added tax while importing goods from Russia. Nobody abolished this tax. That's why the taxation organs will demand from entrepreneurs to pay this tax.'

**On 22 February** the entrepreneurs held an assembly at *Prudkouski* market of Homel. They decided to stop working since 1 March. Almost two week passed after the preventive strike against the introduction of the 18% VAT, but the local authorities ignored the entrepreneurs' demands. Tatsiana Marchanka, leader of the city organization of the free trade union of entrepreneurs, explained: 'The authorities still haven't met with entrepreneurs in order to discuss this problem.'

**On 25 February** the activist of Belarusian Social-Democratic Party *Narodnaya Hramada* Vasil Vauraniuk was fired. He stated it was a punishment for his political and public activity: 'I have worked at Brest customs office for 24 years, but they didn't agree to prolong my contract, despite the fact that I didn't violate any of its paragraphs. On the other hand, I took an active part in the electoral campaign of 2004 on the side of the opposition.' In addition Mr Vauraniuk said that during that electoral campaign the customs officers were forced to do many things that had nothing to do with their professional activity: 'They were forced to vote early. The administration of the customs office attentively watched this process. Every day the chair of Brest customs office Mikola Svirzyd received information about the people who didn't vote. I was an observer at the election and composed a report on falsification of the vote count.' According to Vasil Vauraniuk, after the election the administration warned him that his political activity could have negative impact on prolongation of his working contract. The vice-chair of Brest customs office denies that Vauraniuk was fired for his political activity.

**On 27 February** in Rechytsa the police arrested the activist of the entrepreneurs' association *Perspective* Leanid Nevar. They blocked his micro-bus in Chyrvonaarmeiskaia St. The formal reason was that the car number wasn't doubled on the body. Mr Nevar agreed to sign the report that was composed for this violation, but didn't agree to leave the car. Rechytsa police with Uladzimir Manzhos at the head put out the rear window out of the car. Nevar's wife called for help. The police forcibly arrested the businessman, accusing him in urges to mass riot. He spent the night at a temporary isolator. He had heart attacks and the ambulance thrice came there. The trial of Nevar was appointed on the morning. The charges were changed to petty hooliganism and resistance to the police.

**On 28 February** the judge of Hrodna Leninski Borough Court Natallia Sobaleva rejected the suit of the businessman Mikola Autukhovich against Hrodna TV, journalist Volha Maksimchyk and the tax inspection of Hrodna region. Mr Autukhovich stated the TV channel insulted his honor and dignity in the TV program that was thrice broadcast on 28 and 29 September 2004. For instance, he had pretensions to the author of the program, journalist Volha Maksimchyk who put to doubt that Autukhovich gave charitable aid to a children's community.

**On 1 March** the nationwide strike of businessmen took place. The main aim of the action was to express the protest of small business against the introduction of the 18% VAT for the goods that were imported from Russia. This tax was introduced according to the agreement concerning the change of the order of the VAT payment that was signed by Belarus and Russia. At first

*United opposition candidate  
to presidency  
Aliaksandr Milinkevich* ➔



*Polling.*



*People's Poet of Belarus  
Nil Hilevich in the assembly hall.*



*Press-conference after the Congress of the Democratic Forces of Belarus –  
All United to the Presidential Election!*



*Iosif Siaredzich, editor-in-chief of Narodnaia volia.*



*Picket in Baranavichy protesting against the interdiction of subscribing to Narodnaia volia, Nasha niva, BDG and other private newspapers.*





🕒 *At the editorial office of BDG after the verdict of the court.*



🕒 *Polish journalists held an action of solidarity with Belarusian friends.*

🕒 *Piatro Martsau, editor-in-chief of BDG.*





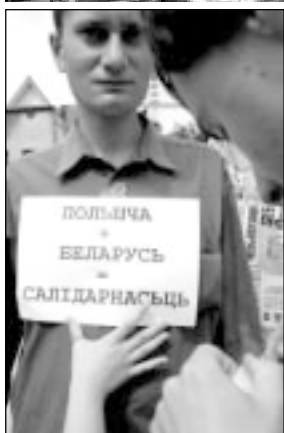
📍 *Head of the Union of Poles in Belarus Anzhalika Borys.*

📍 *Editor-in-chief of Magazyn Polski Andrei Pachobut under arrest.*



*Journalist Andzhei Pisalnik.*





*Hundreds of Poles and Belarusians took part in the actions protesting against the government's pressure on the UPB.*





*Aleh Minich had to leave Belarus because of criminal persecution for the 'cartoons'.* ☹

☹ *Authors of the 'cartoons' about Lukashenka and Co Andrei Abozau and Pavel Marozau; several scenes from their works.*





*Trial of Mikola Statkevich and Pavel Seviarynets.*



*In several hours Andrei Klimau will become a political prisoner for the second time.*



*Minsk actions of solidarity with the political prisoners Mikhail Marynich, Andrei Klimau, Mikola Statkevich, Pavel Seviarynets...*





*Political prisoner Iury Bandazheuski out of prison.*



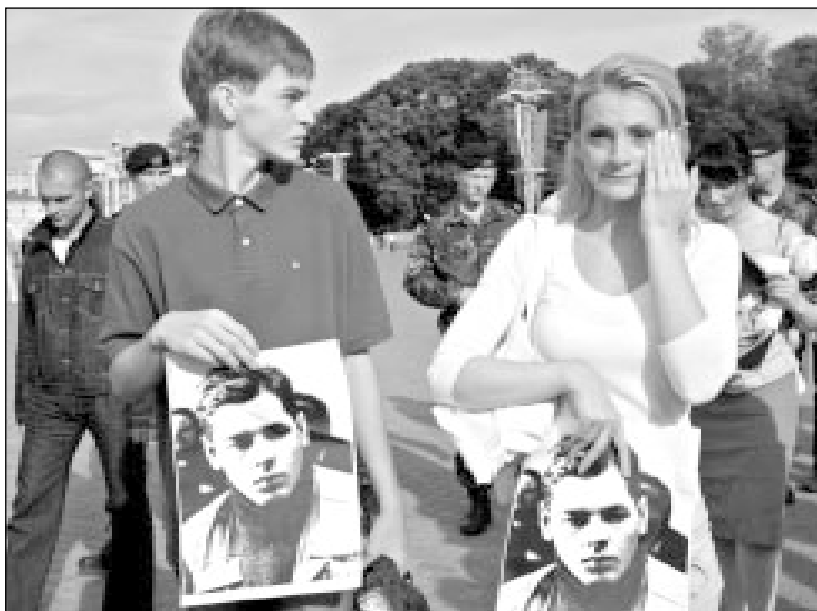
*Mikalai Autukhovich.*



*Siarhei Skrabets.*



*Student Tatsiana Khoma.*



**264** *Sviatlana Zavadskaia with her son Iury.*





*Actions of solidarity* We want to know the truth!





*Actions of solidarity We want to know the truth!*





*Actions of solidarity*  
**We want to know the truth!**





*Freedom Day of 2005.*





*Freedom Day of 2005.*





Chernobyl Way of 2005.





*Chernobyl Way of 2005.*





*Detention of youth activists during actions of protest.*







*Detention of youth activists during actions of protest.*





🕒 *Youth picket We want to study in Belarusian.* 🕒



**274** *Students of Iakub Kolas National Humanitarian Lyceum do not give in, continuing to study in Belarusian 'in the underground'*



*Solidarity Day –  
the 16<sup>th</sup> day  
of each month.*



*Press-conference of Young Front leaders.*



*Entrepreneurs on strike.*



📍 *Workers of Minsk Moto-bicycle Plant on strike.*

📍 *Leader of the entrepreneurs' strike committee Anatol Shumchanka.*



*Distressing  
Maryia Bahdanovich's  
property.*



*Independent trade-unions fight  
for worker's rights.*





*Actions of protest against renaming Minsk streets.*





*Actions of protest against renaming Minsk streets.*



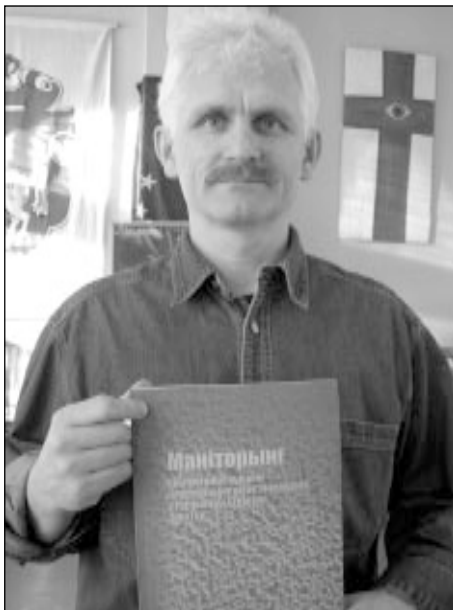
*After a night attack by 'the unknown' in Viasna's Zhodino office.*







**Presentation of the book  
Monitoring parliamentary  
election and republican  
referendum .**



**Head of HRC Viasna Ales Bialiatski.**





*Moments of 2005 .*



the Belarusian authorities asserted that as a result of the agreement Russian businessmen would make their goods 18% cheaper for Belarusian importers. However, it didn't happen and individual entrepreneurs stopped paying taxes to the budget. According to Aliaksandr Lapotka, chair of the national public association *Perspective*, by 1 March about 80 000 entrepreneurs didn't pay the taxes, despite the fact that on the eve of the strike the vice-minister of dues and taxes Vasil Kamenka once again urged the businessmen to accept the rules proposed by the government.

**On 1 March** about 5 000 entrepreneurs from different cities of Belarus gathered in Kastychnitskaia Square of Minsk. They held a meeting on the stairs of the House of Republic. Some of the action participants held posters *Down with the VAT!* The leader of *Perspective* association Anatol Shumchanka took the floor and called all people present to behave well and not cry out any political slogans. The meeting lasted for more than three hours. The police authorities stood near, but didn't demand from the people present to disperse despite the fact that the action was unauthorized. After all who wanted to speak to the people took the floor the businessmen decided to move to the presidential administration and pass their demands to president. However, at the stairs near the House of Officers, the riot squad overlapped the way. The police started to push people out of Ianka Kupala Square. Several women fell in snow. After this the demonstrators changed their mood. They decided to return to the square and stand there till the authorities negotiate with them. The entrepreneurs asked the police to inform Lukashenka in person that they were used to hard conditions of work and could bear the frost for a long time.

**On 1 March** in Minsk region the nationwide strike was supported by the businessmen of Barysau, Zhodzina, Salihorsk, Slutsk, Maladechna and other towns and cities. A part of businessmen from Barysau picketed Barysau City Executive Committee. Another part, with Viktor Harbachou, the leader of the local branch of *Perspective* association, went to Minsk. However, on the way Harbachou was detained by the police.

**On 1 March** in Homel region the nationwide strike was supported by businessmen from Homel, Rechytsa, Svetlahorsk, Zhlobin, Rahachou and other cities. In Homel about 95% of businessmen of *Tsentralny* and *Prudkouski* markets didn't work. *Davydauski* market and a number of automobile markets didn't work at all. In the afternoon dozens of businessmen from different markets of the city picketed Homel Regional Executive Committee. The police didn't interfere. However, in Rechytsa the police disrupted the departure of the bus with about fifty small entrepreneurs to Minsk for participation in the action of protest.

**On 1 March** in Vitsebsk the strike was supported by 90% of entrepreneurs.

In the afternoon several hundred of entrepreneurs gathered at the entrance of Vitsebsk Regional Executive Committee. The duty policemen decided that mass violations could happen and called for support. The police pushed people down from the stairs and ordered not to approach the regional administration. Only four delegates were allowed to enter it. They passed their statement to the head of the executive committee Uladzimir Andreichanka. They didn't even manage to meet with him and had to wait for the answer for several answers, the outside temperature being 12C below zero. Infuriated with it, the entrepreneurs moved forward, but the police warned they would call for the riot squad that would disperse the demonstration. The only official who came out to talk with the protestors was Valiantsin Tsviatkou, the chair of the Council of Trade of the executive committee. He managed to convince them they would receive the answers to their questions at 2 p.m. on 2 March.

**On 1 March** the nationwide strike was supported by the entrepreneurs of Vitsebsk region. The largest markets of Vitsebsk, Polatsk and Navapolatsk were empty. The police stopped the microbus with Navapolatsk businessmen who wanted to get to the protest action in Minsk. As a result the trade union activists had to hitchhike to the capital. A part of the businessmen of Polatsk and Navapolatsk gathered at 10 p.m. near city executive committees despite the frosty weather. In Navapolatsk the authorities ignored the action, whereas in Polatsk the head of the executive committee Uladzimir Tachyla personally talked to the protesters. They were even invited to the committee to get warm.

**On 1 March** the majority of the private entrepreneurs of Brest region stopped working. The local authorities made the vendors of consumer societies and state shops to sell goods at markets instead of them. Almost all entrepreneurs in the towns of Belaaziorsk, Ivanava and Stolin supported the strike as well.

**On 1 March** the private entrepreneurs of Mahiliou supported the nationwide strike. The majority of markets and trade centers and even some private shops stopped working. About 700 entrepreneurs came to the protest action that took place at the central square of Mahiliou. The entrepreneurs composed a statement to the city's authorities that they had to stop working because they weren't able to pay for public utilities. Local leaders of democratic parties and public organizations came to the square as well, to support the protest. The entrepreneurs said their economical problems were connected to politics. Mahiliou Regional Executive Committee accepted the delegation of entrepreneurs but said they couldn't do anything at the local level. The entrepreneurs didn't agree to it and stated they would gather everyday at the central square of Mahiliou till the abolishment of the VAT.

the action of protest. The entrepreneurs started gathering at about 12 a.m. in Zhyliber Park, near the monument to Soviet soldiers and partisans. When they felt there were many of them, they crossed the street and occupied Lenin Square in front of Hrodna City Executive Committee. Their leaders were absent, because on the eve of the action one of them, Dzmitry Ivanouski, was sentenced to 15 days of jail for participation in the previous unauthorized meeting of entrepreneurs, held on 10 February. The action participants chanted 'Let Us Work!'. The head of Hrodna City Executive Committee Aliaksandr Antonenka and the vice-head of Hrodna Regional Executive Committee Aliaksandr Radzevich came out and stood near the monument to Lenin. The entrepreneurs surrounded them and had a long fruitless talk. Then people started to disperse. The action lasted for two hours, but none of its participants were detained after it.

**On 2 March** Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court punished two participants of the protest action of businessmen in Minsk. The activist of the United Civil Party Maryia Bahdanovich was fined 4 800 000 rubles (more than 2 000 US dollars) for 'violation of article #167.1 of the Code of Administrative Violations of Belarus (violation of the order of organization and holding mass actions). For the same violation the chair of the public association *Perspective* Anatol Shumchanka was sentenced to 10 days of jail.

**On 3 March** about 2 000 of businessmen gathered in the center of Hrodna and went to Hrodna Regional Executive Committee, chanting 'Let Us Work!'. At about 1 p.m. they stopped the traffic at the crossing of Dziarzhynski and Satsyialistychnaia streets. Soon several hundred soldiers of internal military forces pushed them out to the pavements, where the action continued. The policeman Uladzimir Buziuk detained the human rights activist Mikola Lemianouski and took him to Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. There the reports for violation of articles #156 (petty hooliganism) and #166 (disobedience to the legal demands of the police) were drawn.

**On 3 March**, the third day of the nationwide strike of businessmen, the vice-chair of Polatsk regional organization of the Belarusian Independent Trade Union and informal leader of the strike of businessmen in Polatsk district Valery Shauchenka was summoned to Polatsk City Borough Board of Internal Affairs without any explanations. When he came there, he was informed he was charged with violation of article #167.1 of the Code of Administrative Code – organization of unauthorized meeting. Here the police meant the everyday pickets in the central square of the city. At 7 p.m. Mr Shauchenka was taken to Polatsk City Court. During the case consideration the defendant demanded from the judge Natallia Abramava to interrogate his witnesses, as a result of which she had to postpone the trial to 10 March.

**On 3 March** the judge of Rechytsa District Court Sviatlana Pyrkh sentenced the businessman Leanid Nevar to 10 days of jail for alleged hooliganism and disobedience to the police. Despite high temperature and ill heart Nevar was taken back to the cell where he had already spent one day and got there a severe cold. The cell windows have polyethylene instead of glass and the temperature there doesn't differ much from the temperature outdoors. The businessmen's relatives think that the judge made this sentenced to completely destroy the health of the leader of Rechytsa businessmen.

**On 4 March** the police detained Vadzim Saranchukou, member of Belarussian People's Front, proxy of Siarhei Antusevich, candidate to deputies from BPF Party. He was detained at Hrodna City Executive Committee – he came there to receive a bill for paying the office rent for the office of Hrodna BPF branch. Hrodna Leninski Borough Court sentenced Saranchukou to 10 days of jail for the protest action that took place in Hrodna on 10 February.

**On 4 March** the leader of Homel entrepreneurs Tatsiana Marchanka was warned by the police. She was summonsed for a talk to the vice-head of Homel Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs Siarhei Iafimenka. He read to her the rights and articles #167 and #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations that contained different punishments for participation in unauthorized mass actions and illegal production of fly-sheets. Tatsiana Marchanka asked the policeman to present evidence that she violated those articles, but he failed to do it. Instead, he warned her about inadmissibility of such actions and asked her to sign the undertaking she wouldn't do it. Marchanka refused and went away. The same day she applied to the prosecutor's office, demanding to investigate the fact that she was watched by unknown persons.

**On 5 March** Hrodna Leninski Borough Court left in force the decision of the administrative commission of Leninski borough to fine the member of an independent trade-union Iury Kurhanski for distribution of the trade-union newspaper *Shaber*. The trial started with another punishment: at the first sitting judge Sabaleuskaia issued a warning to him and fined him for protraction of the trial. She considered as a protraction his solicitation for admission to the trial Andrei Kusialchuk for representation of his interests. The judge turned up the petition and proposed Kurhanski to hire a defense lawyer. Later Iury Kurhanski several times solicited for admission of his representative to the trial and impeachment to the judge. Judge Sabaleuskaia satisfied none of them and left the decision of the administrative commission in force.

**On 10 March** the entrepreneurs who were detained during the assembly at Zhyliber Park in Hrodna were tried. Hrodna Leninski Borough Court fined Vital Dzetchyk, Natallia Ivashka, Dzmitry Krautsevich, Ivan Melnichak, Aleh Sia-

mashka, Liudmila Tsezhyina and Halina Vishneuskaia about 200 US dollars for alleged violation of article #167-1 of the Code of Administrative Violations (participation in unauthorized assembly).

**On 10 March** the court of Polatsk and Polatsk district considered that administrative case against Valery Shauchenka, vice-chair of Polatsk regional organization of Belarusian Independent Trade Union and leader of Polatsk entrepreneurs. The case was brought as a result of the report that was composed by the police. There V.Shauchenka was accused in the participation in the unauthorized meetings on 1-2 March in Polatsk. More than 80 local entrepreneurs came to support their colleague. Judge Natallia Abramava found Shauchenka guilty in violation of part 1 of article #167.1 of the Code of Administrative Violations and fined him the sum equal to about 400 US dollars.

**On 14 March** Vitsebsk Regional Economic Court started considering the case that was brought against the entrepreneur Barys Elkin. The police detained his car late on 8 October 2004 on the way from Smolensk (Russia) to Vitsebsk. There they found 9 000 copies of the book *Occasional President*. The case was brought by Vitsebsk district police board on struggle counteraction to economic crimes. Its chair Piatro Prakapovich formulated two charges against Barys Elkin: the real number of the books didn't meet the number in the covering documents and the legal address of the enterprise that sold the books wasn't its real address. According to Mr Elkin, the police had no doubts about the documentation and confiscated the books in order to hold a literary expertise and find out whether the book defamed or insulted the president Aliaksandr Lukashenka. In January Vitsebsk Regional Prosecutor's Office received the document where it was stated the book by Sviatlana Kalinkina and Pavel Sharamet didn't contain anything illegal. However, the policemen didn't return the 9 000 copies of the book to the owner and a month later accused him of economic violations. Judge Liudmila Ivanova appointed the next sitting on 17 March.

**On 15 March** the owner of the *Radiotaxi 22222* Company Mikola Autukhovich declared a termless hunger-strike to protest against the officials' actions, as a result of which his employees and himself were deprived of the right to work. 'I have to do this because I have hardly any hope left that they will allow us to work normally. I will continue my hunger-strike until they have solved a problem all too important for over 100 people: 'Will we be allowed to work on?' – says Mikola Autukhovich's appeal. According to Mikola Autukhovich, the conflict broke out a year and a half ago. 'Because I am a citizen of this country I decided not to keep silent and testify against some taxation officers abusing their official powers. Instead of getting protected as a witness, I started to be pressurized from all sides', said Mr Autukhovich. He argues that the taxation

agencies launched audits checking his business activities and the activity of this business associate *Nika-trans* in an attempt to stand up for their colleagues and to show the businessmen as people willfully avoiding paying taxes. No surprise, the other law enforcement bodies joined in: judges, prosecutors, State Control Committee representatives... As a result, Mr Autukhovich was requested to pay large fines.

**On 17 March** the chair of the regional organization of the Free trade union Valiantsin Lazarenkau was summonsed to Brest Maskouski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. There the police composed the report in which he was accused of organization unauthorized meeting of entrepreneurs at one of the city markets. The trial was appointed on 25 March.

**On 21 March**, the sixth day of the hunger-strike of the Vaukavysk businessman Mikola Autukhovich, his employees gathered at *Nika-trans* Company. Eight of them decided to join the hunger-strike. All of them are veterans of the war in Afghanistan. According to Autukhovich, the hunger-strike could draw attention not only to the problems of entrepreneurs in Vaukavysk, but also to the situation of small business in the country.

**24 March** was the tenth day of hunger-strike of the businessman Mikola Autukhovich in Vaukavysk. 11 more people joined him. Representatives of the hunger-strikers applied to the presidential administration with a letter to Aliaksandr Lukashenka, signed by 75 persons. In this letter they asked him to discriminate in their case. However, the letter wasn't accepted. The duty officer familiarized with it, but said the presidential administration wouldn't interfere with court affairs.

**On 25 March** it became known the enterprise of heating systems didn't prolong the contract to its leading lawyer Aliaksei Haurutsikau, leader of Vitebsk city organization of Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (*Hramada*). He said it was a punishment for his participation in the parliamentary election. The enterprise didn't prolong the contract to his wife either.

**On 25 March** in Baranavichy the leader of the local entrepreneurs Mikola Charnavus was fined 240 000 rubles for alleged organization of the unauthorized meeting of entrepreneurs during the strike of 1 March and activity of behalf of unregistered organization.

**On 29 March** more people joined the hunger-strike of protest in Vaukavysk. As a result the number of hunger-strikers reached 25 persons. The majority of them were drivers of *Nika-trans* enterprise. Two veterans of the war in Afghanistan joined them. In the morning they brought the statements about their hun-



ger-strike to Vaukavysk District Executive Committee. Later six more drivers and the special correspondent of *Birzha informacii* Sviatlana Kukharava did the same. This was the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Mikola Autukhovich's hunger-strike. He felt weak, but said he could hunger for quite a long time.

**On 1 April** hunger-strikers with Mikola Autukhovich, entrepreneur from Vaukavysk, at the head, were visited by the representative of the Minsk OSCE office Heidy Smith and veterans of the war in Afghanistan, who also came from Minsk. 32-year old Liudmila Parembaskaia, who worked as a manager at Autukhovich's enterprise, joined the hunger-strike. An ambulance came to the hunger-strikers. They explained they didn't call for it. The medics said they were sent to examine the people's health, but had to go away.

**On 4 April**, the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the hunger-strike of Vaukavysk entrepreneur Mikola Autukhovich, the taxi dispatchers Anzhela Matsias and Anzhela Shukava, the taxi drivers Ivan Zhuk and Ivan Matveichyk joined the hunger-strike together with Kanstantsin Ulanau from Minsk, who used to serve in Afghanistan together with Autukhovich. He found about the hunger-strike from *Narodnaia volia*. So, on 4 April the number of hunger-strikers increased to 35 persons.

**On 5 April**, the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of the hunger-strike of Vaukavysk entrepreneur Mikola Autukhovich, three more persons joined the hunger-strike. These were the taxi dispatchers Alena Litvin, Valiantsina Talashka and the citizen Andrei Sazon. The total number of hunger-strikers became 38 persons. Mikola Autukhovich said he felt weakness, dizziness and sometimes everything was going dark before his eyes. Nevertheless, none of the action participants agreed to hospitalization.

**On 6 April** the member of the Council of the public association *Perspective* Leanid Nevar returned from Minsk, where he took part in the negotiations of the parliamentary commission and representatives concerning the 18% value added tax on the goods that were imported from Russia to Belarus, to the town of Rechytsa. The chair of Rechytsa road police Aliaksandr Fiadak sent to him two rulings. According to one of them Mr Nevar was fined for driving his microbus with unfastened belts. The second ruling deprived him of the right to drive for 36 months because he allegedly didn't stop on the demand of the road police.

**On 7 April**, the 24<sup>th</sup> day of hunger-strike, Mikhola Autukhovich's temperature and blood pressure got lower. He lost 14 kilos. The ambulance doctor examined Autukhovich and said that irreversible processes could soon begin in his body. Nevertheless, the entrepreneur refused to stop hungering. Maryna

Khityrk, who used to work to work on probation at the dispatcher office of Autukhovich's firm, joined the hunger-strike and became its 39<sup>th</sup> participant.

**On 8 April**, the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the hunger-strike of Vaukavysk entrepreneur Mikola Autukhovich ambulance took away the taxi dispatcher Alena Litvin on suspicion that she had appendicitis. Some moves took place in the hunger-strikers' case – on 6 April the Supreme Court suspended the action of the penal sanctions (the fine of 267 million rubles) imposed on Mikhail Autukhovich. The General Prosecutor's office prepared a protest on the decision of the Supreme Economic Court to fine the *Nika-trans* firm. However, the protest wasn't signed, that's why people continued the hunger-strike.

**On 12 April**, the 29<sup>th</sup> day of hunger-strike Vaukavysk businessman Mikola Autukhovich felt quite bad. The state of the health of some other hunger-strikers deteriorated as well. The day before one more person joined – Anatol Dzeshka, former worker of tax inspection, and the number of hunger-strikers increased to 40.

**On 13 April** Judge Ruslana Sianko fined Valiantsin Lazarenkau, chair of Brest regional branch of Free Trade Union of Belarus about 200 US dollars for organization of the unauthorized assembly at Brest market on 145 March, during the strike of businessmen. Mr Lazarenkau tried to prove he had no relation to the organization of the assembly and was invited by the businessmen. According to him some officials also took part in the assembly, but none of them were punished.

**On 15 April** Vaukavysk hunger-strikers – the businessman Mikola Autukhovich who hungered for 31 days, the employees of his firm and their supporters decided to stop their protest. The authorities did not wholly grant the demands of the strikers. Nevertheless, the action participants said it was their victory – the cars owned by *Nika-trans* could again be used as taxis. On the other hand, the fine awarded to the *Nika-trans* company for violation in the accountancy (more than 440 million rubles), wasn't abolished. It was imposed by the local tax inspection and upheld by the Supreme Economic Court. Also, the Taxation Ministry adopted a regulation saying the company didn't pay taxes for the money which the *Nika-trans* taxi drivers received and handed over to Mr Autukhovich during 2003 and 2004. This tax together with the fine (and the penalty for its non-payment) amount to more than 1 813 million rubles.

**On 18 April** Vitsebsk Regional Economic Court ruled to confiscate 9 000 copies of the book *Occasional President* in favor of the state from the Vitsebsk businessman Barys Elkin who had transported these books in his own car from Smolensk and was detained by the traffic police on route. A month before

the economic court considered the police claims that the transportation papers did not indicate the correct number of the copies of the book. After these claims were refuted by Barys Elkin and his legal consultant Hary Pahaniaila, the court case was closed. On 18 April the court spent the whole day hearing the case against Barys Elkin. The accusations voiced by the department head Viktor Prapakovich were based on the businessman's alleged violation of the Convention on international transportation of freight, because the transportation papers did not meet the required standards. According to Mr Elkin, it is very indicative that during the detention on 8 October last year the police did not notice any discrepancies in the documents. Nonetheless, the economic court chaired by Judge Liudmila Ivanova found Barys Elkin guilty of the law, ruling that the books be confiscated.

**On 16 May** the term given to the Free Trade Union of Belarus for leaving the office it rented came to an end. The residential maintenance company insisted on eviction quoting payment arrears and the lease term expiry. The Trade Union leaders refuted these allegations. The residential maintenance company refused to comment on the situation and Henadz Bykau, the leader of the Free Trade Union, gave the following commentary: 'The housing company cannot alone make such decisions. We've been there for 11 years and so far have had not problems. This is how all organizations beyond control of the authorities are shutting down. The authorities themselves pushing us away from economic and social issues, making us get involved in politics.'

**On 16 May** it became known that Aliaksandr Aleinik, director of Homel Regional Area Studies Museum, signed the order for dismissing the activist of the social movement *Razam!* (Together!), the museum employee Maryia Bahdanovich. The activist believes that the dismissal is politically motivated. The following reason explaining the dismissal was provided by Aleh Razhkou, the director of the Area Studies museum: 'She did not execute the instructions accurately. She was engrossed in public activity. She used to commit parts of her working day to her public work. And before she stopped doing that, she had received several admonitions.' Maryia Bahdanovich commented: 'The political motivation of the dismissal is obvious. The employer did not keep it secret. When I came to the museum director, knowing that there would be a final order, his first question was: 'Will you refuse from your activities?' I said: 'No!' I do not think I am guilty. I am against agreeing with the authorities, because today my employer will request my agreement, tomorrow they will invite me to the city executive committee and say: fall in line, or you'll find no job anywhere.' Ms Bahdanovich said that she faced problems after the official demonstration in commemoration of the October revolution. Then a group of the city residents, including Ms Bahdanovich, took to streets with the slogan *Down with Despotism!*, reported *Narodnaia volia*. On the day when the newspaper

was issued, the vice-head of the culture department Lilia Bulanava phoned to the museum. Bahdanovich: 'She reminded me that I work in a state institution, where there is a state ideology. This was an official warning. Obviously, then they did not want to fire but scare me.' Last year Maria Bahdanovich and the deputy of Homel City Deputy Soviet Iury Hlushakou, also a museum employee, requested permission for a rally against the rising housing payments, fee-based health service, and the obligatory employment of university graduates in Chernobyl-affected areas. After the city executive committee first allowed and then banned the rally, Ms Bahdanovich and her associates took the ban to court. That's when the museum administration started to issue warnings and admonitions to Maryia Bahdanovich and deputy Hlushakou.

**On 18 May**, after a three-week hunger-strike, medics directed the resident of Kalinkavichy, liquidator of the consequences of Chernobyl accident Vasil Siliverst to a sanatorium. Mr Siliverst was hungering to make the authorities confess his illnesses were connected to the work in Chernobyl zone.

**On 25 May** at the sitting of the executive committee of the International federation of steelworkers in Vienna it was decided to exclude from this organization the Belarusian national trade union of the car and agricultural engineering. Among the reasons for it there were mentioned the deviation from the democratic principles, illegal deprivation of the former chair Aliaksandr Bukhvostau of his seat and complete loyalty to the Belarusian authorities. Let us remind that in 2004 Aliaksandr Bukhvostau was removed from the seat of the trade-union's chair by the extraordinary congress that was gathered on the initiative of the authorities and the leadership of the official Federation of the Trade Unions of Belarus. The part of the workers who disagreed with such decision established the independent trade union of car and agricultural engineering and elected Aliaksandr Bukhvostau its chair. The authorities started to pressurize them, which turned the attention of the International Federation of Steelworkers, as well as the way Bukhvostau was removed from his position. Mr Bukhvostau is convinced that the decision to exclude the official trade union from the international organization was quite logical. According to him, only some representatives of Russia were against it.

**On 26 May** the congress of the International Federation of Steelworkers adopted the resolution concerning violations of workers' rights in Belarus, expressed there its protest against harassment of independent trade unions and individuals, the non-execution of the international undertakings by the Belarusian authorities and demanded from them urgent correction of the present situation. Representatives of 200 trade unions from 100 countries of the world took part in the congress. Similar resolutions were adopted concerning three more countries – Columbia, Nepal and Paraguay.

**On 27 May** it became known that the family business of Aleh Tychyna, chair of the local entrepreneurs' movement, was liquidated. 'Today the authorities have sent to me the documents according to which we were couldn't rent land any longer. Haven't found any other means to stop my activity, the chair of Lepel City Executive Committee Piatro Shykshnian closed two shops owned by my wife Zinaida Tychyna. I consider it as harassment. The regime can't find other means except for making people redundant, when they can't earn their living.' According to Aleh Tychyna, the liquidation of his family business won't influence his political position.

**On 3 June** Homel Tsentralny Borough Court considered the suit of the deputy of Homel City Deputy Soviet Iury Hlushakou against the direction of the regional ethnographic museum. Mr Hlushakou asked to annul three rebukes and one admonition that were issued to him by the museum administration. At the court he explained he had such troubles primarily because of his public and political activity, whereas Mr Aleinik, the museum director, tried to prove Iury Hlushakou was regularly late for the work and drew several workers as witnesses. As a result it was found that one of the rebukes was issued because Mr Hlushakou was late for 1,5 minutes (!). Judge Viktar Kazachok said the verdict on the case would be pronounced on 6 June.

**On 6 June** the judge of Homel Tsentralny Borough Court Viktar Kazachok left in force the three rebukes and one admonition that were issued to Iury Hlushakou by the local ethnographic museum. He took the side of the museum director and didn't abolish even the rebuke that was issued for 1,5-minute lateness.

**On 7 June** the Ministry of Health revoked the license of the largest private medical center *Ecomedservice* as a result of its complex check-up. According to the center, this decision was taken because some medics didn't have the supreme category in their specialities. However, the administration of *Ecomedservice* hoped to reach an agreement with the ministry. It's worth mentioning that at the council on reform of the health care system A.Lukashenka stated that medicine must be accessible to everyone. After this the State Control Committee turned its attention to a number of large medical centers – *Ecomedservice*, *Nordin* and *Lode*. Each of these centers received different pretenions from the committee's workers.

**On 8 June** the leaders of the entrepreneurs' movement of Minsk, Vitsebsk, Brest, Baranavichy, Rechytsa and other towns and cities gathered for a council in Minsk. According to the order of A.Lukashenka, on 1 July the transitional period for small business will be order and entrepreneurs would have to start paying the 18% value added tax for the goods they imported from Russia.

According to the council participants half of entrepreneurs would have to stop their activity in this case, that's why they decided to again apply to Lukashenka and his subordinates and ask them to abolish the tax. On the other hand, the council participants stated that since the meeting with Lukashenka in March there had been no improvement in this direction.

**On 10 June** the Ministry of Health agreed to reconsider the medical history of the liquidation of the consequences of Chernobyl accident Vasil Siliverst. It happened as a result of the hunger-strike that lasted for more than three weeks and the protest letters he directed to the authorities, demanding from them to confess the connection between his illnesses and participation in liquidation of the consequences of Chernobyl accident. The first vice-minister Viktor Kalbanau sent a letter to Mr Siliverst, informing him the repeated consideration of his medical case by the National expert soviet would take place after examination of his thyroid and other ill organs.

**In the morning of 16 June** the workers of the department of technological bundling of Polatsk building trust #22 didn't come to work. They gathered near the building of the department, demanding to increase their wages and improve the conditions of work. According to the workers, they received 115 – 180 000 rubles a month, which wasn't enough even for satisfying the ultimate needs. They stood silently for about an hour. Then the chair of the department Leanid But-Husaim went out. He said he understood the workers' moods, but asked them to start working, promising the trust administration would come for negotiations within two-day term. The workers obeyed, but warned they would start termless strike in the case their demands weren't satisfied.

**On 22 June** the direction of the Belarusian metallurgical works fired the vice-chair of one of the workshops Valery Rybchanka, chair of Zhlobin district organization of the Party of Communists of Belarus. According to the order, signed by the alternate director general Viktor Matachkin, he was fired for systematic non-execution of his duties without a good excuse. According to Mr Rybchanka, the plant administration started issuing to him rebukes for allegedly low-grade repairs of equipment in autumn 2004, when he didn't refuse from running for the parliament despite the administration demands.

**On 29 June** Homel Tsentralny Borough Court satisfied the suit of the deputy of Homel City Deputy Soviet Iury Hlushakou to the direction of the regional ethnographic museum. Judge Siarhei Shytsikau abolished the admonition that had been issued to Hlushakou by the museum director Aliaksandr Aleinik for 'neglect of working relations'.

**On 30 June** the license of the private medical center *Nordin* was liquidated

for the reasons that also concerned *Ecomedservice*. The assistant minister of health Aleh Matusevich stated the reason was gross violation of the conditions of medical activity and incompatibility with presidential decree #17 about licensed activity. Besides, the State Control Committee was preparing financial sanctions against the medical center. Before this the Ministry of Health also annulled the license to the private company *Ecomedservice* because of the insufficient qualification of some of its doctors. The representative of *Ecomedservice* Natallia Kramniova said the center's employees didn't believe it: 'It can be hardly connected with the quality of the medical service, because in the state institutions they really leave much to be desired'. We should remind that during his speech to the Chamber of Representatives the Minister of Health Liudmila Pastaialkina said the ministry was beginning to establish the net of the state medical center with paid services.

**On 12 July** the privately-owned medical center *Nordin* filed with the Supreme Economic Court of Belarus a suit against the Ministry of Health. The company's leadership requested that the Ministry's decision to annul the license be cancelled. The formal reason for the cancellation of the license was that some specialists did not have the required skills. For similar reasons the Ministry of Health sued another company - *Ecomedservice*. The leaders of the business structures called these events an attack launched by the authorities against the non-state medical sector with a view to redistributing the property.

**On 15 July** Homel Tsentralny Borough Court started to hear two cases filed by Maryia Bahdanovich, a *Razam!* public movement activist, against the administration of the regional studies museum regarding punishment and reinstatement in employment. A junior scientist of the museum, Ms Bahdanovich was fired in June after a third admonition. The museum representative Valery Damaskanau, who appeared in court, did not agree to recognize the demands of Maryia Bahdanovich regarding reinstatement in employment. He also refused to acknowledge the political motivation of the dismissal decision. The judge Zhana Andreichyk decided to continue the hearings in several days.

**On 22 July** the Supreme Economic Court did not grant the suit filed by the private medical center *Nordin* against the Ministry of Health. They asked the court to find invalid the decision of the ministry to annul the license. *Nordin* was shut down. Yet another privately-owned center *Ecomedservice* that was awaiting a court ruling in the similar case said that they hardly hoped for the good outcome of the case. Simultaneously, yet another private company *Optimed* was defending its right to health provision activity in the Supreme Court. The Ministry of Health deprived it of the license on the grounds of the same claims to the level of qualification of the personnel as with *Ecomed-*

*service* and *Nordin*. The leader of the Belarusian Union of Businessmen Aliaksandr Patupa said that this was a deliberate attack of the authorities on the private business.

**On 28 July** the Supreme Economic Court did not grant the suit filed by the private medical center *Ecomedservice-invest* against the Ministry of Health. The court found the Ministry's actions legal and *Ecomedservice-invest* ceased its operations. The decision of the Ministry of Health took effect immediately after the suit consideration was completed. The center employed about 200 people, 140 of them are medical assistants and technical personnel. Specialists in the field of business said that the cancellation of the licenses held by such large health centers as *Ecomedservice* was a campaign planned by the authorities against the private medical institutions and private enterprise in whole.

**On 29 July** in Homel Tsentralny Borough Court the governing board of the regional studies museum signed a settlement with Maryia Bahdanovich, a *Razam* public movement activist and a former employee of the museum. The governing board of the Homel Regional Studies Museum agreed to reimburse two months of forced leave of absence to Maryia Bahdanovich, who had been dismissed by the Museum. Maryia Bahdanovich appealed in court against the admonition and dismissal order by the museum head Aliaksandr Aleinik.

**Since 1 August** individual businessmen started working by new requirements. The new rules were launched by A.Lukashenka. The necessity for the decision was conditioned by the fact that from 1 January Belarus adopted a new VAT taxation principle in trading with Russia – according to the country of consignment. The Belarusian authorities decided to apply the changes to businessmen selling Russian goods. The rules went into effect on 1 August. According to the traders' general opinion, the new requirements are worse than the former ones, for there was no real compensation.

**On 9 August** Minsk City Economic Court decided to evict the Free Trade Union of Belarus from the rented premises. Minsk Partyzanski Borough Housing Economy filed the eviction suit to Minsk City Economic Court. The trial took place in absence of the FTUB leaders and became known to them only several days later. The court secretary Alena Hladkova said the subpoenas for the trial was directed to the legal address of the trade union, but all of them returned back and as a result the case was considered in absentia of the defendant. The housing economy failed to present any concrete explanations concerning the reasons for the eviction. The FTUB chair Henadz Bykau stated he considered the claims of the officials and the court unfair and was going to complain to the supreme instances.



**On 19 August** under a decree of Ministry of Labor and Social Protection a new Council for the Development of Labor Legislation was created. Experts say that Minsk now has a serious conflict with the International Labor Organization (ILO). According to the ILO case #20/90, Belarus violates its labor legislation and neglects the ILO Convention regulations, ratified by the country. The situation is to be controlled by the National Soviet for Labor and Social Matters, but democratic trade unions were not allowed to take part in its work. In 2004 a special ILO commission worked in Belarus and recommended the Belarusian authorities to correct the mistake. Still, the administration of the Congress of Democratic Trade Unions is not going to boycott the Soviet's work. As A.Iarashuk, head of the Congress, said, 'the question of our full rehabilitation as a professional trade union centre in the Council will remain topical for a long time. Though, we have been given a chance. And we must use it for the sake of our organization.'

**On 14 September** in Hrodna there started the trial of the correspondent of the non-state newspaper *Salidarnasts* Ivan Roman. He was accused of activity on behalf of unregistered trade-union. The administrative case against Mr Roman was brought on the appeal of the main guard of the plant of car aggregates Uladzimir Malatkou. According to Malatkou, on 23 August Roman handed to workers copies of the bulletin of the unregistered trade union of radio-electronics, car engineering and metalworking. Ivan Roman objected that he had only copies of the newspaper *Salidarnasts* and was a member of the trade union of radio-electronic industry, whereas the trade union Mr Malatkou mentioned was liquidated long ago. A representative of Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs asked the judge Natallia Kozel to delay the trial because of the absence of one of the witnesses, a guard of the plant. As a result, the trial was postponed to 20 September.

**On 15 September** it became known that *Belaruski chas*, the newspaper of the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus, got the right to use the word Belaruski (Belarusian) in its name. This right was given to it by Lukashenka's decree #425. According to this decree, the right to leave the words 'Belarusian' and 'national' was also given to the magazines *Vestnik Assotiacii belorussskikh bankov*, *Vestnik Assotiacii belorussskikh bankov*. *Bankovskoe delo* and a number of commercial and non-commercial institutions and organizations (all in all, 11 juridical bodies).

**On 16 September** in Mahiliou the police detained the activists of *Zubr* Uladzislau Barodka and Iauhen Suvorau for handing out fly-sheets with information about disappearances of public activists in Belarus and political imprisonments. The detainees were taken to Mahiliou Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. A number of non-state editions, such as *Beloruskaya delovaya*

*gazeta*, *Belorusskiy rynek* and *Nacionalnaya ekonomicheskaya gazeta* had to change their names and undergo re-registration. Now they are called *BDG.Delovaya gazeta*, *Belorusy i rynek* and *Ekonomicheskaya gazeta* accordingly.

**On 20 September** in Hrodna the public activist Ivan Roman was tried. During the proceedings witnesses representing two sides were listened to, as well as the explanations provided by I.Roman himself. Mr Roman was accused of acting on behalf of unregistered organization. Judge Kozel postponed the announcement of the verdict to 27 September.

**On 20 September** the route cab drivers of Brest went on a hunger-strike. The reason for the hunger-strike was the actions by the taxation agency that makes some of the Brest businessmen with a license to passenger transportation pay a Republican fee for using cars brought to the Republic of Belarus for commercial purposes. This fee was established on the basis of decree #140 issued by Aliaksandr Lukashenka in April, however the taxation agencies believe that this fee also concerns those businessmen that brought their cars from abroad much earlier. As a result, the owners of the cabs were obliged to pay an additional fee of 25 to 50 million rubles. Such requirements were forwarded only to a part of the cab owners who did not manage to persuade neither the taxation authorities nor the economic court that the law cannot be retroactive. The colleagues of these businessmen believed this Republic fee would be applied to all other cab owners and not only in Brest. That's why the businesswoman Liubou Rezanovich referred to the hunger-strike as an enforced step: 'Now we refuse from food, in two or three weeks if the authorities do not pay attention we will refuse from water. We will be dying from hunger because we do not have so much money. We want the decree to be treated as it should be. We want nothing more from the authorities. We do not demand something else.'

**On 20 September** Vaukavysk-based businessman Mikalai Autukhovich started a hunger-strike that is the third one in the past two years. He claimed that the taxation agency and local authorities had launched another offensive against his business. The wife of the businessman, who is a co-founder of the *Nika-Trans*, was served a notice that said she was being called to account as a suspect in the criminal case of avoiding large tax payments. Iury Liavonau, the company director, was another suspect in the case. The property of both businessmen was attached. The authorities also threatened to confiscate all property in the firm. What the investigators viewed as tax evasion was that the company provided to the businessman Autukhovich its drivers so they could work on his cabs. The investigators stated that the taxi services were provided by the company rather than the entrepreneur and the company didn't have a

license to passenger transportation, which meant it had to pay to the state the receipts gained during its activity from spring 2003 to autumn 2004.

**On 28 September** ended the trial of Ivan Roman, Hrodna activist of the trade-union of radio-electronic industry. Mr Roman was charged with activity on behalf of unregistered organization. The judge Kozel ignored the presented evidence that the organization was registered by the Ministry of Justice as a national trade union and ruled to fine him 1 275 000 rubles. 'Then it becomes unclear for me why do we need such large staff of the Ministry of Justice in the case a judge issues a verdict that crosses its decisions', commented Ivan Roman.

**On 29 September** the presidium of the Supreme Economic Court canceled the rulings taken by all previous courts and sent the case of the Vaukavysk businessman Mikalai Autukhovich for reconsideration. Because of this decision Mikalai Autukhovich who had been on a protest hunger-strike for 9 days said he would stop the hunger-strike. He viewed the ruling taken by the Supreme Economic Court with Viktor Kamiankou at the head as a victory.

**On 5 October** the Belarusian Congress of democratic trade unions expressed its protest against Aliaksandr Lukashenka's statements concerning independent trade unions. In his speech to the Federation of trade unions of Belarus the president accused the leaders of independent trade unions of cheap politics and stated that they demanded the introduction of economic sanctions against their own country. Lukashenka ordered to the director of the general concern *Belnaftakhim* to finish with the independent trade-union organizations in this sphere. The vice-chair of the congress Mikalai Kanakh stated the congress considered such statements of the head of the state as a call to liquidation of the independent trade union movement.

**On 10 October** Minsk City Economic Court deprived the Free Trade Union of Belarus of the right to rent the office in Zakharau St 24 in Minsk and ordered it to leave its headquarters. The alleged reason was the non-timely payment of rent. The leader of the trade union Henadz Bykau also stated that workers of the Ministry of Justice also warned him they intended to discuss some questions with the trade union. Mr Bykau believes they meant the legal address (of which the organization was deprived as a result of the eviction). The absence of legal address can be viewed as a reason for liquidation of organization in Belarus.

**On 11 October** Baranavichy City Court abolished the decision of the administrative commission of Baranavichy City Executive Committee to punish the leader of the local entrepreneurs Mikalai Charnavus for distribution of fly-

sheets. In August the police composed on Mr Charnavus a report of administrative violation for distribution of printed production that contained no data-line. The police considered as such production the officially printed flyers of the United Civil Party. At the trial Mr Charnavus managed to prove that he hadn't violated any laws by distribution of these flyers. It was also found that the policemen fabricated the case: the report was composed on 18 August and the flyers were distributed on 20 August. This became the reason for the abolishment of the administrative commission's decision.

**On 12 October** the chair of the Belarusian trade union of radio-electronic industry Henadz Fiadynich had to write an explanatory note concerning the article that was published on 8 August 2005 in #22 of *Express-info* newspaper. The General Prosecutor's Office stated there was too much negative information in the article. The trade union leader was summonsed for a talk and asked about the circulation of the newspaper, the place of its printing and the way of distribution. The worker of the prosecutor's office Sviatlana Hancharova stated that it wasn't a good idea to place 'negative information about the social and economical situation in the country' in the trade union newspaper. Mr Fiadynich answered that information must be true first of all and emphasized that the newspaper was issued and distributed in strict conformity with the legal requirements.

**On 13 October** the National Prosecutor's Office of Belarus took explanations from the leader of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions Aliaksandr Iarashuk because of his statement regarding the speech by Aliaksandr Lukashenka at the September congress of the Federation of the Trade Unions. Aliaksandr Iarashuk said: 'I was told that I was distributing information that was not published in the official media, regarding the instructions issued by Lukashenka during his 20 September speech at the FPB Congress to the chair of *Belnaftakhim* Branislau Sivy and the chair of FPB Leanid Kozik to stop the independent trade union movement. They wanted to know where I obtained this information and whether I can prove it.'

**On 19 October** the Belarusian Congress of democratic trade unions received an unexpected proposal of Minsk City Executive Committee concerning the protest action the congress intended to hold in Banhalor Square of Minsk on 22 October. The capital's authorities demanded from BCDTU to conclude agreements with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, ambulance, etc. – all in all, six subjects – and bring the paybills to Minsk CEC in order to receive the permission for the action. 'This meets neither commons sense, nor legislation', commented BCDTU chair Aliaksandr Iarashuk.

**On 20 October** the Council of the Belarusian Congress of democratic trade

unions (BCDTU) considered the question about the possibility to hold its 6<sup>th</sup> assembly abroad, because all attempts to rent a room for it in Belarus brought no results. The Council also decided to abstain from holding of the protest action in Banhalor Square of Minsk on 22 September, because the groundlessness and illegality of the financial demands of Minsk City Executive Committee.

**On 26 October** the member of the United Civil Party Siarhei Panamarou who for some years was running a small business in Kletsk, stated he was pressurized for political reasons. The matter is that in 2002 Kletsk District Executive Committee allowed him to rent one of the buildings of a former military unit with the subsequent right of purchase. The owner paid money for the premise, but the authorities did not register it as his property. Then Kletsk DEC decided to evict him from the purchased premises with the assistance of the economic court. Mr Panamarou, his wife and son are members of the United Civil Party. The DEC denies any connection between the political activity of the businessman and the confiscation of the room.

**On 3 November** Mahiliou Leninski Borough Court turned up the suit for rehabilitation at work, filed by Iury Darashenka, former worker of Mahiliou metallurgical plant, chair of a unit of the independent trade union of radio-electronic industry. The plaintiff was fired in the end of August for 'truancy and systematic non-execution of the working duties'. He didn't take the blame, said he was fired for trade-union activity and had the medical certificate proving he was ill the days he didn't come to work. It's worth mentioning that during his chairmanship the number of the members of his unit doubled. In summer he also accused the plant director Leanid Markau in misuse of office and expressed his opinion in the informational edition *Express-info* and application to Piatro Miklashevich, prosecutor general of the Republic of Belarus. However, the court ignored the plaintiff's arguments and decided the case in favor of the defendant. According to the judge Halina Kuzhaleva, the suit couldn't be satisfied because the plaintiff applied for rehabilitation at work later than a month since his firing.

**On 15 November** it became known that in Zaslauié the leader of the Independent trade union of the joint-stock company *Zaslauiéburvod* Uladzimir Feaktystau was dismissed. As Uladzimir admitted, the executive blamed him in unsuitability for the occupation. He worked for *Zaslauiéburvod* as the chief of hydro geological department. His seniority comprised 34 years. Mr Feaktystau refused the reason concerning unsuitability for the occupation and claimed that the reason was closely related to his activities as a trade union leader. 'They are hounding out, put pressure on the trade union, ask friends on the trade union not to take part in. I think that the executive committee bears rela-

tion to the situation. I should think so! The trade union is the only organization of Independent Trade unions in Zaslauiе. How is it possible to bear all these on the eve of the elections!?' According to his words, that was not the first attempt of prosecution. Only this year he was blamed for breach of labor discipline, enlargement of the trade union news-paper *Salidarnasts* and an attempt was made to dismiss him. The leadership of the republican organization of the Independent Trade Union said the administration actions were a part of the struggle of the Belarusian authorities against democratic independent trade unions.

**On 25 November** in Minsk several hundred workers of Minsk Motor- and Bicycle Plant held an action of protest near the check-point. They stopped the traffic at Partyzanski Avenue for 1,5 hours. The workers emphasized the non-political nature of their action. All in all about 600 persons (about 20% of the total number of workers) took part in it. 150 of them stood on the carriage way of the avenue, chanting 'Give Us Our Wage!'

**On 2 December** Hrodna Regional Court didn't grant the complaint of Hrodna activist Ivan Roman against the decision of Hrodna Leninski Borough Court by the terms of which he was found guilty in acting on behalf of unregistered organization for distribution of *Shaber*, bulletin of an independent trade union. This case is called 'trial on delation', as it started on the written statement filed by the head of the guard of Hrodna Car Aggregates Plant. Ivan Roman didn't take the blame and also complained to the Supreme Court of Belarus.

**On 5 December** bus drivers of Homel went out into Lenin St. to protest against the low wages and difficult working conditions. On the eve of the action one of the drivers, Aliaksandr Ieusiaichuk, was summonsed to the office of the director of the bus depot. The chair of Homel Savetski Borough Board of Internal Affairs and an unknown person in plain clothes waited for him there. They started to threaten him with firing and other punishments in the case he would take part in the action. The picket lasted for an hour and ended with signing a collective complaint to the State Control Committee. After the action the harassment of its participants started. One by one, drivers were called to the office of the director of the bus depot and psychologically pressurized. For instance, the director said to the activist of Belarusian People's Front Andrei Baranau that KGB prepared a case against him for organization of unauthorized meeting and giving false information to RFE/RL.

**On 5 December** the unemployed Uladzimir Asipenka, the secretary of *Nika-trans* enterprise Liudmila Parembaskaia, the businessman Anatol Dzeshka and the drivers Ivan Ianushkevich, Mikhail Semiarych and Dzmitry Liankevich who drive the cars of businessman Autukhovich stopped the hunger-strike they

kept since 14 November. They collected 377 signatures of Vaukavysk citizens under the appeal to the president for changing the restraint to Autukhovich and submitted it to the presidential administration.

**On 9 December** it became known the trade union unit of the enterprise *Lios* in Baran (Orsha district) received the official letter from the enterprise director with reference to presidential order, according to which they had either to leave the building or conclude the rent agreement with the Ministry of Communications. Vasil Leuchankau said: 'To my mind, it wasn't the director's initiative, but pressurization from the above. We have been situated here for more than 12 years and have faced terrible pressurization and intimidation during the last 1,5 years. Some workers were told to leave the trade union for the fear of firing.' Mr Leuchankau also stated the deprivation of the office contradicted to the collective agreement between the trade union and the employer. However, the administration of the enterprise stated everything was legal: 'In 2002 there was issued a presidential decree. We didn't take it into consideration when concluding the agreement between the employer and the trade unions, but then received an explanation related to it,' said the assistant director Liubou Isakovich. According to her, the presidential documents don't let free renting of the factory's room to any organizations except for members of the official Federation of Trade Unions.

**On 14 December** the trade union of radio-electronic industry made a public statement, demanding to stop intimidation and insinuations against independent trade unions and their leaders and timely start the implementation of the recommendations of International Labor Organization on restoring the liberty of associations in the Republic of Belarus. They also said the adopted amendments to the Criminal Code had no relation to the right of trade unions to apply to ILO with complaints against violation of trade union rights in Belarus. Henadz Fiadynich, the leader of the trade union of radio-electronic industry, said the state regularly violated the rights of trade unions and workers: 'The authorities don't solve anything and, on the contrary, do everything possible to liquidate independent trade union movement. In conformity with the law, we apply to the International Labor Organization. High-level lawyers come from there and find that all our complaints are confirmed. ILO has given the same recommendations for several years already.'

**On 16 December** in Kalinkavichy District Court the Chernobyl eliminator Vasil Siliverst, who has a second degree disability, declared a hunger-strike because the court left his application without consideration. 'Because Kalinkavichy court had been considering my case for the fourth month already and there had been no headway – I was forced to declare a hunger-strike. Judge Sarnauskaia said to me - go ahead!' Mr Siliverst commented on his decision.

During the hearings in court Vasil Siliverst attempted to have the authorities recognize the link between his diseases and disability as caused by his taking part in the elimination of the Chernobyl disaster. He had to file applications with court. The earlier appeals sent to the Ministry of Health, the National Inter-Departmental Expert Council and other agencies did not yield any positive results. Judge Sviatlana Sarnauskaia, who heard the case, said that the refusal of the expert council to connect the disability with the participation in the elimination of the Chernobyl disaster aftermath should be considered in the District Court of Minsk, where the National inter-departmental expert council was located.

**On 19 December** the organization of the Free trade union of the open joint-stock company *Polatsk Glas Fiber* received the official warning from Polatsk City Executive Committee for operating without a legal address, which the organization had lost after the eviction from the office. The trade-union organization was established in April 1999 and had an office at the administrative building of the enterprise. In the end of October 2005 the direction of *Polatsk Glass Fiber* refused to prolong the rent agreement. As a result the organization lost its office and legal address.

**On 21 December** Minsk Regional Economic Court turned up the complaint of the Kletsk entrepreneur, participant of the democratic movement Siarhei Panamarou against the ruling of the local authorities to deprive him of the woodworking workshop. At the trial Mr Panamarou stated he opened a workshop in the building Kletsk authorities gave to him three years ago. Mr Panamarou paid the money for the building, but the authorities didn't let him register it as his property. Then they even decided to take the building away and destroy his business. According to Panamarou, the reason was in his political activity and the authorities wanted to get his family move out of Kletsk district. By the way, in 2004 Panamarou's wife ran for the parliament as a representative of the opposition.

**On 22 December** it became known the administration of Mahiliou Car Plant increased the harassment of the local branch of the independent trade union of radio engineering. The activists of the trade union stated they were summonsed to heads of the workshops and told about the advantages of joining the official trade union. Mr Sukhanau, vice-chair of the plant on ideology issued a written order to representatives of the administration to 'conduct explanatory work for drawing workers to the office trade union' and attached to them a list of workers that included members of the independent trade union. At first representatives of the administration talked of advantages and then proceeded to intimidation saying those who refused to join the official trade union wouldn't be transferred to work in Belarusian Car Plant to which Mahiliou



Car Plant was subordinated. Mr Sukhanau also summonsed Aliaksandr Karytkin, chair of the plant's branch of the independent trade union. Karytkin characterized the actions of the administration as violation of the workers' rights. 74 workers signed the appeal to Aliaksandr Lukashenka to inform him about the situation at the enterprise.

**On 24 December** the Belarusian Union of Entrepreneurs spread the information that in 2005 Belarus lost 30 000 businessmen – this is almost one fifth of the overall number at the start of the year. Yet another 20 000 small businessmen were being liquidated. Now Belarus has around 186 000 registered petty businessmen, including those that have ceased their operations and are being liquidated. According to the vice-chair of the Belarusian Union of Businessmen Ryhor Rylkou, they will continue to go out of business and the list of items allowed to be sold on a market can be substantially limited. Iryna Naidovich, a reviewer of *Indyvidualny praprymalnik* newspaper, said that the number of petty businessmen has not been increasing for quite a while now, which was noted even by the Ministry of Economy: 'The number of businessmen is the same as when the fourth decree was adopted. They do not even expect any further growth and recommend that the trading businessmen transfer into the service sector or become incorporated,' she said.

## 10. Freedom of conscience

**On 13 January** the heads of a number of protestant denominations of Belarus submitted to the head of the state, the government and the education ministry letters of protest against 'distribution of false information that foments religious enmity' in the schoolbook *Fundamentals of vital security*. They demanded to exclude the book from the school curriculum. In its official response the Ministry of Education called the accusations groundless. The vice-head of the department of secondary education Valiantsina Maieuskaia said: 'The Committee on national and religions affairs considered their application as well: we didn't limit their rights in any respect. There's only one paragraph which says there are sects of Seven's day Adventists, the *Church of Our Lady, White Congregation*, Jehovah's Witnesses and the methods of their work are similar. What can be insulting there? It is reference information about them. When we reissue the book, we will come back to this issue and may write it in another way. But they are always dissatisfied. According to representatives of Protestant churches, this is not the first case when insulting information about them appears in schoolbooks – before that it was published in the books *Man*.

*Society. State and Man in the World of Culture.* Every time the authorities promised to correct the mistakes. The major presbyter of Minsk region Henadz Brudzki thusly commented on the situation: 'At first we were defamed in the textbook, but then we were told it was libel, but it wasn't aimed at us. They also promised us to correct it. We believed them, but with every reissue the material becomes even more libeling: only a dilettante can compare *White Congregation* to Baptists, or one could purposefully defame Baptists for good money. If all our contacts with the authorities end up with such come-offs, it can turn into religious chauvinism. We are to stop this religious war somehow.'

**On 23 January** the police and representatives of Minsk Maskouski Borough Executive Committee came to the place where the church *New Life* held its Sunday services. They demanded from the church leaders to show the state permission for such activity. The believers couldn't do it, because in December 2004 the chair of Minsk CEC Mikhail Paulau refused to register the church. Finally, the pastor Viachaslau Hancharenka and the church administrator Vasil Iurevich were invited to the office of Mikhail Kudzinou, the chair Minsk Maskouski Borough Board of Internal Affairs.

**On 26 January** the authorities of Brest-Kobryn Orthodox Eparchy didn't let believers of Ruzhany settlement to establish one more religious parish. The believers and the priest whom they invited were pressurized by the law machinery. More than 100 Orthodox believers of Ruzhany didn't go to the local St. Peter and Paul church, because they didn't trust the present priest Aliaksandr Sen. During the recent years several valuable icons disappeared from the temple. For a certain period of time gathered for masses in a usual flat, but in 2005 they decided establish one more Orthodox parish in Ruzhany. However, the authorities of Brest-Kobryn Eparchy didn't recognize this decision. Soon after it the believers and the priest Iaan Hrudnitski whom they invited faced with persecution from the side of the law machinery. The priest thinks it is made on the proposal of the present authorities of the eparchy. On 26 January Ruzhany District Court was to have considered the first administrative case against the citizens of Ruzhany, who were charged with organization of unauthorized service. However, the trial didn't start because the judge stated that the protocols that were filed by the police didn't meet the norms and the case couldn't be considered at court at all.

**On 3 February** Vasil Iurevich, one of the leaders of the Protestant church *New Life* was summonsed to Minsk Maskousky department of the Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES). There he was informed about the intention of the authorities to close the curacy in Sukharau suburb. The MES authorities explain this decision with the improper use of the cowshed that didn't meet the demands of the fire security. On the other hand, the believers say the state

fund refused to give them any other building. 'We wrote letters to all executive committees of the city, asking where we could conduct our statute activity, but all of them answered they had no room available,' said Vasil Iurevich. Ala Rabitsava, chair of the Committee on religious affairs of Minsk City Executive Committee, gave the following comments on it: 'Land pieces for erection of cult buildings can be issued only on the president's personal agreement. The same concerns passing of the buildings. It was them who created this situation. We didn't touch them when they were outside the city boundaries. Then the boundaries expanded and now we have one more headache.'

**On 10 March** the courts of Brest and Ruzhany considered two cases against the orthodox priest Iaan Hrudnitski. The cases considered the police reports that were composed for holding of unauthorized assembly of believers and religious actions at a funeral. Both cases took place in the town of Ruzhany, where the conflict between the local believers and the priests of the Peter and Paul's Orthodox Church was going on for about two years. A part of the believers refused to go to the church till receiving the explanations where were the valuable icons and other expensive things that used to be there. They gathered for prayers in a private house and invited from Brest the priest Iaan Hrudnitski. Brest Orthodox Eparchy refused to comment on the situation, referring to the fact the church affairs had nothing to do with the state ones and father Iaan was deprived of the right to hold liturgies. The courts didn't decide anything and requested additional information about the corpus delicti.

**On 22 March** Nadzeia Reutskaia, judge of Maskouski Borough Court of Minsk, fined Viachaslau Hancharenka, pastor of the church *New Life*, 720 000 thousand rubles. The court found the pastor guilty of illegally organizing on 23 January a gathering of believers, which took place in a former cow-shed. During the past six months the officials repeatedly fined the leadership of the community for divine services conducted in the former cow-shed. Despite this, believers continue to gather in the building every week and demand that the authorities allow them to reconstruct the cow-shed in Sukharau suburb, Minsk, so that the building could be suitable for services.

**On 6 April** the Council of the protestant community of the church *New Life* found from the official letter of Minsk City Executive Committee that Minsk CEC issued the second warning to the church. In the letter it is said that on 30 March the CEC received a copy of the ruling that was issued on Minsk Maskouski Borough Court on 22 March concerning the violation of part 1 of article #167 of the Code of Administrative Violations, committed by the church pastor Viachaslau Hancharenka. The court fined him 720 000 rubles 'for violation of the order organization of religious measures'. 'Because of this and being guided by article #37 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus' Minsk CEC warned the

religious community. Its members consider the warning as an attempt to intimidate them.

**On 20 April** the leadership of the Catholic Church in Belarus addressed the Belarusian authorities, requiring that they recover to them the Minsk Church of Saint Joseph and the Bernardine monastery. The building of the church now houses the Archive of the Scientific and Technical Documentation, and also the Archive of Literature and Art of Belarus. The building of the former monastery is occupied by the military commandant's office. The believers started saying prayers for recovery of the Catholic sacred places. Priest Antoni Klimantovich of the Virgin Mary Cathedral informed the believers of the church's initiative at the Sunday service. The same information was disseminated in other Minsk parishes. The vice-head of the Committee for Archives and Documentation Aliaksei Zabalotny commented on the situation in the following way: 'True, there is a desire to get back that building, but so far no decision has been taken to this effect. Obviously, such a decision cannot be taken by anyone, because we cannot get evicted into the street, we have nowhere to go. We have been in this building for long. Until we have a place to move, we surely won't give it up.' According to Mr Zabalotny, earlier there was a perspective that a separate building would be erected, where they could work. But because they have no money now, there is no hope that this can happen. It was also believed that the Archives would move to the present premises of the National Library after it moved to a new location. But, so far there were neither decision, nor money to do the repairs. In the best case, this can only happen in about five years. The military commandant's office didn't hurry to leave the monastery premises, either. The believers started saying prayers for recovery of the Catholic sacred places today. Older people were joined by the younger ones. Parishioners of different Minsk churches were praying outside the former church of St. Joseph, and the Bernardine monastery that were occupied by the Archives and the military. They intended to play there everyday. According to historic sources, the church and the monastery of the Bernardine order were founded in Minsk in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. They were part of the monastery complex, which, at various times, used to house a primary school, a philosophy school, and a library of 1500 volumes of unique literature. In 1863 the Bernardine monks supported the rebellion led by Kastus Kalinouski. After it was subdued, Muravyov the Hangman (the then governor of Belarus) ordered their forced eviction to Mahiliou, following which the monastery was closed. The church housed an Orthodox Church for some time. Since 1872 it has been converted into an archive, which function has been preserved to date.

**On 29 April** in Minsk there took place the joint prayer of representatives of more than 60 protestant churches from all regions of Belarus. About 2 000 persons took part in it. Protestants demanded from the authorities to immedi-

ately stop the pressurization of Minsk community *New Life*, register the church and let its believers pray in their prayer house without any obstacles. The reason for the prayer assembly became the constant pressurization of the pastor and the believers of the church by the local authorities. Vasil Iurevich, the pastor of the church, said: 'With the assistance of this action we want to show that the pressurization we are feeling now can soon touch other churches of Belarus. That's why we want to show to the authorities and all other people that were are united.' Several years ago the church *New Life* bought a cowshed from on the territory of Sukharava village and wanted to rebuild it into a prayer house. As a result, at the end of 2004 the state didn't reregister the church, the rebuilding was prohibited and now it is also demanded from them to leave the building as soon as possible. The church activists applied to believers of other protestant churches with the request to support them.

**On 24 May** the Commission for International Religious Freedoms of the US Congress (USCIRF) presented to the US leadership and the international community a traditional yearly report on the freedom of religious belief in the world. According to the document prepared by the commission, Belarus together with Cuba, Egypt and Nigeria are on the so-called *Watch List*, or a list of countries requiring close attention, because they do not do enough to provide for the right of religious belief. According to the commission's conclusion, the most difficult situation with the right of religious belief was observed in Uzbekistan.

**At 7 p.m. on 30 May** in Minsk the police detained five Catholics, who demanded from the authorities to return to the Catholic administration St. Joseph church and Bernardine monastery. The believers were taken to the police. The policemen composed on the detainees reports for unauthorized picketing and then released them. We should remind that the Catholics of Belarus officially applied to the country's authorities with the demand to return to them of the church and the monastery. At present the church is occupied by the Archive of scientific and technical documentation and the Archive of the literature and art of Belarus, and the monastery – by a military commandant's office and prosecutor's office. The believers started services at the stairs of these buildings with the aim to get the authorities return them.

**On 18 July** at the initiative of Minsk City Executive Committee Minsk City Court started to consider a case of the liquidation of the religious community of the Belarusian Evangelical Church headed by Pastor Ernest Sabila. The Belarusian Evangelical Church was registered by Minsk City Executive Committee in 1993. The Housing Code adopted in 1999 banned public organizations to have legal address in privately-owned apartments, and according to the law on religious organizations adopted in 2002 communities have the right to gath-

er only in non-residential buildings. The Belarusian Evangelical Church did not meet these demands. In court Ernest Sabila made an appeal for the proceedings to be conducted in Belarusian. Judge Ala Krapiuka explained that she did not have to speak Belarusian, and the minutes would also be kept in Russian. The pastor said that this was a matter of principle for him and demanded translation from the Russian language. The judge granted this appeal. The representatives of Minsk City Executive Committee unexpectedly informed the court that the officers of the department for religious affairs have a very good attitude to Ernest Sabila. She said that they had all tried to help and even asked the Union of Baptist Christians to provide a legal address to Sabila's community, but received a negative response. The official said they felt very sorry but the law had to be executed. The priest explained that the believers do not have the money needed to pay the rental fees. Then the judge asked the official to help the pastor. She advised him to appeal to the governmental agencies. Judge Ala Krapiuka gave a term of two months to perform the above procedures.

**On 2 August** news was received that in Orsha in St. Trinity Orthodox Church of Kutseinski monastery everybody was welcome to put their names down against 'Catholic expansion in Belarus' – against the construction of a second Catholic church in town in particular. According to the officials of the ideology department, Catholics provoked the conflict themselves by canvassing for the construction. Nobody knew where this list came from and where it was to go. Archpriest Mikalai (Vabishevich), who was responsible for Orsha Orthodox churches, also knew nothing about the initiative. According to him, it could have been provoked by the fact that in the same district *Zadniaprouie* Orsha Catholics decided to construct a new church. There are five Orthodox churches and one Catholic Church in Orsha. The construction of another Catholic church hasn't been approved by Orsha authorities yet, due to 'the necessity for a public opinion poll'. According to a representative of the local Catholic community Edvard Asviatsinski, believers have visited many people to carry out such a poll and hasten the solution of the problem. Having learned about the poll, the Orthodox believers started their own one. Orsha town officials said that both of them violated the law, but the fault rest basically with the Catholics, who didn't want to wait for the authorities to carry out the poll. According to a town executive committee representative Khamutouskaia, the accusation of the expansion should not be taken seriously, lest the problem turn into an open inter-confession conflict.

**On 15 August** Minsk City Geodetic Department declared that the usage of the land belonging to the Evangelic Church *New Life* was illegal. According to the community's administrator V. Iurevich, in late June Minsk Maskouski Borough Executive Committee denied the community's request to reregister it at 72, Kavaliouva St. 'In the second half of July we received a reply from vice-head

of Minsk City Executive Committee M.Piatrushyn. It said that the community's registration in this building was impossible, since it is neither religious nor office', said Mr Iurevich. According to him, the geodetic department informed the Church that the land was not meant for holding masses, but for cowshed service. 'According to Geodetic Department, the issue of the community's liquidation will be considered at the next meeting of Executive Committee', he added. At the same time, the Church sent appeals to the head of Executive Committee and Belarusian president requesting to prevent lawlessness. The community demands to let them reconstruct the cowshed into a tabernacle, hold masses on the land and stop the pressure from the police and officials from Ministry of Emergency Situations and Sanitary and Epidemiology Department.

**On 19 August** Minsk City Court ruled to liquidate the Christian Religious Congregation *Belarusian Evangelical Reformist Gathering*. Minsk City Executive Committee took the believers to court for failure to become reregistered. Ala Salauiova, judge of Minsk City Court, dealt with the church liquidation case for an hour. She read the documents that the Christian religious congregation *Belarusian Evangelical Reformist Gathering* registered in Ministry of Justice in 1992 was to have a legal address in non-residential premises according to the new law. In two years that passed since the law appeared the Calvinists didn't file any new documents for registration of new legal address with Minsk City Executive Committee. Pastor Lipen said in court that God's judgment is what matters to him. He called the liquidation case a politically motivated order from the authorities. The priest also said that he boycotted the new law and demanded that the Calvinists be restored their temples that historically belong to this denomination: 'We cannot accept this discriminatory law. It violates the freedom of conscience. We need freedom and historic buildings (at least one of them) restored to us, and persecution stopped. We had all of our buildings confiscated. They confiscated everything and now they demand some legal address. I think that they know everything. They know about the history of reformation. They have done everything knowingly'. The world alliance of reformed churches in Geneva sent a letter to the head of the Belarusian Orthodox Church, which asked the Patriarchal Hexarchy to help with the recovery of the Calvinist temple in Zaslaue, which is now used for Orthodox worship. However, this attempt did not yield any results.

**On 2 September** it was announced that the Protestant Church *New Life* was facing liquidation. Minsk authorities urged the believers to give their temple to the state. Two days before they were deprived of the land and asked to leave the building. The property was to be made state-owned, with financial compensation to the Church, which meant the community would lose its legal address and therefore would be liquidated. The church's pastor V.Hancharenka names the reasons for the decision: 'I think that the situation is conditioned by

a number of reasons. The first is the state ideology giving favor to the Orthodox Church. The second is the officials' possible desire to take both the land and the building to allow constructing private cottages on the place. The third is the threatening increase of religious intolerance.' The deacon of the church said that the believers had started a termless rally of protest and would stay within the temple in turns. Maskouski Borough Board of Internal Affairs threatened to use force if the building was not left peacefully.

**On 15 September** the parishioners of the protestant church *New Life* together with their children intended to hold an action in Nezalezhnastsi Square. A month before Minsk City Executive Committee deprived the church of the peace of land and proposed the believers to leave the building of the cowshed. The church faced liquidation. The believers invited for a talk the chair of Minsk City Executive Committee Mikhail Paulau, but he ignored their invitation, that's why they decided to come to his office. Two hours before the action vice-Minister of Interior Viktor Filistovich invited the church administrator Vasil Iurevich and the pastor Viachaslau Hancharenka to his office and promised to solve their problems in the case they refused from the action. Vasil Iurevich said: 'We agreed to follow his request so that they wouldn't accuse us that we didn't try to solve the question peacefully'.

**On 15 September** the Belarusian Krishna believers received the answer-resolution from the UN Committee on Human Rights. In this answer it was stated the Belarusian authorities violated the believers' rights. Firstly, they limited their right to invite missionaries from foreign states and, secondly, artificially created unbearable conditions for the existence of the organization. The UN Committee on Human Rights obliged the Belarusian authorities to publish this resolution in the mass media within three-month term.

**On 19 September** the first negotiations of the administration of the Minsk-based protestant church *New Life* with representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs took place. The vice-minister of interior Viktor Filistovich arranged the meeting to the church administrator Vasil Iurevich and the lawyer Siarhei Lukanin with the chair of a department of the Commission on religious and national affairs Aliaksandr Kalinau and the representative of Minsk City Executive Committee Alena Radchanka. However, this meeting didn't solve the problems of the church. The representatives of the authorities advised the believers to look for a new legal address, stating the building of the cowshed they wanted to turn into a church would be confiscated anyway.

**On 20 September** Minsk City Court liquidated the Belarusian Evangelical Church. Earlier the court had already liquidated a Calvinist Protestant Church with Leanid Lipen being the pastor. The Protestant Church *New Life* with Via-



chaslau Hancharenka serving as the pastor also faced liquidation. Minsk City Executive Committee initiated the proceedings. The religious community of the Evangelists was registered in 1994. They started to have problems after 2002. Because the church was registered at the apartment owned by Pastor Sabila, Minsk City Executive Committee demanded that the believers find a new legal address. But the Church has fewer than twenty people. They do not have enough money to rent an office. Judge Ala Krapiuka held the first sitting in July and gave the pastor time to find a compromise with the officials. However, the officials refused to help with a new legal address. As a result, the court liquidated the church. Judge of Minsk City Court Ala Krapiuka dotted the i's in the case of liquidation of the Belarusian Evangelical Church despite the fact that Pastor Ernest Sabila was taken ill and could not attend the court session.

**On 23 September** Minsk Maskouski Borough Court continued to consider the case of the administrator of the Church *New Life* Vasil Iurevich. The police accused him of organizing religious services unauthorized by the authorities. The report was made on 24 July, and 24 September was the last day of the administrative responsibility. The case consideration lasted half an hour and led to a decision: find the church administrator Vasil Iurevich guilty and fine him in accordance with article #167 part 2 160 4 080 thousand rubles (about 2 000 US dollars). The Church believers and observers believe that the authorities have launched proceedings to suppress the tide of protest and prevent the believers from taking part in street actions against the liquidation of the Protestant community.

**On 5 October** the administrator of the protestant church *New Life* Vasil Iurevich was judged for the second time. He was accused of holding unauthorized liturgy on 4 September. That day the believers waited for the chair of Minsk City Executive Committee Mikhail Paulau at the entrance of their church. The judge Nadzeia Reutskaia questioned Vasil Iurevich. The policemen who composed the violation report didn't attend the trial. It was found that the report was composed at a police station, but there were no appropriate reports that described the violation. That's why the trial was postponed to 7 October.

**On 7 October** Minsk Maskouski Borough Court rule to fine the administrator of the protestant church *New Life* Vasil Iurevich almost 2 000 US dollars for unauthorized liturgy. Before that he was sentenced to a fine worth about 4 000 dollars.

**On 20 October** representatives of Kobryn District Executive Committee, fire inspectorate and sanitation office visited an unregistered branch of the Churches of Evangelical Christians and of Evangelical Baptists. They found various violations in the churches, including breaches of the fire safety rules,

and drew up reports registering the above violations. The pastor of Kobryn Church of Evangelical Christians Mikalai Radkovich was fined 25 000 rubles for fire safety violations. Stanislau Akinchyts, worker of the information center *Freedom of Conscience*, commented on the actions of the Kobryn officials: 'The authorities acted in the old Soviet way in this case. They picked on the believers. What's more, they cause different state-controlled agencies find fault with the believers. These are the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the sanitation office, and whoever else. They do so to demonstrate that this has nothing to do with religion'. The unregistered community of Evangelical Christians in Brest also faced some problems. The other day the authorities even wanted to seal their churches, saying it was too close to the residential buildings and industrial premises, but the believers managed to defend their sacred place.

**On 26 October** the bishops of the Belarusian Protestant unions signed an open letter to the chair of the presidential administration Viktor Sheiman. There they expressed their support for the Christian Full Evangelical Church *New Life*. They requested that 'the decision by the Minsk City Executive Committee confiscating the Church's land parcel and forcing the Church into sale of the building be revoked; that the Church be provided with a land parcel at the same or equal location where a building for religious purposes could be constructed; that the Church be allowed to perform religious ceremonies at the building at 72 Karaliou St during the construction.' The petition was signed by Siarhei Khomich, Bishop of the Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith, Mikalai Sinkavets, Bishop of the Union of Evangelical Baptist Christians, Aliaksandr Sakovich, Bishop of the Religious Association of Full Gospel Christians, and Maisei Astrouski, Bishop of the Conference of Churches of 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist Christians. The Protestant leaders noted that 'in a number of instances the municipal authorities and their certain representatives demonstrated unwillingness to develop and maintain friendly and constructive relationships with evangelical communities.' The letter was also forwarded to the prime-minister Siarhei Sidorski and the chair of Minsk City Executive Committee Mikhail Paulau.

**On 10 November** the US State Department published the annual report about the situation in the field of freedom of religion in the world. In the document the situation in 197 countries of the world is analyzed for the period from July 2004 to July 2005. 13 pages of this document are dedicated to Belarus. Belarus, Russia and Azerbaijan are listed among the countries with discriminative legislation and preconceived attitude to religions. In 1996, the constitution of Belarus declared religious freedom and equal status of all confessions. The fact that Belarusian society is especially tolerant has a positive effect on the activity of different confessions. However, in practice some religious minorities feel a hostile attitude from the part of Belarusian government. According to the law *On freedom of conscience and religious organizations* passed in

2002 and in accordance to the Concordat the state has signed with the Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church has a privileged position in Belarus. According to the report of the State Department, Belarusian authorities discriminate confessions which, in their opinion, propagate other cultures and external political influences. On the basis of the law on re-registration the authorities didn't register 12 religious associations and 104 religious communities, most of which were Protestant groups. In particular, unregistered organizations include the congregations of Complete Gospel, but also Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, the Union of Jews and International Society of Krishna Consciousness. The authorities accused Krishnaites of illegal distribution of religious literature. According to the Law, a religious community should have at least 20 adult persons, and religious associations should have at least 10 communities that operate on the territory of the country for at least 20 years. Not having a judicial address, status and permission to assembly, religious organizations have no right to carry out publishing, pedagogical, charitable and missionary activity. The authorities refuse registering the communities - Protestants in particular - that carry out devotional gatherings in private apartments. Local authorities press on the owners of buildings so that they won't rent them to Protestants, as it happened in Slonim. Minsk community of the Church *New Life* still fails finding a room. In the report of the State Department it is said that re-registration became a powerful mean of influence of Belarusian authorities on religious organizations they don't favor. In the accounting period there was no restitution of religious property in Belarus. There is no legislative base for restitution in the country; the law even forbids restitution of buildings that are used for cultural or educational purposes. In the accounting period the government many times fined the representatives of different religious confessions for 'carrying out illegal divine worships' and 'unauthorized religious activity'. In 2004, the acts of vandalism on Jewish cemeteries and other memorable places in different cities of Belarus were recorded, but the law enforcement agencies were never able to find the guilty and to call them to account.

**On 18 November** the Technical Inventory Bureau of Minsk issued to the protestant church *New Life* a technical certificate to the building of former cowshed that was used for worshipping. According to the new certificate, the building was regarded as a religious one. Thus, the believers received the legal right to own it. However, Minsk City Executive Committee intended to appeal against the TIB decision. The believers of the protestant church *New Life* said that the new technical certificate gave them only a respite because Minsk City Executive Committee did not give up on its intention to deprive them of the building.

**On 24 November** the judge of Minsk Partyzanski Borough Court Mikalai

Trubnikau issued a warning to the pastor of the Minsk-based protestant church *Christ's Testament* Heorhi Viazouski for 'unauthorized liturgy'. At the trial the police inspector Siarhei Sivalobau stated that on 30 October an unauthorized religious assembly took place in Bahratsion St. in Minsk. 30 persons prayed and sang religious songs there. Ala Martynava, the leading specialist of the department of national and religious affairs of Minsk City Executive Committee, said that liturgies at residential premises could take place only on agreement of the registering state organs. Besides, according to her, the church received three warnings from the city authorities for absence of the legal address. The church *Christ's Testament* was registered in 1994 and in 2004 didn't undergo re-registration, had no legal address and its believers gathered at the private house of H.Viazouski.

**On 19 December** the pastor of the Catholic congregation in Barysau was refused in prolongation of the Belarusian visa. Pastor Robert had been working in Belarus for over ten years. According to Pastor Robert, the Committee on religious and national affairs did not agree that he could stay any longer in Belarus. The pastor considered this decision as politically motivated. Citizens of Barysau started to collect signatures against this decision.

**On 20 December** the protestant community *World's Light* faced the threat of liquidation. The community was registered in 1998 in Minsk City Executive Committee. It is a member of the association of the communities *Full Evangelic Christians*. In 2004 the believers were reregistered. The rental agreement expired on 31 October. Pastor Andrei Sidar said he couldn't have the church registered at the new address because, according to him, the executive committee officials prohibited the office premises owners to give the believers their address.

## 11. Linguistic rights and national minorities

**On 26 January**, the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the enforcement of the Law on languages the youth initiative *Voka* made an open statement, urging citizens of Belarus to join the action *Belarusification of the Belarusian TV*. 'Of course, it is almost impossible to transfer the whole TV to Belarusian at once, but it is possible to create several programs in Belarusian', said the initiators of the action. 'That's why we must simply express our wish to constantly hear our native language on the TV'.

**On 27 January** the Fund of Development and Support to Romany Tradi-

tions sent an open letter to Aliaksandr Lukashenka, in which the conviction in the existence of race discrimination in the country was expressed. Among the filed documents there was the warranty letter of Vitsebsk housing service with the guarantees to conclude the agreement with the Fund concerning the rent of a building in Davatar St. after the registration. After the registration the rent agreement wasn't concluded because the building was allegedly lent. We were also advised to wait as soon as another room could become free. In May 2004, after one more application to the exploitation society of housing resources, the Romany were directed to Vitsebsk City Executive Committee. There they found out the documents didn't get to the executive committee because its establishment wasn't agreed with the board of ideology and propaganda of Vitsebsk City Executive Committee and as a result the regional executive committee didn't have the right to register it. 'It is a violation of our constitutional rights and really resembles of race discrimination', commented the chair of the organization Vera Hrakouskaia.

**On 4 February** the main council of the Union of Poles in Belarus urged the Polish Government to support the organization and monitor its activity till the next assembly. The matter is that on 28 January the Ministry of Justice issued to UPB a warning for suspension of Tadevush Kruchkouski's powers as chairman and gathering the general assembly. The ministry considered it as excess of the powers of the Main Council of the UPB. The Main Council disagreed, saying it didn't violate the statute and the Ministry of Justice was deluded by the chair of the Main Council and the chair of the UPB. According to the vice-chair of the UPB Iuzaf Pazhetski, in the minutes of the sitting of the Main Council it was stated that the decision to summon the general assembly was taken by this organ. The presentation of this document made the Ministry of Justice issued the warning for 'excess of the powers by the Main Council'. Having received the warning, the Main Council confirmed its decision to hold the UPB assembly on 12-13 March. The attempt of Tadevuch Kruchkouski to summon the extraordinary sitting of the Main Council failed, only two persons came. The chair of the Main Council Kanstantsin Tarasevich, Kruchkouski's devoted adherent, stated that the UPB was in the danger of splitting. It means Kruchkouski's party was even ready to destruct the oldest Polish organization in Belarus in order to preserve their powers.

**On 15 March** Iakau Basin, the first vice-chair of the Union of Belarusian Jewish Public Associations and Communities, presented to the public the conclusions of his analysis of the events that took place in January-February 2005. According to him, the manifestations of xenophobia and anti-Semitism acquired more neo-Nazi nature with complete connivance of the authorities and the habitual anti-Semitism was fed by many books of the appropriate content, the majority of which were imported from Russia and sold in the state bookstores.

**On 19 April** Aliaksandr Lukashenka gave a speech to the National Assembly. He unexpectedly touched upon the delicate topic of relations between representatives of different nationalities and religions. He said that somebody was trying to set the Belarusian Catholics, Poles and Palesse citizens against the present authorities. He made especial emphasis on the Belarusian Poles and accused the Polish Embassy in Minsk in subversive activity and agitation of Belarusian Poles against the present authorities even with the assistance of the Catholic Church. Both the Embassy and Belarusian Poles were embarrassed at such statement. Tadevush Havin, one of the leaders of the Polish national movement in Belarus, stated that neither the Embassy, nor the Catholic Church carried out any political work against the authorities. Uladzimirz Cimoszewicz called the anti-Polish statements of Aliaksandr Lukashenka scandalous and absurd: 'Such statements don't suit a person that occupies presidential seat', said Mr Cimoszewicz.

**On 29 April** in Minsk there took place the rally in commemoration of Holocaust victims. Representatives of the Jewish community of Belarus, German delegation and foreign diplomats took part in it. The rally ended with the mournful meeting near the *Pit* memorial complex.

**On 6 May** in Vitsebsk unknown persons drew a swastika on the wall of the local synagogue. Members of the Jewish religious community applied to the police and the city newspapers in order to draw public attention to this fact. They think it was not a coincidence that the swastika appeared on the wall on the day of commemoration of Holocaust victims. It was the first incident of the kind in Vitsebsk, that's why Jews considered it necessary to spread information about the activation of neo-Nazi on the eve of the Victory Day.

**On 11 May** in the Polish city of Biaiyastok there took place the first sitting on the criminal case against the editorial board of *Niva*, the weekly of the Belarusian minority. All in all, 11 authoritative public activists, members of the Program Board of the weekly Michai Androsiuk, Jury Chmielewski, Eugeniusz Mironovicz, Michai Stelmaszuk and Eugeniusz Wappa were charged with misuse of the financial means, issued by the Polish state to support the edition.

Eugeniusz Wappa, chief editor of the weekly said: 'Today the accuser, the prosecutor's office of Biaiyastok, presented to us the proposals of so called 'conditional punishment'. Actually, it was a proposal for us to plead guilty. In this case we would be sentenced to conditional punishment and fined 600 zlotys. We, in our turn, think we are innocent. That's why we didn't agree to this proposal. As a result the judge decided to make a trial on the case.' Belarusian human rights activists consider such actions of the Polish authorities as a form of intimidation of the Belarusian national minority with the aim to push it out of the cultural, public and political life in Poland.

**On 12 May** it became known that the Ministry of Justice found illegal the sixth assembly of the public association Union of Poles in Belarus that took place in Hrodna two months ago. Aleh Slizheuski, chair of the department of public associations of the Ministry of Justice, confirmed this information in a telephone talk with the vice-chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus. He also added that the text of this decision was sent to the headquarters of the union. It means that the assembly decisions and the new administration that was elected there lose their power. The Ministry of Justice explained its decision with the fact that during the last two months members of the Union of Poles in Belarus submitted many complaints to the ministry, pointing at alleged mass violations during nomination of delegates to the assembly from district branches. It was emphasized even that people who weren't delegates voted at the assembly. The Ministry of Justice recommended the former chair of the Union of Poles Tadevush Kruchkouski (whom the new head of the union Anzhalika Borys charged with theft of the organizational documentation) to hold a new assembly within two-weeks' term. Anzhalika Borys also stated to Hrodna journalists that she was elected democratically and that the new administration of the union is strongly pressurized by Belarusian authorities. She also promised to take all possible efforts to normalize the activity of the Union of Poles in Belarus.

**On 13 May** the Embassy of Israel in Belarus directed its protest note against an article published in the state newspaper *Respublika* to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Information and the main ideological department of the presidential administration. According to the Embassy, the article of the chief editor of *Respublika* Eduard Skobelev *Not to Let Belarusian Maidan*, published on 5 April 2005, is evidently anti-Semitic and spoils the prestige of Belarus. The Embassy of Israel stated the article was grounded on the *Protocols of Zion's Sages*, one of the old anti-Semitic fabrications, which is an attempt to foment interethnic enmity. According to the Embassy, in his article Mr Skobelev stated that the main aim of World War II was the creation of Israel and the overall lexicon of the article reminded of old anti-Semitic sources. Before this the embassy directed a letter to *Respublika*, but the newspaper didn't publish it and didn't even react. The first vice-editor Mikhail Valkouski referred to the law on press that allegedly obliged a mass media to react within a month's period in the case there were reasons for it. The chair of the Union of Belarusian Jewish organizations and communities Leanid Levin commented: 'We will also prepare our opinion and direct it to the newspaper and other instances. We think it is a pure provocation and will indignantly respond to it. Skobelev is obsessed with anti-Semitism, which is inadmissible for a man who works in state organs. His article is like fire for gunpowder. Why do it and provoke?'

**On 14 May** in Hrodna the Supreme Council of the Union of Poles in Bela-

rus unanimously decided not to hold a new congress as required by the Ministry of Justice. Representatives of most of the Belarusian regions attended the session. Out of 35 members of the Council, 25 attended the session and the rest gave their agreement over the phone.

**On 17 May** the Embassy of Poland to Belarus officially confirmed that the Belarusian authorities declared the first secretary Marek Bucka to be a persona non grata. In the Polish Embassy, Marek Bucka was responsible for contacts with the political parties, public associations and media. He also maintained contacts with the Union of Poles in Belarus that was in the focus of attention from the Belarusian authorities at that time.

**On 18 May** the Supreme Council of the Union of Poles in Belarus filed statements with the general prosecutor's office, the Ministry of Justice and the Presidential Administration, where they voiced a protest against the actions that degraded the feelings of the Poles in Belarus. The conflict was provoked by the decision of the Ministry of Justice and the film *Who ordered the Union of Poles?* shown on the Belarusian television. The participants of the recent actions against the Union of Poles may face visa restrictions. The Embassy of Poland to Belarus confirmed visa sanctions to be imposed on the persons behind the recent actions against the Union of Poles in Belarus.

**On 20 May** the extraordinary joint sitting of the Parliamentary committee of foreign affairs and the commission on contacts with the Polish Diaspora took place at the Polish Parliament. The deputies proposed to take concrete measures, including declaring the Belarusian officials who had relation to the conflict of the Union of Poles in Belarus non-grata. Mariusz Kaminski, member of the commission on contacts with the Polish Diaspora, said: 'The representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who attended the sitting of the commission, stated that the Belarusian officials who had relation to the conflict with the Union of Poles in Belarus and a number of Poles who collaborated with Lukashenka with the aim to split the Union of Poles were included in this black book. And one more thing – in the case Lukashenka's collaborators will come at power in the union, we will stop any financial assistance to this organization.'

**On 20 May** the administration of the Union of Poles in Belarus stated the Belarusian authorities pressurized some of the union's activists who collected signatures under the appeal to Aliaksandr Lukashenka, the signers of which expressed their indignation at the film *Who Ordered the Union of Poles?* that was shown on the Belarusian TV. The officials threatened the UPB members with different problems, including redundancy.

**On 24 May** the Belarusian Minister of Justice Viktor Halavanau was 'sur-



prised to learn that Poland had placed him on the 'refused entry' list because of the Ministry decision that recognized as illegitimate the latest congress of the Union of Poles in Belarus'. 'I regret it that the Polish side has reacted to the demands to public associations requiring compliance with the effective legislation in such a way', said the minister. Mr Halavanau repeated the opinion of the Ministry of Justice that the sixth congress of the Union of Poles had been conducted with legal violations. He also recalled that the Union received one written warning in 2005. 'If we choose to act in full compliance with the law, we may well take the Union of Poles' liquidation case to court', said Viktor Halavanau, who then added that 'the Belarusian side compromised in some matters with the Union, not wanting a conflict'. According to the Minister, if the Union does not appeal the decision taken by the Ministry of Justice and does not conduct a new congress, the Union of Poles will remain to be headed by the former leadership.

**On 24 May** a round table discussion held in Hrodna was attended by representatives of six groups representing national minorities. They unanimously supported the members of the Union of Poles in Belarus. The discussion focused on the situation around the UPB and the Belarusian authorities. The discussion revealed that representatives of the public association Society of Belarusian Chuvashes, the organization of Lithuanians *Tevine*, the Jewish community *Minora* and the Russian Association, and also the public association of Tartars of Hrodna experience certain problems in their relations with the authorities. So, the head of the Lithuanian group Alhimantas Dzirhinchus stated that after they refused to take part in the Festival of National Cultures last year, they started having problems with the taxation agencies. Alena Kutsevič, the representative of the Jewish community, said that the authorities do not assist the restoration of the Hrodna synagogue. Aliaksandr Krynitski, leader of the public association of Tartars, summed up all of the grievances: 'We are maltreated by the state. They only remember about use once every two years, when the authorities want to hold a Festival of National Cultures...'

**On 25 May** the new leadership of the Union of Poles in Belarus received a letter from the Ministry of Justice, by which they were called to hold a repeated congress of the organization. Two weeks before the Ministry of Justice recognized as illegitimate the sixth congress of the UPB on the basis of alleged numerous violations committed during the run-up to and the conduct of the congress. The new leadership of the organization with Anzhalika Borys at the head stated that the congress was completely democratic and law competent. The organization sent the Ministry of Justice a letter requesting additional verification of the grounds of their doubts. And in the evening on 24 May, an answer from Minsk was received. It says that the Ministry of Justice maintained its previous opinion and required a repeated congress of the UPB as earlier.

The press-secretary of the Union of Poles of Belarus Andzei Piscalnik said that the UPB wanted to resolve the conflict with the Ministry of Justice in a legal way, so it requested careful examination of the problem. However, this approach failed. The new leadership of the UPB was going to appeal this decision in court.

**On 26 May** the action *Down with Fascism* started in Babruisk on the initiative of the Belarusian People's Front, the *Young Front* and the public organization *Svaia Sprava*. The democrats urged the authorities of Babruisk to paint over the anti-Semitic graffiti on the country's walls (unknown persons drew gallows with stars of David). The matter is that the city's communal services 'failed to notice' such graffiti for several months.

**On 30 May** the authorities of the public association Union of Poles in Belarus (UPB) applied to the chair of the Committee of State Security (KGB) and the minister of internal affairs with the request criminally punish the persons guilty in persecution of the Poles who are citizens of Belarus and stop repressing the union's activists. The letter signed by the chair of the union Anzhalika Borys expresses indignation with persecution of the chair of Brest regional branch of the UPB Alina Iarashevich by workers of Brest regional KGB board and workers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who threatened to imprison the teacher of Polish language Iadviha Sekh when they interrogated her. Besides, the authorities closed a Polish Sunday school in Brest. Iuzaf Pazhetski also said the authorities pressurized members of the Union of Poles all over the country: 'The authorities carry out this campaign on the whole territory of Belarus. They talk with the chairs of our branches and act with the assistance of the local press. In many district newspapers they have recently printed articles about the alleged illegitimacy of the 6<sup>th</sup> assembly of the UPB. Some of them newspapers reprinted the article of *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*.'

**On 7 June** the chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus Anzhalika Borys applied to the Belarusian military prosecutor Viachaslau Liubitski. In her appeal Borys asked to punish for fomenting of inter-ethnic enmity (article #130 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus) the authors of the article *Playing with Packed Cards* in the newspaper *Vo slavy rodiny*. According to Anzhalika Borys, the authors of the article 'tendentiously and one-sidedly presented the situation around the Belarusian Union of Poles' and the lines of the verse that were published there 'insulted the national dignity' of the Belarusian Poles.

**On 15 June** it became known that the Polish authorities banned entry to 10 Belarusian officials who participated in harassment of the Union of Poles in Belarus, including the minister of justice Viktor Halavanau.

**On 21 June** Hrodna City Executive Committee did not allow the Union of

Poles to celebrate Midsummer Night on 25 June, the event called by Poles 'the Festive Night' and celebrated every year in the center of the city on the banks of the river Nioman. This was the first refusal received by the Union of Poles. Hrodna authorities referred to the ongoing earthwork on the river banks, allowing at the same time another group of Poles to celebrate Midsummer Night. The head of the ideology department of the city executive committee Siarhei Dubavets refused to disclose the reasons for such actions by the local authorities. By the way, the permission for celebration was issued to Kazimir Znaidzinski, friend of Tadevush Kruchkouski. Both of them were excluded from the Union of Poles several days before.

**On 21 June** a number of the country's ministers refused to take part in the round table *The situation of the Belarusian language in the light of the referendum of 1995*. At the same time, the chair of Frantsysk Skaryna Belarusian Language Society Aleh Trusau said the situation in the country continued deteriorating and the Belarusian language was almost completely pushed away from the system of accountancy, education and other branches of the state activity: 'the authorities continued to ignore the idea to establish a high educational establishment with the Belarusian language of instruction. Only about 21% of schoolchildren learn in Belarusian. There almost no Belarusian-language kindergartens. For instance, in Minsk there were only three such kindergartens out of about 400, despite the growing demand for the education in Belarusian language,' he said.

**On 22 June** the Union of Poles in Belarus sent a letter to Aliaksandr Lukashenka, asking him to stop the destruction of the Union of Poles. The letter was signed by about 3 000 persons.

**On 27 June** the Union of Poles received a short letter from the Belarusian TV Company. It says: 'In response to your inquiry we inform you that the film *Who ordered the Union of Poles* was not shown by the First National TV Channel on 13 May. The letter was signed by the vice-chair of the State Television and Radio Company Aliaksandr Martynenka. On 13 May in the evening the Belarusian TV Company showed a 45-minute film condemning the new leadership of the Union of Poles in Belarus and some Polish diplomats. On 14 May in Hrodna the Supreme Council of the UPB adopted a statement where it was said: to demand from the Belarusian TV Company refute the libelous tales of the film *Who ordered the Union of Poles*; to request the prosecutor's office of the Republic of Belarus call to criminal account the authors and film participants'.

**On 13 July** the military prosecutor's office refused to institute proceedings requested by the Union of Poles to investigate the article *Playing Packed Cards*

that was published by the newspaper *Vo slavu Rodiny*. The Union of Poles considered that the author degraded and undermines the national dignity of Poles and strived to incite national hostility. The response sent from the prosecutor's office said: the actions did not constitute a crime, and criminal action will not be brought. The newspaper correspondent Uladzimir Kazheunikau 'received an editorial assignment to cover the situation after the sixth Congress of the Union of Poles', he even 'attempted to defend the rights of ethnic Poles, whose right to assembly was violated by the illegitimate election of the Union of Poles in Belarus'.

**On 16 July** the Belarusian authorities decided to deport the head of the consular department of the Polish Embassy in Minsk Andrzej Buczek. This decision was taken in response to the Polish authorities' proposals that Maksim Ryzhankou, a councilor of the Belarusian Embassy in Warsaw, leave the territory of Poland. The Poles believe that the main reason for this tension in the bilateral diplomatic relations is the undemocratic choice of the new leadership of the Union of Poles in Belarus.

**On 20 July** the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland released an official statement in response to the Belarusian authorities declaring a persona non grata the head of the consular department of the Polish Embassy in Minsk Andrzej Buczek. Poland's MIA underscored that this decision of the Belarusian authorities will, first of all, have poor consequences to the citizens of Belarus, because it 'will make more complicated obtaining required documents for travel in Poland'. The statement negatively evaluates the steps that the Belarusian authorities have been recently taking against Poland and the Polish community in Belarus instead of trying to resolve the conflict caused by the reprisals against the Union of Poles in Belarus.

**At 7 p.m. on 21 July** the Chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus Anzhalika Borys was visited by Mr Iantsurevich, an employee of Hrodna Leninski Borough Prosecutor's Office, who served her an official warning signed by the prosecutor Vrubleuski. Anzhalika Borys received a warning for, as the document says, 'preventing the real assembly of the Union of Poles'.

**On 21 July** the former head of the consular department of the Polish Embassy in Minsk Andrzej Buczek left Belarus. He was deported by the Belarusian authorities as a persona non grata. When leaving, Mr Buczek faxed a letter to the leader of the Union of Poles in Belarus Anzhalika Borys. In the letter he thanked all of the Polish community in Belarus for cooperation in the field of renaissance of the Polish language, culture and traditions. The Polish diplomat said in the letter that 'in this difficult period for the Polish community' in Belarus he wishes to all supporters of the Polish

cause 'courage, endurance and self-sacrifice in the implementation of the mission of the UPB'.

**On 22 July** the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus decided to close down the Minsk office of the European Foundation *Dialog* registered in Warsaw because of the information that under cover of scientific interests the foundation representatives were allegedly involved with espionage. The leadership of the *Dialog* Foundation called such accusations absurd and compared the closure of the foundation with the situation around the Union of Poles in Belarus and the expulsion of the Polish diplomats. The head of the European Foundation Dialog Siavomir Teciaw said that the Belarusian authorities aimed to eliminate all Polish organizations in Belarus.

**In the night of 23 and 24 July** the entrance door and the nameplate in the Minsk headquarters of Frantsysk Skaryna Belarusian Language Society were stained with black paint and had nazi-Bolshevik fly sheets attached to them. Near the entrance to the head office of the BLS there was also the abbreviation of the Nazi-Bolshevik Party painted together with a sickle and a hammer. According to the activist of the Belarusian Language Society, the writer Kanstantsin Tarasau, this act of vandalism was most probably committed by people who have a hatred for anything national, Belarusian. BLS representatives filed a complaint with Minsk Partyzanski Borough Board of Internal Affairs, requiring that those behind the act of vandalism be found and punished accordingly.

**On 26 July** in the evening three leaders of the Union of Poles in Belarus were detained in Shchuchyn – luzaf Pazhetski, Mechyslau Iashkevich and Andrei Pachobut on charges of conducting an unauthorized picket in Shchuchyn on 3 July. This time Mechyslau Iashkevich, Andrei Pachobut and luzaf Pazhetski came to Shchuchyn to observe the regular organization farce of the former leadership of the Union of Poles – the former Supreme Council was having a meeting in Shchuchyn on that day to select the date for a repeated congress. It became known that the activists detained in Shchuchyn would most likely be tried in Lida on 27 July. The thing is that the wife of the local UPB branch head Viktor Bohdan who supports Kruchkouski, Tamara Bohdan works as a judge in the local court.

**On 26 July** in the evening the police attempted to break into the apartment of Anzhalika Borys, the chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus. At about 11 p.m. a police group came to Ms Borys's place, requiring that she open the door to be served a subpoena. The Union chair refused to let the police in, because the hour for serving the subpoena was too late. Also, on the same day she has already received two subpoenas: from the prosecutor's office and the police.

When the police officers threatened forced entry to the apartment, Anzhalika Borys warned she would telephone the Polish journalists. The police group had to leave. In two days Anzhalika Borys received three subpoenas from the regional prosecutor's office and the police. Due to the pressure from the authorities, Ms Borys felt bad in the headquarters of the Union. They had to call an ambulance. The Union leader refused to go to the hospital, because she views this as not unsafe. She also said that she does not feel right to observe the subpoenas.

**On 27 July** the detained members of the Union of Poles were tried in Lida for having ostensibly organized an unauthorized picket on 3 July. The senior editor of the *Magazyn Polski* Andrei Pachobut was sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest, Mechyslau Iaskievich and Iuzaf Pazhetski were given 10 days of arrest each. On that day the members of the former Supreme Council of the Union of Poles, who together with the former chair Tadevush Kruchkouski and the Ministry of Justice did not recognize the results of the last congress of the organization, held their own sitting in the Polish House in Shchuchyn. According to one of the participants of this session Kanstantin Tarasevich, the session was attended by 14 people. All in all, the former Supreme Council of the Union of Poles in Belarus was composed of 35 people. Before the session Kruchkouski and his associates expelled 8 members from the organization, including Anzhalika Borys who had been elected the new chair of the UPB. 13 people came to Shchuchyn who had brought along another 5 paper with so-called delegated votes. Those who attended the session in Shchuchyn now declare there has been quorum and the session has been legitimate. It became known that the new congress would be held on 27 August in Vaukavysk. The house where this session took place was heavily guarded by police and other special units and the entrance to the House of Poles in Shchuchyn was blocked.

**On 27 July** in Krychau Neo-Nazis from the Russian National Unity organized a provocation against the journalists of the independent Krychau newspaper *Volny horad*. All of Krupskai St., where the editorial office is situated, was littered with provocative fly sheets. 'Go away to your American bosses, venal BPFers!' - threatened the Russian Neo-Nazis.

**On 27 July** at about 10 p.m. the main headquarters of the Union of Poles in Hrodna were captured. It is difficult to identify the units of power structures behind this 'operation', because the assailants were wearing sports outfits. The leaders of the organization were simply thrown out of the headquarters. The people were forced out of the building and dragged along the ground, one of the oldest members of the organization Liavon Padliakh had his shirt torn. Thus, the authorities installed in the main headquarters of the Union of Poles

the former leaders with Tadevush Kruchkouski at the head. About 20 people were detained and the police cars took them to different police stations of the city. In three hours at about 1 a.m. all of the detainees were released.

**On 28 July** at 9 o'clock about 30 of the organization's activists gathered near the Union of Poles, showing their indignation at forced seizure of the headquarters. The entrance to the building was closely watched by high ranking police officers, several people in plain clothes were standing nearby. The chair of the organization Anzhalika Borys, who wanted to get her personal belongings, was not allowed inside. 'The correct' leaders were afraid to leave the premises and show themselves to the people. One of the active participants of the televised propaganda, an instructor of the agrarian university Valdermar Krautsevich who had come to the headquarters had to run away against the shouts of the indignant crowd, though the people, with elderly women dominating the crowd, were not in an aggressive mood. Those present there sang religious songs and the famous hymn *Rota* with the lyrics composed by Maryia Kanapnitskaia, following which they knelt and started to say prayers.

**On 28 July** the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland Adam Rotfeld said that Warsaw was recalling its ambassador from Belarus for consultations. After the Belarusian riot police seized the headquarters of the Union of Poles in Hrodna, Rotfeld said that 'the Belarus-Poland relations are affected by a deep crisis'. The Polish side again underscored that it supported the legally elected board of the UPB with Anzhalika Borys at the head.

**On 28 July** Belarus did not provide an air corridor for an aircraft with a Polish governmental delegation on board. This delegation was heading to Russia to attend the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Polish military cemetery in Katyn. The aircraft went to Smolensk via Ukraine. The refusal of the official Minsk to provide the Polish plane with an air corridor over the territory of Belarus occurred in the middle of a serious crisis between Belarus and Poland, and reprisals against the democratically elected leadership of the Union of Poles in Belarus.

**On 28 July** in the morning the chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus Anzhalika Borys was interrogated at Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. After the interrogation she was summonsed to the regional prosecutor's office, where she had to stay for about three hours. At Hrodna Leninski BBIA Anzhalika Borys was interrogated as a witness in two cases filed against her. The first one was from the chair of the Shchuchyn branch of the UPB Viktor Bohdan, where he accuses Ms Borys of attempting to seize the local building of the House of Poles. The second one was from a member of the Hrodna branch of the UPB Valdemar Krautsevich, which claims that Ms Borys had

been stealing money and property from the Union. It is not clear yet whether or not criminal action will be brought. She rejects all of the charges and believes that they are provocation and an attempt to intimidate her. An officer in the regional prosecutor's office asked Anzhalika Borys how the UPB had obtained an issue of *Gios znad Niemna* published with the support of *Gazeta Wyborcza* and who had organized this publication.

**On 28 July** the Polish city of Wroclaw cancelled the partnership cooperation agreement with Hrodna in protest against the persecution of the Union of Poles in Belarus by the Belarusian authorities. Wroclaw viewed the forced seizure by the Belarusian authorities of the Hrodna headquarters of the Union of Poles as reprisals.

**On 1 August** Tadevush Havin, the honorary head of the Union of Poles in Belarus, addressed the members of the union. The address was distributed among the people who met in protest in front of the UPB office in Hrodna. It said: 'Let's raise together to protect the legitimate leaders of our Union. Let's do our best so that the forcible pseudo-meeting could not take place. Let's identify with a real Pole Anzhalika Borys, head of our Union. I testify that she is a respectable, hard-working and experienced person, who has done much for the revival of Polish culture in Belarus.'

**On 1 August** Ihar Bantsar, a journalist from *Gios znad Niemna*, was arrested near the railway station in Hrodna. He was carrying Tadevush Havin's address to the Poles of Belarus. He was kept for two hours in Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. Policemen drew up a violation report, confiscated all the copies of the address and took his telephone number.

**On 1 August** about 120 persons gathered near the building of the Union of Poles in Hrodna. The police scared people with fines for alleged unauthorized picket, but people didn't go away. They sang songs, expecting the arrival of Donald Tusk, vice-chair of the Polish Parliament, leader of the party *Platforma obywatelska*. He said: 'We are conscious that this conflict is not a conflict between Poles and Belarusians. You have been deprived of the office, but you have it in your hearts. Hold on, people in Poland remember about you'. There were no incidents during this speech. The detentions started after the people dispersed.

**On 2 August** in Hrodna the police detained Veslau Keuliak, a vice-chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus. He was taken to Hrodna Borough Board of Internal Affairs, where the police captain Vechar took from him explanations concerning the events that took place near the central office of the organization on 1 August.



**On 2 August** in Hrodna the police detained Tadevush Havin, one of the founders of the Union of Poles in Belarus. He was accused in participation in unauthorized meeting for attending the action that took place near the UPB office in Hrodna on 1 August. Hrodna Leninski Borough Court sentenced Havin to 15 days of jail.

**On 2 August** in Shchuchyn the police detained Andzhei Piscalnik, press-secretary of the Union of Poles in Belarus for alleged participation in an unauthorized action in Shchuchyn on 3 July (violation of article #167.1 of the Code of Administrative Violations) and took him to the investigative isolator of Shchuchyn. Andzhei Piscalnik went on hunger-strike to protest against the lawless detention.

**On 3 August** Andzhei Piscalnik was taken to Lida District Court for trial. He solicited for advocacy services. The judge satisfied the petition and agreed to let him go till the next sitting, but the police brought Piscalnik back to the isolator. In the evening of 3 August Mr Piscalnik was visited by the defense lawyer Aliaksandr Birytau, who had to go to Shchuchyn to sign the contract with his client. After the meeting Mr Birytau said: 'Andzhei Piscalnik is of the opinion he is detained illegally. I support this opinion. He asked for a meeting with the prosecutor who is responsible for law and order in places of detention. He has already filed a complaint to Shchuchyn Town Prosecutor's Office.' The same day the Polish House in Shchuchyn was visited by the police, the local authorities and the prosecutor. The police videoed the house. The Polish Consul Andrzej Krentowski introduced himself to the guard of the house and asked to open it, but the guard received. Then Mr Krentowski and Azhalika Borys spoke to the local members of the Union of Poles of Belarus. After it a concert took place right at the stairs of the Polish House.

**On 3 August** the vice-chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus Veslau Keuliak was sentenced to 15 days of jail for participation in the unauthorized action that allegedly took place outside the central office of the organization on 1 August after the police didn't let in the UPB chair Anzhalika Borys and Belarusian and Polish journalists.

**On 3 August** the British administration of the European Union issued a declaration concerning the events that were taking place in Belarus. There it condemned the offence of the Belarusian authorities on the Union of Poles of Belarus, the political opposition, the civil society and the independent mass media. This declaration was upheld by the 25 member-countries of the EU as well as the candidates to joining the EU: Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia, Albania, Serbia, the Ukraine, Moldova, etc.

**On 3 August** an action of the pro-governmental Belarusian National Youth

Union (BRSM) *Do not interfere in the internal affairs of Belarus* took place near the Polish Embassy in Minsk. BRSM activists brought flags, banners, a saw and a log with the inscription *Friendship* on it. After that they cut off a piece of log in front of the embassy. 'For two days we have been cutting with this Polish saw our mutual home, our mutual future' – says D.Zhalko, the organizer of the picket. 'Unfortunately, there are still people who cannot live in peace, friendship and unity.' Zhalko as well as most of other activists could not explain what kind of claim they had against Poland. As it turned out, none of the interviewees either had been to Poland, or knew the name of the present Polish president. At the same time, Belarusian media kept criticizing Poland's policy with Belarus. BT channel declared that the Union of Poles together with Poland were going to organize an independent monitoring of the 2006 election. *Republika* wrote that Poland dreamed of recovering 'the Eastern Territories' and had 'a strategy for revision of the boundaries'. Two commissions of the House of Representatives approved of the resolution protesting against Poland's interference in the internal affairs of Belarus. Meanwhile the Czech Foreign Office issued a statement, criticizing the Belarusian authorities' actions against the Union of Poles and its leaders. 'The Czech Republic will continue, according to the EU policy, offer support to democratic Belarusians for the development of civil society in Belarus' – it said.

**On 3 August** in Warsaw a 24-hour picket in protest against the persecution of the Union of Poles in Belarus was organized in front of the Belarusian embassy in Poland. The picket was organized by the friends of All-Polish Youth organization. The picketers said that nobody from the embassy came out to speak to them.

**On 3 August** the US State Department put out a statement on the situation of the Union of Poles. 'The USA do not approve of the Belarusian government's actions against the Union of Poles in Belarus. Arrests of the Union's friends, the usage of special police forces to seize the office of the Union are a part of the never-ending system of baiting the people who try to share their ideas peacefully.'

**On 4 August** the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that Minsk did not violate its obligations within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The statement rejected as 'groundless fabrication' the accusations of the EU and the US that the Belarusian government oppresses non-governmental organizations, describing the charges as yet another reflection of the double standards practiced by Brussels and Washington. 'The attempts to manipulate the Union of Poles in Belarus with the aim to confront it to the present authorities are a rude interference with the internal affairs of a sovereign state', said the statement.

**On 4 August** Valiantsin Sheuchyuk, judge of Lida District Court, sentenced Andzhei Piscalnik to 10 days of jail for alleged violation of article #167.1 and #166 of the Code of Administrative Violations – participation in unauthorized mass action and resistance to the police). Before the beginning of the trial the judge prohibited the journalists to make photos. He even expelled for it Mr Kowalewski, journalist of *Gazeta Wyborcza* (later he was let in the court again). At the entrance of the court hall the police put down the surnames of all who came to the trial, paying especial attention to journalists of foreign media. The defense lawyer Aliaksandr Birytau was very convincing when proving the innocence of the defendant. He also presented to the court the documents confirming he had ill daughter who would have to stay alone and in the case of imprisonment (Piscalnik's wife was abroad). Despite of it, judge Sheuchyuk sentenced the journalists to 10 days of jail.

**On 4 August** two pickets took place near the Embassy of Poland in Minsk. Activists of the pro-governmental Belarusian National Youth Union (BRSM) demanded from the Polish authorities to stop the crisis of the relations between Belarus and Poland that, to their mind, was initiated by the Polish side. After the end of the BRSM picket there came 10 activists of the *Young Front*. They held banners with the inscription 'Poland + Belarus = Solidarity'. They also passed to the Embassy the note of support to the legally elected administration of the Union of Poles in Belarus with Anzhalika Borys at the head, the authorities and the people of Poland and the arrested UPB activists Tadevush Havin and Andzhei Piscalnik.

**On 4 August** Anzhalika Borys, chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus received an official warning from Hrodna Leninski borough prosecutor. She was charged with distribution of false information about violations of the rights of the Belarusian citizens who were Poles by nationality, urges to disobey to the police and take part in unauthorized mass actions. In the warning it was stated that such actions could lead to international conflicts and were inadmissible. Anzhalika Borys didn't comment on the document, but said she would complain against it to the supreme instances.

**On 4 August** Donald Tusk, vice-speaker of the Polish Parliament, asked the Polish president A.Kwasniewski to afford the Polish citizenship to all the activists of the Union of Poles in Belarus persecuted by the Belarusian authorities in the case they would ask for it.

**At 12.15 a.m. on 4 August** the police detained five members of the *Young Front* for a picket in support of the Union of Poles in Belarus, held near the Polish Embassy in Minsk. Dzmitry Dashkevich, Artur Finkevich, Nastasia Palazhanka, Dzmitry Rabchyk and Antanina Vezhavets were taken to Minsk Par-

tyzanski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. At the same time, members of Belarusian National Youth Union picketed the embassy for the 4<sup>th</sup> day already, expressing their support to the authorities by sawing the log of freedom between Belarus and Poland.

**On 6 August** in Minsk there took place conference that was dedicated to the problems of the national minorities and religious confessions of Belarus. Its participants adopted an appeal to the country's president with the demand to stop the harassment of the leaders of the Union of Poles. Iakau Basin, one of the leaders of the Jewish national minority in Belarus, expressed his concern with the participation of the police in the seizure of the office of the Union of Poles in Hrodna and the arrests of the organization's leaders. Mr Basin stated the Belarusian authorities did little for preservation of the cultural identity of the national minorities. The chair of the Belarusian association of Ukrainians *Vatra* Viktor Hutouski pointed the development of the events around the Union of Poles in Belarus also disturbed Ukrainians. The representative of the Romany Diaspora Mikalai Kalinin called the attitude of the authorities to the UPB a typical example of violation of human rights and non-democracy of the Belarusian authorities who wanted to control everything in the country. On the way to the conference Mr Kalinin was detained by policemen in plain clothes and taken to Minsk Savetski Borough Board of Internal Affairs, where he had to give written explanation why he was near *Iakub Kolas Square* tube station at 11.40 a.m. The police also made photos of him and took his fingerprints. In three hours they released Mikalai Kalinin without giving any charges. Mr Kalinin considered it as an attempt of intimidation.

**On 6 August** BRSM continued picketing the Polish embassy in Minsk. Besides, BRSM started picketing the Polish consulate in Hrodna from August 4, violating the Belarusian legislation. According to the law *On mass actions* it is prohibited to hold mass actions, including pickets, within 50 meters from embassies and consulates. A human rights watch specialist U.Labkovich said that BRSM pickets violated the legislation. 'Besides, I really doubt if BRSM managed to submit an application within the period of 15 days, provided by the Law. If such violation were committed by any other organization, it would have been liquidated, while its leaders would have got 15 days of detention,' he said. Labkovich added that Belarusian human rights watch lawyers were drawing up claims to the police and the prosecutor's office, urging them to stop the violation by BRSM. They also protested against the actions of the police on 5 August, when several members of the *Young Front* were arrested. 'If the Belarusian police really wanted to maintain order, they would not arrest them, but would stop the unlawful picketing of the Polish Embassy', said Labkovich.

**On 8 August** the delegation of the European Parliament, consisting of the

vice-chair of the European Parliament Jacek Sariusz-Wolski, the chair of the deputy group on relations with Belarus Bogdan Klich and the deputies Bogusiaw Sonik and Barbara Kudrycka weren't let into Belarus by the border guards of the transition point Kuznica Bialystocka – Bruzgi. The border guards also didn't let to Belarus the chair of Białystok administration Ryszard Tur, who was going to Belarus together with the delegation and also intended to meet with the chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus.

**On 9 August** the EU Commission condemned Belarus' decision not to allow the European Parliament Delegation to enter the country. 'The Belarusian authorities once again showed that they do not respect the fundamental rights of their citizens and violate the universal international regulations' – said the statement.

**On 10 August** Anzhalika Borys was summonsed to Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. The reason for the summons was the complaint of Tadevush Kruchkouski, former chair of the Union of Poles, whom the authorities considered as the chairman. Having given explanations to the police, Anzhalika Borys said to journalists: 'I was summonsed on Kruchkouski's delation. He wrote that the official seal and flags disappeared from the office of the Union of Poles in Hrodna. I had to give explanations. I wrote that in presence of witnesses the riot police pulled us out of the office and I left all my belongings there. I also wrote that the computer of a journalist of *Gazeta Wyborcza* was left at the office as well. The police haven't returned anything to us and that they didn't let us in the office.'

**On 12 August** Zinaida Bartsevich, judge of Hrodna Kastrychnitski Borough Court, sentenced Tadevush Havin, one of the leaders of the Union of Poles in Belarus, to 15 days of jail. In the morning of 11 August the guards put the person whose surname is Malisheuski to the prison cell where Tadevush Havin spent the 15 days' arrest to which he has been sentenced for alleged organization of a picket. Malisheuski started to provoke an argument. Finally, when Havin called the prison guards, Malisheuski began fighting. As a result, the policeman Zubkou composed reports on both of them and, which is even more interesting, made Havin the main accused. As a result, on 12 August he was sentenced to 15 more days of jail – for hooliganism (article #156 of the Code of Administrative Violations). This trial started on 11 August, but Havin applied for advocacy services and the judge had to postpone it. The new term will start on 17 August, after the end of the present one. It looks like the authorities decided to deprive him of the possibility to attend the 'correct' assembly of the Union of Poles they intend to hold on 27 August.

**On August 12** several Lithuanian NGOs, representing the national minor-

ities, passed an appeal to the Belarusian Embassy urging Belarus to stop persecuting the Union of Poles in Belarus in its friends. The statement said that by doing this the authorities do not only violate the rights of the minorities but the Belarusians' rights as well. The appeal was initiated by Inforum (Information Chamber of the Peoples of Lithuania), representing all the major ethnic minorities of Lithuania. Previously, the Belarusian embassy received an address to the Belarusian authorities 'On the Protection of the Freedom of the Press and the Polish Minority in Belarus'. The appeal was drawn up by the Polish journalists of Lithuania after a picket of solidarity with the Polish-language media of Belarus persecuted by the Belarusian authorities. The appeal was taken by the embassy's official who presented himself as a clerk on duty. The journalists drew no reply.

**On 16 August** in Minsk unidentified vandals desecrated the memorial to the Nazi victims *Pit* at Melnikaite St.: Plastic wreaths were burned, stones traditionally laid in commemoration of those murdered in the years of war were scattered, and on the monument itself the vandals left a grape of rowan-berries with a crow's feather inside. According to the vice-president of the Union of Belarusian Jewish Public Associations Iakau Basin the leadership of the association planned to file a complaint with the prosecutor's office though they didn't not believe the criminals would be found because this was the third case of vandalism on the memorial territory.

**On 18 August** the Polish authorities banned entry to 13 members of the Council of the 5<sup>th</sup> convocation of the Union of Poles in Belarus, who took part on 27 July in Shchuchyn in the preparation for the repeated 6<sup>th</sup> congress of the organization, staged to please the Belarusian authorities. The former chair of the Union of Poles Tadevush Kruchkouski who lost his position in March had been among the other members of the organization who attended the meeting of the so-called old Council in Shchuchyn. The entry ban also includes one of Kruchkouski's associate, the UPB lawyer Edvard Kalosha.

**On 23 August** around ten people took part in an authorized protest in Banhalor Square in Minsk against the plans for Russian language broadcasting of *Deutsche Welle* radio in Belarus. The first action of the kind also took place in Banhalor Square on 22 August. The organizers planned to stage pickets of protest every day until 26 August. The picketers collected signatures for the Belarusian-language broadcasting of *Deutsche Welle* in Belarus.

**On 24 August** *BelaPAN* informed that the internet version of the radio program *Deutsche Welle* broadcast across Belarus would be partly in Belarusian. The head of the radio station's communications department Iohannes Hoffman informed the agency to this effect. This decision was made because of

the great number of letters coming to the station, where citizens of Belarus criticize the idea of broadcasting in Belarus in the Russian language.

**In the evening 26 August** in Hrodna the police detained the lawyer Vadzim Saranchukou. Mr Saranchukou came to the railroad station to get a ticket to Vaukavysk and go to the Union of Poles Congress. When V. Saranchukou was in the chain, he was approached by police and asked to show the documents. Saranchukou had the passport on him. Despite this, he had to go to the railroad police station 'for an identification procedure', which lasted so long that Vadzim Saranchukou did not set off for Vaukavysk that day.

**On 26 August**, on the eve of the repeated assembly of the Union of Poles in Belarus the police arrested adherents of Anzhalika Borys. In the morning of 26 August the chief editor of *Magazyn Polski* Andrei Pachobut and the correspondent of *Salidarnasts* newspaper Ivan Roman were detained in Shchuchyn and charged with violation of article #156 (petty hooliganism) for alleged swearing at the entrance of Shchuchyn District Board of Internal Affairs. They were released on 27 August, after Andrei Pachobut went on dry hunger-strike. His brother Stanislau Pachobut, correspondent of *Navinki* newspaper, was detained in the evening of 26 August and stayed under arrest till 29 August. On 29 August Andrei Pachobut was arrested once again, this time for three days. The UPB activist Mechyslau laskevich, detained in Vaukavysk the same day, was kept in jail till 29 August as well. In the afternoon of 27 August the criminal police detained the UPB activist Ihar Bantsar and took him to Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. These arrests were aimed at prevention of the protest action in Vaukavysk, where on 27 August the authorities staged the repeated assembly of the Union of Poles with election of new chair of the organization.

**On 27 August**, on the day of the so called second 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Union of Poles of Belarus, the authorities took violent measures to prevent the arrival of the 'undesirable' people who could support the legitimate leaders of the organization. On the way from Minsk to Vaukavysk the police three times stopped the bus with the representatives of youth organizations, Christian communities, minority cultural societies and journalist from a number of independent media. The police said they had to do it because of the several criminals who had escaped from a prison not far from Vaukavysk. According to the police practice they checked the documents twice. 12 people did not have any ID, so after a third stop the bus was taken to Stoubtsy. There it was checked by the police with A. Burak, head of Minsk Regional Transport Control Department, at the head. In Stoubtsy police station the head of the group had to give explanations, while the people who did not have any documents were taken to Stoubtsy District Board of Internal Affairs for personal identification. Stoubtsy

police and KGB, reinforced by several dozen policemen from Minsk, had to work on their day off. They found reasons to stop the bus, but they were not able to detain all the passengers. Some of the journalist and public activists managed to reach Vaukavysk, though with a short delay. At the same time, six youth activists from Baranavichy were forced to leave the train heading for Vaukavysk. Several *Zubr* activists were not allowed to come to Vaukavysk either. Meanwhile, Iuzaf Luchnik, the newly elected chairman of the Union, said during his first press-conference that he knew nothing about the repressions against the people who wanted to come and see the Congress with their own eyes.

**On 29 August** Anzhalika Borys expressed her opinion of the repeated congress of the Union of Poles: 'When the congress takes place behind the closed doors, when no journalists are allowed inside, when people get detained on the road, when the Union of Poles members, who founded this organization, stand outside with the police blocking their way, when people are forced to attend the congress, when the authorities are behind the congress, orchestrating it, then I believe that the congress may be considered democratic only by the authorities, not by the international standards', reported the chair of the UPB. As regards the newly elected chair, Ms Borys said that Iuzaf Luchnik, a founder of the UPB, would hardly be at the head of the organization, the real leader, because the council of the organization was mostly made up of rather abominable people. As regards further work, Anzhalika Borys said the following: 'I think we will continue with our work, we will continue to work in Belarus. The time will come when the human rights, and not only the rights of Poles, will not be violated in Belarus. This situation allowed me to meet people of different ethnic origin, who offered their solidarity. I think the situation will change. And we will work toward the rule of democracy in Belarus', said Anzhalika Borys.

**On 29 August** the investigators of Hrodna City Board of Internal Affairs came to the apartment owned by the UPB chair Anzhalika Borys. She was not in, only her sister was there. The police demanded she opens the door or they force it open. Anzhalika'sr sister had to let them inside. The investigators said that they had come to investigate the complaint made by Michai Dvorczek, a representative of the Polish committee *People in sympathy with Belarus*. Unidentified people attacked him outside the house where A.Borys lives and took his rucksack away. While the police officers were still in the apartment, Anzhalika Borys herself and Polish journalists arrived. Anzhalika Borys was asked provocative questions. For example, they asked her if anyone of her circle could have attacked Michai Dvorczek. After fifteen minutes in the apartment, the police officers left.

**On 29 August** the UPB activist, journalist Andrei Pachobut was fined for



having allegedly used foul language outside the Shchuchyn District Board of Internal Affairs. The judge of Shchuchyn District Court Tatsiana Tadarouskaia punished Andrei Pachobut for violation of article #156 of the Code of Administrative Violations ('petty hooliganism'). On Friday the car, in which Pachobut and Ivan Roman, a *Salidamasts* newspaper reporter were driving, was detained as it was leaving Shchuchyn. They were taken to Hrodna Leninski BBIA and then back to Shchuchyn. Both had to spend the night in the police station, and on Saturday both were released. Henrykh Zubel, the vice-head of the Shchuchyn police, fined Ivan Roman for 'petty hooliganism' as well.

**On 31 August** the chair of Hrodna branch of the Union of Poles in Belarus Mechyslau laskievich familiarized with the materials of the administrative case under article #167-2 (organization of unauthorized action) that was brought against him by Vaukavysk police and passed to the local court. Among the case materials there's even an anonymous letter that was allegedly sent to Hrodna Regional Board of Internal Affairs. There it is stated that on 27 August UPB activists wanted to hold mass actions with the support of political activists from different towns and cities and prepared for it iron rods, bottles with naphalm, etc. According to Mechyslau laskevich, on 26 August this paper was passed to him by a man in plain clothes who didn't introduce himself. It also became known that the police composed reports on Aliaksandr Baradaukin and Viktor Huliak, local activists of United Civil Party, accusing them in unauthorized picketing during the repeated UPB Assembly. The police detained Mr laskevich in Vaukavysk (where the authorities staged the repeated assembly of the small part of the Union of Poles that was loyal to them, with the aim to elect controllable administration to the whole union). The police released Mr laskevich only on 27 August, after the end of the assembly.

**On 1 September** Tadevush Havin, who was the first chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus, was released from jail after the 30-day arrest. In the morning the police secretly drove him out of the detention center by a police car. It was done purposefully, not to let friends and journalists meet him at the entrance.

**On 1 September** only 15 pupils came to the 1<sup>st</sup> form of the Polish-language school #36 in Hrodna. R.Huletska, school headmaster, says that this is connected with the events around the Union of Poles. 'Parents say that the political situation is very unstable, so they do not know what will happen in future. They fear that their children will not be allowed to receive education in Poland' she said.

**On 5 September** the TV program *In the focus of attention* accused Andrzej Krentowski, general consul in Hrodna, of smuggling copies of *Gios znad Niemna* newspaper that was published in Poland (this newspaper was founded by the

Union of Poles and was issued in Belarus). Then Marjan Siemakowicz, acting Ambassador of Poland in Minsk, was accused in having come to Hrodna in the end of August and gathered members of Belarusian Union of Poles in the consulate to read to them a three-hour lecture how to disrupt the public order during the repeated assembly of the UPB that Belarusian authorities decided to hold in Vaukavysk. The accusations were accompanied with a video chronicle shot by the police cameras that were installed near the Polish consulate in Hrodna.

**On 6 September** in Warsaw Anzhalika Borys met with the EU ambassadors to Poland. After the meeting she said that she was satisfied with its results and the ambassadors had treated her 'very warmly and positively'.

**On 7 September** in Warsaw the leader of the Union of Poles A.Borys met with the Polish prime-minister M.Bieliek, who said that Poland would by any means including financial aid help the Union of Poles in Belarus with A.Borys at its head.

**On 8 September** in Strasbourg A.Borys met with Secretary General of the European Council. She also addressed the members of the EU delegation on affairs of Belarus and the members of the biggest faction of the European Parliament – the faction of the European People's Party. She said that we should not only remember about the persecution of the Polish minority in Belarus, but also about the repressions against the Belarusian opposition. 'We, the Poles, are happy to have another Native land – Poland to take care of us... Belarusians do not have this' added A.Borys.

**On 8 September** the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs commented on the Polish Foreign Ministry's recent decision not to recognize the leaders of the Union of Poles elected at the Congress in Vaukavysk in late July. 'It is beyond understanding how a governmental body of a foreign state can recognize or not recognize the election within a public organization in a different country. Poland's attempt to act as a judge in Belarusian legislation looks absolutely incongruous,' said the statement. A few days earlier the Polish Foreign Ministry declared that A.Borys and other leaders of the Union of Poles elected in March would remain Poland's partners.

**On 22 September** it became known that the personnel administration of the Belarusian State University sent to the dean's offices letters requesting information about Lithuanians and Poles. The oral explanation provided by the HR is they need it for statistical purposes. As is known, since 1994, when the first Belarusian national passport appeared, the passports have not had any national origin section. The head of the personal administration of BSU Aleh

Klimkovich commented: every year they collect information about foreigners among the students and lecturers to know the university makeup. And this information was for in-house use only and wouldn't be disclosed. What should be noted is that this letter was produced at the time of deteriorated relations between Belarus and Lithuania and Poland.

**On 29 September** the Belarusian language grade where Ianka Lapitski, 9, went to was dissolved before the last academic year started. It only had two pupils. According to Zhodzina officials, keeping a grade for two students is expensive for the town budget. Ianka's parents refused to have the son transferred to a Russian language school. Ianka's parents Aliaksei and Sviatlana Lapitskis appealed to the Education Minister Aliaksandr Radzkou for assistance. In their letter they stated that since 2004 due to the decisions of the local authorities they had been deprived of the fundamental right for the son to receive obligatory and free-of-charge education in the mother tongue that is an official language in Belarus. In the Lapitskis' opinion, deprivation of Ianka of the possibility to learn in Belarusian the local educational authority left no choice to them. Moreover, the local officials exerted psychological pressure and force to accept the much deteriorated conditions for continuing the education. In a letter to the minister the Lapitskis expressed their 'strong protest' against the discriminatory, in their opinion, actions of Zhodzina town educational authority.

**On 3 October** the 9-year-old Ianka Lapitski from Zhodzina got a hope to continue his education in Belarusian. The Ministry of Education addressed Zhodzina City Executive Committee with the initiative to solve the conflict. The Lapitskis received a copy of the letter of the Ministry of Education that was directed Zhodzina Executive Committee. According to Ianka's father Aliaksei Lapitski in this letter the vice-minister of education Kazimir Faryno asked Zhodzina officials to take the necessary measures to provide constitutional the constitutional right to Ianka Lapitski and his parents to receive education in Belarusian.

**On 5 October** it became known that the representatives of national and religious minorities who had signed the appeal to Aliaksandr Lukashenka to support the chair of the Union of Poles Anzhalika Borys not recognized by authorities, were summonsed to the prosecutor's office. The appeal was signed by eight persons, including representatives of the German, Gypsy, Tartar and Polish Diaspora. They demanded to stop the intervention of the authorities in internal affairs of national public associations and start a dialogue with their representatives instead. Two months passed, but the signers received no answer from Lukashenka's administration. Instead of it the Committee on religious and national cases asked the prosecutor's office to conduct a check-up. As a result the prosecutor Pavel Ieliseieu summonsed each signer with the aim to find whether he belonged to any Diaspora.

**On 5 October** Viktor Borys, brother of Anzhalika Borys (whom the Belarusian authorities don't recognize as the head of the Union of Poles in Belarus), was forced to disemploy from Hrodna police. Anzhalika Borys was also informed he would be tried by the disciplinary commission for having not executed the order to bring her for interrogation.

**On 5 October** the former chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus Tadevush Kruchkouski was banned entrance to Poland. The Polish frontier guards cancelled Kruchkouski's entry visa on the boundary transition point in Kuznica. They issued to him the document where it was stated that he presented danger to the safety and public order of Poland. Mr Kruchkouski became the third UPB activist who was officially banned entrance to Poland. All of the three took part in the August assembly in Vaukavysk that was staged by the Belarusian authorities with the aim to get a loyal leadership of UPB elected.

**On 10 October** the Ministry of Justice declared legitimate the repeated assembly of the Union of Poles in Belarus that took place on 27 August in Vaukavysk. At this assembly, organized with participation of the Belarusian authorities, Iuzaf Luchnik was elected the new chair of the UPB.

**On 10 October** in Zhodzina there took place the negotiations between the parents of Ianka Lapitski and the local educational authorities. According to Ianka's father Aliaksei Lapitski, the vice-chair of Zhodzina City Educational Department Liudmila Talmachova said that at the sitting of Zhodzina City Executive Committee it was decided to provide Ianka with the possibility to learn in Belarusian. 'We haven't received the official document yet. It is necessary to look how they put it, but tomorrow Ianka will start his classes at gymnasium #1. They have found one teacher,' commented Aliaksei Lapitski. This news made the boy glad, because he didn't go to school for more than a year after the Belarusian-language form where he used to learn was closed.

**On 11 October** the college board of Hrodna Regional Court left in force the temporary restriction for foreign travels to the activist of the Union of Poles in Belarus, journalist Andrei Pachobut. On 27 July Hrodna Leninski Borough Court decided that Mr Pachobut evaded from paying the fine for participation in the unauthorized picket that took place on 6 July, despite the fact that by 27 July Mr Pachobut paid 3 700 000 rubles from the 5 000 000 of the fine that was imposed on him. The College Board decided that the restriction would be removed after the payment of the whole sum of the fine.

**On 11 October** the representative of the Romany minority Mikalai Kalinin and other representative of national and religious and national minorities that signed a petition to A.Lukashenka in support of the unrecognized by the au-

thorities chair of the Union of Poles in Belarus Anzhalika Borys were officially warned by Minsk prosecutor's office about the inadmissibility of violation of the law *On public associations*. In the warning to Kalinin it is stated that he, acting on behalf of the Romany Diaspora public association, participated in the constituent conference of the international and inter-confessional initiative *Consent* and signed the appeal to Lukashenka in defense of Anzhalika Borys.

**On 19 October** the chair of the Belarusian Language Society Aleh Trusau called non-objective the report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs *On contemporary situation of the Belarusian language in the Republic of Belarus*. 'The process of expansive use of the Belarusian language takes place in different branches of social life, first of all in the educational system, in the field of culture, in mass media, etc.'. The ministry gives the following numbers: 60% of all secondary educational establishments in Belarus have the Belarusian language of instruction, 40% of kindergartens are Belarusian-language ones, more than 3 000 students are educated in Belarusian at the Belarusian State Pedagogic University and the number of Belarusian-language schools in towns and cities has doubled in comparison to 2000. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs doesn't give exact numbers and percentage of the Belarusian-language schools, higher educational establishments, pupils and students. The chair of the Belarusian Language Society Aleh Trusau calls such approach non-objective. 'They again count those small village schools, where some dozens of pupils learn and don't give the percent of the pupils who are taught in Belarusian. The real situation is that less than 30% learn in Belarusian. It is a catastrophic number according to the UNESCO standards.' Mr Trusau also points that the number of the Belarusian-language schools in Belarus is decreasing. For instance, in Minsk there used to be 11 schools with the Belarusian language of instruction, only 4 are left, the only Belarusian-language lyceum was closed and there are no higher educational establishments with the Belarusian language of instruction. The ministry tries to hush these facts up. Aleh Trusau also disproves the information that the number of the films in Belarusian language increases. Speaking of mass media, the MFA state that the state TV has 80% of broadcasts in Belarusian, but again keep silent about the percentage of the Belarusian-language programs. In general, the abovementioned report doesn't contain any examples of the narrowing of the use of the Belarusian language and no problem facts. To Trusau's mind, the MFA consciously misleads the foreign partners by such non-objective and distorted information. The ministry explained the report was composed by the collective of its workers according to the information that was received from the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Culture and other state organ. The MFA representative Ruslan Ilesin stated that the ministry would examine the remarks about the non-objectiveness of the report and would present its answer within a week's term.

**On 20 October** in Hrodna the police detained the activist of the Union of Poles Andrei Pachobut, chief editor of *Magazyn Polski* and member of the editorial office of the newspaper *Głos znad Niemna*. He was standing out in the street, waiting for an acquaintance. However, a police car came instead. The policemen stated they had some questions related to the numbers of *Głos znad Niemna* that were issued in Poland and distributed in Belarus. The journalist was taken to Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. There he was informed that Hrodna regional prosecutor Trutsko had applied to the BBIA, asking to check whether there were no law violations in distribution of this newspaper. The police proposed Mr Pachobut to give explanations, but he refused. After this he was released, but was told to wait for the investigators who were going to Hrodna (he was a suspect in the criminal case brought by Shchuchyn District Prosecutor's Office). At about 8 p.m. two policemen drove Andrei Pachobut to Shchuchyn and tried to make him sign a written undertaking not to leave the town. Mr Pachobut refused to do it saying he disagreed with such restraint and wouldn't take any action without consulting with his lawyer first.

**On 21 October** it became known that the three-year struggle of the Karalkous in Horki for the right to receive education in Belarusian language gave some results. Despite the negative attitude of the local authorities, their initiative was upheld by other citizens of the town. At present about 40 children are taught in Belarusian there. Maryia Karalkova learns in Horki school #4. She received the possibility to be educated in her native language as a result of the insistent struggle of her parents. Viktor Karalkou, Maryia's father, is a well-known activist of the democratic movement in Horki, a member of the Conservative-Christian Party BPF and the leader of the local organization of this party. 'The authorities answered the refusal of our daughter to go to Russian-language form with violent oppression with the assistance of the prosecutor's office and the police. They even wanted to deprive us of parental rights. Finally, the Ministry of Education paid reaction to this situation,' said Mr Karalkou.

**On 24 October** Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs considered the complaint of the activist of the Union of Poles, journalist Andrei Pachobut against the decision of Hrodna Leninski borough administrative commission. The commission fined him about 12 US dollars because he allegedly trampled a lawn during the unauthorized picket in defense of the newspaper *Głos znad Niemna* that took place on 6 July in Lenin square in Hrodna. The court issued a private observation to the administrative commission, but left its decision in force.

**On 28 October** Anzhaliika Borys, the leader of the Union of Poles in Belarus (who is not officially recognized by the government), was detained while

crossing the border between Belarus and Poland by car at the Berestovica-Babrouniki border point. Borys was allowed into Poland only after seven hours. She said that the customs officials were expecting the arrival of some sophisticated equipment to inspect the car. According to Borys, they explained their actions as ordered by Minsk officials. Anzhalika Borys thought that she was allowed to leave only thanks to having informed the Polish mass media of her detention at the border.

**On 1 November** it became known that the information about the famous Minsk citizens who were Jews by nationality was not included into the four volumes of the historical documentary chronicle. It was claimed by Professor of M. Tank Belarusian State Pedagogical University of, Emanuel Iofe at the International Scientific conference *Famous Minsk citizens of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries*. According to his words Minsk was one of the biggest cities where Jews settled population lived and by the First national census in 1897 52,2 per cents of its citizens were Jews. 'I have prepared all the necessary materials but they did not enter the chronicle,' said Mr Iofe.

**On 3 November** the Belarusian frontier guards did not allow Anzhalika Arekhva to enter Poland. She is an active member of the Union of Poles, which is unrecognized by the authorities. She was on her way from Hrodna to Biaystok. She bought the ticket to the train till Kuznica Bielastockaja. At the customs examination she was examined very carefully and allowed to enter but she failed to pass frontier control. 'They took my passport under the reason that they have doubts in the stamp 'departure to all countries of the world'. The stamp was imprinted on in the district passport and visa department urgently. Frontier guards said: you have registration in Lida but why the stamp if made in the local passport and visa department? We have doubts and should check.' Before that Anzhalika was a principal of civil school attached to the Union of Poles.

**On 6 November** the meeting of members of the Union of Poles with Iuzaf Luchnik (whom Belarusian authorities consider as the chair of the UPB) was to have taken place in the town of Sapotskin in Hrodna district. Members of the union were informed about the meeting by announcements and some of them even received personal invitations. However, the town citizens ignored the meeting: only to persons came to it. The majority of the town citizens are Poles, but they still support the democratically elected chair of their organization, Anzhalika Borys, despite the refusal of the authorities to confess her official position.

**On 8 November** the honorary chairman of the Union of Poles in Belarus Tadevush Havin was summoned to the police. The investigating officer asked

him to recall how the funds of the Union of Poles were managed when Mr Havin headed this organization. Mr Havin said the investigator was mostly interested in foreign aid to the children of Hrodna region. This interrogation was related to the case filed to check up the activity of Anzhalika Borys as a chair of the Union of Poles.

**On 11 November** the founder of the Union of Poles Tadevush Havin received the decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus in which it is stated that the Chairman of the Supreme Court V.Sukala after considering the materials of the civil case against Mr Havin cancelled the decision that Hrodna Kastychnitski Borough Court passed on 12 August finding Mr Havin guilty of violating article #259 of the Criminal Code (hooliganism) and was punishing him with 15 days of arrest. This case dealt with the circumstances when Tadevush Havin, who was already under the administrative arrest, was accused of hooligan actions against another prisoner and punished with additional 15 days of arrest - as it turned out, illegally. Tadevush Havin, who spent almost a month under administrative arrest, is indignant with illegal actions of the authorities and thinks that the guilty shall account for illegal actions. He intends to appeal the court against the judge of Hrodna Kastychnitski Borough Court demanding a moral compensation.

**On 14 November** five representatives of the Union of Poles in Belarus unrecognized by the authorities including Anzhalika Borys were summonsed to Hrodna police investigation department for interrogation. The investigating officer Dzmitry Labouski was trying to get from the UBP representatives a confession - where were they getting money from and how did they distribute these money along with the donor's aid for the organization. For example, the investigator asked about that Inesa Todryk, who worked as newspaper designer of the Union of Poles. Naturally, Inesa Todryk said that she did not belong to the UBP management and didn't have relation to that. In his turn, the investigator was reminding her all the time about the criminal responsibility for untruthful information. In addition he said that she would have to confront on 16 November. UBP chairman Anzhalika Borys was surprised at this interrogation as during the time of her management UBP received no foreign aid. Anzhalika Borys is sure that by summoning her and the others for interrogations the authorities wanted to frighten those UBP members who support her.

**On 17 November** representatives of the Romany national minority submitted to the head of the Committee on religious and national affairs and the chair of the Commission on human rights of the Republic of Belarus the claim to prohibit for TV broadcasting the film *Tabor Goes to Jail*, that was based on the police video of the detention of drug dealers, and make the TV publicly apologize to the Romany minority. According to representatives of the Romany soci-



ety, the film contains much negative information about the Romany. In the very beginning of the film it is said the journalist's aim wasn't to discredit the whole Romany society. However, this film brings on such results.

**On 20 November** Belarusian border guards detained Andrei Pachobut who was coming back from Poland through the border checkpoint Kuznica-Bruzgi. Mr Pachobut was kept for several hours and then they took his passport from him. He was detained at about 10 p.m. together with Mechyslau laskevich, chair of Hrodna branch of the Union of Poles in Belarus who, like Pachobut, took part in the meeting with the prime-minister of Poland Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz in Warsaw.

**On 23 November** the Belarusian border guards did not allow entry to Poland to two activists of the Union of Poles unrecognized by the authorities: Anzhalika Arekhva and Inesa Todryk. The UPB activists planned to go by train at 10 a.m. from Hrodna to Biaystok on a business trip. The border guard who took their documents for checkup restored their passports in some time and could not explain why they had not been allowed to leave abroad. The only thing that he recommended was to come to the next train at 2 p.m., then he said the higher officials would be there and if they were not allowed to leave again they would be explained the reasons.

**On 8 December** the preliminary meeting of the judge of with Andzhei Pisalnik and the representative of the pro-governmental Union of Poles, lawyer lauhien Kalosh took place at Hrodna Leninski Borough Court. The reason for the meeting was the suit of the chair of that Union of Poles luzaf Luchnik, who stated the former editor of *Gios znad Niemna* newspaper Andzhei Pisalnik stole the photo-camera that belonged to the editorial office and cost 1 500 US dollars. Andzhei Pisalnik explained to the judge that in May he received this photo-camera and wrote a receipt for it. The camera was used by all members of the editorial office. However, in July the Polish House in Hrodna was assaulted by the riot police and the police forcibly led out of there 20 members of the Union of Poles in Belarus. According to Pisalnik, he had no possibility to take away the photo-camera. All the detainees were taken to the police, where they were interrogated for several hours. After this the police guarded the building of the Polish House, not letting anybody in.

**On 9 December** Hrodna Leninski Borough Passport and Visa Service returned to Andrei Pachobut his passport with the inscription 'temporary restricted foreign traveling' and signature of Hrodna regional passport and visa service Hryhoryeu in it. The journalist considered it as an attempt of the police not to let him to go to Poland from the Ukraine. Before that the police annulled the passport seal that allowed going abroad so that he couldn't come to Poland.

**On 12 December** the Belarusian border guards didn't let in Belarus Michai Dvorczek, adviser of the prime-minister of Poland on affairs of Poles Abroad. Mr Dvorczek was going to Hrodna region to meet with members of the Union of Poles of Belarus that wasn't recognized by the Belarusian authorities. Michai Dvorczek was going to Poland on the delegation that also included Adam Lipinski, the state secretary of the chancellor of the prime-minister, and the general consul of Poland Andzhej Krentowski. At the transition point Kuznica-Bruzgi the Belarusian border guards took away the passport from Michai Dvorczek and left him waiting separately from his colleague. Then the adviser was informed his visit to Belarus was undesirable. The border guards told him to apply to the Embassy of Belarus in Warsaw for details. The premier-minister of Poland Kazimierz Marcinkewicz said to journalists Warsaw would respond to the actions of the Belarusian side: 'It's a very bad practice and the Polish diplomatic services will react to it accordingly'.

**In the evening of 26 December** the Belarusian border guards detained the activists of the Union of Poles of Belarus Andzhei Pisalnik, Andrei Pachobut and Andzhei Lisouski. It happened at the assembly that took place near the town of Sapotskin (Hrodna region). The border guards composed on them reports for violation of the regime of entrance to the border zone and then released them.

## 12. Academic liberties and the right to education

Anatol Liaukovich was elected the new chairman of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party *Narodnaia Hramada*. **On 28 January** he received a reprimand at his work. He said that soon he could be fired. Liaukovich works as a docent at the philosophy department of Brest State University. The reprimand was issued by the rector of the university Mechyslau Chasnouski for alleged ignorance of the results of the last-year attestation, demonstrated by Mr Liaukovich. Since 2004 the administration of the educational establishment had been looking for a reason to get rid of the lecturer, who worked there for more than 25 years.

**On 4 February** the general assembly of the National Academy of Sciences didn't uphold the new statute of the academy that was proposed by its administration. The scientists called it open manifestation of disobedience and protest against violation of the academic rights and liberties. In the new edition of the statute it was proposed to introduce the contract system, openly elect Mem-

bers and Corresponded Members at the general assembly and prohibit political activity to scientists. The scientists stated their intention to continue fighting for their rights and create the movement of intellectuals.

**On 10 March** it became known the administration of Mahiliou State University made Pavel Usau, the leader of Mahiliou city branch of Young Social Democrats and Homel regional organization of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada, wrote application for retirement. He worked there as a lecturer of political science. Before that, the lecturer received two warnings – one of them for running for a seat at the Chamber of Representatives in autumn 2004 and the second for the explaining the political situation to students, whom he urged to come to the polling stations only on the Election Day, 17 October. The public activist was also informed that it wouldn't be easy for him to defend the doctor's dissertation, which he was preparing.

**On 22 March** the court rejected the suit of Anatol Liaukovich, chair of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party, against the reprimand that was issued to him by the rector of Brest State University. Mr Liaukovich decided to retire from the university after he was elected the party chairman, but it didn't influence his intention to complain against the reprimand. Mr Liaukovich said it was a case of honor for him. The court hearings lasted for a day. In the evening the judge Siarhei Beraziuk issued the verdict that the reprimand couldn't be abolished.

**On 1 April** it became known that students of Belarusian State Agricultural Academy of the town of Horki (Mahiliou region) weren't allowed to gain work experience abroad. Students were very disappointed with the fact, while the academy administration explained the state was trying to put in order the foreign travels of its citizens. According to the information of Sviatlana Naskova, dean on foreign relations, in 2004 about 600 students went abroad, mainly to the farms of Great Britain. It was a legal possibility for them to work abroad, gain experience and earn money. Then the officials stated it was necessary to have a license to send students abroad. The academy didn't have such license. According to the acting director of the academy Vasil Neudakh, the academy couldn't do anything to help its students. 'It is a state affair and while everything is put in order in the state and the complicated relations with foreign countries this issue must be regulated', he said.

**On 19 April** Antonas Valonis, Foreign Minister of Lithuania, made a statement to this effect after an informal meeting of the heads of Foreign Ministers of the European Union countries in Luxembourg, which took place at the end of the last week. The statement by the Foreign Ministry of Lithuania notes that Antonas Valonis mentioned 'tendencies in Belarus, which cause concern'.

According to the Minister, with respect to Belarus the European Union mostly uses approaches oriented to bring about concrete results. Antonas Valonis emphasized the important role played by the European Humanities University in Lithuania's aspirations 'to pass universal European values to the academic community of the neighboring country in the broadest manner possible'.

**On 21 April** the general assembly of the National Academy of Sciences didn't adopt in the new statute the majority of the regulations that weren't approved of by the group of academicians. Scientists call it a disloyalty act and an example in defending of the academic rights and liberties and the common human values. The first hours of the assembly were devoted to the establishment of the order of voting for the amendments to the statute. As a result it was decided to vote each amendment separately. However, the academy administration, headed by Mikhail Miasnikovich (who was appointed by Lukashenka) amalgamated several amendments in order to reduce the number and make academicians to vote for them. That's how the amendment about the transfer of academicians to the contract form of employment and some others were adopted. However, the amendment according to which academicians and correspondent members of the academy were to be elected by open vote was rejected.

**On 16 May** in Berlin there opened the photo exhibition *We Continue*, devoted to the history of the European Humanities University that was closed down by the Belarusian authorities. The exhibition was aimed at drawing the attention of the German Ministry of Culture to the fate of the Belarusian students in exile and the issue of recognition of the EHU diploma in Europe. The exhibition was organized by the 17 former students of EHU who received asylum at Free University in Berlin.

**On 20 May** Uladzimir Shloma, chair of a district education department, prohibited to senior pupils of Vitsebsk to go on excursions to Kyiv, the capital of the Ukraine. However, pupils of 10A grade of secondary school #40, their parents and the class master Tatsiana Seviarynets (Pavel Seviarynets' mother) made him set this ruling aside. To Tatsiana Seviarynets' mind, being afraid of 'orange' consequences of trips to the Ukraine, the officials gave to her pupils an excellent possibility to learn how to defend their rights and, what is especially important, to win.

**On 20 June** the third-year students of the extra-mural department of the journalism faculty at Belarusian State University Hanna Kavaliova and Valery Ruselik complained to the education minister and the university rector against the actions of Aleh Sluka, lecturer on history of the Belarusian journalism in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The students stated he gave them unsatisfactory

marks at the exam because of biased attitude to them. They also associated it with their signatures in support of their year-mate Volha Klaskouskaia, journalist of *Narodnaia volia*. Hanna Kavaliova and Valery Ruselik asked to establish an expert commission for objective evaluation of their written works, rehabilitation of their rights and 'prevention of possible future lawless and discriminative actions against the students who manifest their public position and openly express their views'.

**On 21 June** Homel City Education Board refused to employ a graduate of Frantsishak Skaryna University, an activist of the unregistered youth movement *Lemon* Iulia Sivets. In spring, when the philology department graduates were being officially distributed, the city education department sent to the university a request for the philologist Iulia Sivets. However, one of these days the education department recalled its request. The university graduate said that the real reason was her public and political activity. 'Sure, they will find some official reason for sending me to a school in some remote part. This is what happens everywhere and not only due to the distribution. The same situation is with expulsions from universities. No one says this is because you are involved in public and political activity. People get expelled because they do not pass exams or for some other reasons,' she said.

**For 29 June – 1 September** the collective of the Belarusian National Humanities Lyceum departed to Warsaw. The pupils learned and listened to lectures on film production. The main part of the organizational work was implemented by the Warsaw club of catholic intellectuals. All in all, about 100 persons went to Warsaw. 87 of them were pupils, the rest – teachers and parents.

**On 30 June** the assembly of teachers and students of the Institute of Contemporary Knowledge was held in Minsk. At the assembly the intention to liquidate the three branches of the institute in Vitsebsk, Hrodna and Brest as well as the department of law and social technologies in Minsk was declared. It was also said that the liquidation was initiated by the Ministry of Education, which considered that the education at these units of the institute didn't meet the present standards. According to the assembly participants the real reason was that the institute was private, that's why he had follow the fate of Iakub Kolas Belarusian National Humanities Lyceum and the European Humanities University.

**On 30 June** the scientific soviet of the Institute of History at the National Academy of Belarus excluded from its members Henadz Sahanovich, a well-known researcher of the medieval times in Belarus who wrote many popular books about the relations between the Moscow state and the Great Principality of Lithuania. Before this move Mr Sahanovich was fired from the institute of

history because of alleged violation of the working discipline. The matter was he went on a scientific mission to the Polish city of Krakow without the official permission. However, he went there at his own expense, because the institute didn't have any means for it anyway. Sahanovich's colleagues point the real reason for this lynching was his rigid scientific position. Short time before the dismissal he wrote a scientific article for the Russian magazine *Rodina* about the present situation of the Belarusian historiography and mentioned the authorities didn't welcome critical views on the wars between the Great Principality of Lithuania and the Moscow state in the 16-18 centuries. Sahanovich's colleague Zakhar Shybeka thusly commented on the events: 'I consider Henadz Sahanovich one of the best-known and one of the most talented and professional historians of Belarus. I don't know who the Institute of History needs if they don't need Sahanovich. I think that the man of his level and talent will be able to continue his historical studies, the more that Henadz researches history on the European level and, pitifully enough, is more popular abroad than here, in Belarus.'

**On 15 July** in the evening Prof. Terry Besh was called to the international relations faculty of the Belarusian State University, where they informed him of the authorities' demand that he and his two daughters, 10 and 13, leave the territory of Belarus within two hours. Mr Besh telephoned the US Embassy. The US diplomats got in touch with the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and asked if Terry Besh and his family could have several days to pack up. The Belarusian side agreed that Terry Besh and his daughters leave Belarus on 19 July after the representatives of the nationality and migration department returned to the professor his passport. The International Relations Department of Belarusian State University didn't know why Terry Besh was prohibited to stay on the territory of Belarus. The 40-year-old Terry Besh has worked in Belarus for two years. He not only taught international law in BSU but also organized charity events for the educational establishments in Belarus. He organized international student conferences, seminars and courses. According to Mr Besh, he was only involved with scholarly projects in Belarus. According to Mr Besh, before the presidential elections in 2006 Aliaksandr Lukashenka started the great purging aimed at the representatives of the West. The US professor believes that his case is similar to the closure of the European Humanities University.

**On 19 July** the education department of Svetlahorsk District Executive Committee refused to renew the employment contract with the chemistry and biology teacher of Prudki secondary school Henadz Biada. Mr Biada is a member of the Conservative Christian Party BPF. He taught his subjects only in Belarusian. The school authorities claim that the contract with the teacher was not renewed because of lack of teacher training education. Henadz Biada grad-

uated from Horki Agricultural Academy, and is qualified as an agronomist. He spent more than five years in school as a teacher.

**On 20 July** the US Professor Terry Besh, who has worked with Belarusian State University, left Belarus. The Belarusian authorities refused to renew his work visa. Mr Besh admitted that within the last 72 hours he had felt the close attention of the Belarusian secret services. Over ten students and people who took part in the Belarusian educational programs came to see the US professor at the railroad station.

**On 3 August** the Ministry of Education didn't permit the traineeship in the United States of America to the sixty Belarusian school-children who won the context of FLEX exchange program, announced by the state newspaper *Nas-taunitskaia Hazeta* in October 2004. The ministry officials refuse to comment on this event. In March 2005 Aliaksandr Lukashenka signed the decree 'About certain measures to counteract human trafficking'. On the basis of this document the Ministry of Education adopted a special instruction. The officials explained to the parents that their children couldn't go to the US because one of the instruction paragraphs was violated and they hadn't been informed about the contest and its conditions.

**On 22 August** it became known that 8 schools were closed in Homel Region on the eve of the new curriculum year. As a rule, the authorities close Belarusian-language rural schools because of insufficient amount of pupils and financial inexpediency. Then children have to go to schools that are situated in other villages or towns.

**On 22 August** in Hrodna the chair of the Union of Poles Anzhalka Borys was summonsed to Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. After she was interrogated as a witness, Anzhalka Borys revealed the questions asked: where she was in the night of 6 and 7 December, when some unidentified person burned the *Opel* that belonged to Tadevush Kruchkouski, the ex-chair of the Union of Poles.

**On 23 August** L. Haravy was fired from the post of school headmaster. He occupied the post for 18 years. The decision was motivated by expiry of contract and as the ex-headmaster thinks, educational department head's reluctance to work together with a person who shares his ideas on various social and educational issues. Haravy took an active part in the Parliamentary election of 2004. He is a member of Haradok District Deputy Soviet, a member of the Central Committee of BSDP (*Hramada*) and a member of the Central Council of the Belarusian Language Society. He also participates in the work of the Assembly of the deputies of local soviets.

The **1 September** meeting of teachers and pupils of the Belarusian Humanities Lyceum (that was liquidated by the Belarusian authorities and now exists in underground) took place near the building where the lyceum used to be situated. The teachers congratulated the children and their parents with the new curriculum year and thanked for good progress in education demonstrated last year. As far as the children worked in Poland throughout the summer, the teachers decided to start the classes on 1 October. At the same time several youth organizations sent letters to education departments of Belarusian towns and cities. They asked the officials to report on the situation with Belarusian as language of instruction in their regions, whether they had enough books and other school aids. They also asked why there were no forms with Belarusian language of instruction.

**2 September** news was received that the confiscated building of Iakub Kolas National Humanities Lyceum at 21 Kirau St. in Minsk would be occupied by Minsk Tsentralny District Court.

**On 8 September** the pupils of Akhremchyk artistic college (that used to be a Belarusian-language one) were informed that since this curriculum year all subjects would be taught in Russian. It was said that there's no money for purchase of the maths schoolbooks in Belarusian. This news shocked many of the schoolchildren and their parents. The pupils composed a petition to the gymnasium administration with the proposal to refuse from dinners so that the books could be bought. Valiantsina Loika, representative of the parental committee, said that russification concerned not only this gymnasium. At the same time, some youth organizations sent letters to education departments of Belarusian cities where they asked officials about the situation with education in Belarusian and purchase of school-aids. They questioned the education departments why there were no forms with Belarusian language of education on their territory.

**On 5 October** Aliaksandr Lukashenka has signed the decree that imposes age limitations to foreign travels of Belarusian pupils for health improvement. According to this decree, during the curriculum year it is allowed to take abroad for more than 15 days only pupils of 1-4 grades of the primary school and 1-5 grades of specialized schools. The official version states the decree is necessary for saving the regularity of the curriculum process. Teachers think that the real intention of the authorities is to limit the contacts of schoolchildren with the West. According to the decree, the organizers of recreation travels must inform ministries of education and health care and the department of the humanitarian activity of Presidential Administration about facts of non-returning of children or the persons who escort them, within day's term.



al Academy of Sciences of Belarus fired Andrei Kishtymau, The senior researcher, candidate of historical science Andrei Kishtymau is the leading investigator of the country's economy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is well-known in Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Russian and the Ukraine. For about five years he hosted at Belarusian TV popular programs dedicated to the history of the country's economy and Belarusian businessmen. In spring 2005 there was issued the 4<sup>th</sup> volume of the encyclopaedia 'History of Belarus'. The preface, the conclusion and the part that describes the economical affairs of Belarus as a part of the Russian Empire were written by Kishtymau. Mr Kishtymau said the following: 'I was invited to the personnel department and read the order of the director, Aliaksandr Kavalienia, for my firing because of the end of the contract term. I worked in the institute from 1979 and went through all posts from junior assistant to senior researcher... This summer the Institute of History issued the monograph 'Historiography of the agrarian history of Belarus.1861-1917', where my surname is mentioned with the characteristics that remind of 1937. It is difficult to understand the logics of the author, who calls anti-Soviet my research of the period of monarchical Russia and says my works contain 'zoological hatred to the present authorities'. It is impossible to dispute with the author who characterizes my research as 'obscene anti-Soviet pasquil.'

**On 14 October** the judge of Haradok District Court Aliaksandr Liashkovich turned up the suit of the dismissed director of a secondary school Leanid Haravy. In August Haradok District Education Department refused to prolong the contract to Mr Haravy. Being sure that he was fired for political motives, Mr Haravy applied to the court with the aim to get rehabilitated at work and get the wage for the period which he spent in redundancy. He also wanted to exact 2 000 000 rubles of moral compensation. However, the court decided the case in favor of the district education department that was represented by the lawyer of Haradok District Executive Committee Iryna Dziamianenka. Leanid Haravy worked as a school director for 18 years. Under his rule the school has become one of the best in the district. However, Ms Dziamianenka stated the dismissal of Haravy was a simple case when the employer decided not to prolong the contract. The court also ignored Haravy's statement that he was fired with violation of the law on the status of deputies of local soviets. According to this law, a deputy can be fired only with agreement of other deputies of the local deputy soviet.

**On 20 October** 30 instructors of the branch of the Institute of Contemporary Knowledge in Hrodna, which was liquidated this year, sued to Minsk Pershamaiski Borough Court to get compensation payments for their dismissal. They demanded that the employment contract termination be acknowledged as invalid. The Institute of Contemporary Knowledge was founded

in 1990 and it was the first non-budget higher educational establishment that provided humanitarian training. It had three branches based in Hrodna, Vitsebsk and Brest.

**On 15 November**, after Aliaksandr Milinkevich's meetings with the students of Baranavichy Non-state Economic and Judicial College, the teacher Viktor Syrytsa had to write the request for his own dismissal. One of the oldest teachers of the economic and judicial college Viktor Syrytsa states that he was forced to leave the educational institution. He was a bit surprised with this decision of the Ministry of Education and the college administration, since when the students were invited to the meeting with Aliaksandr Milinkevich, Mr Syrytsa was calming down everybody saying that the meeting would have a form of usual conversation and that the action was absolutely lawful and, besides, it took place after the lessons. As a result, everything happened vice versa. Syrytsa said: 'My students, who took part in the meeting, were very much suppressed. First of all, they were threatened with dismissal. I have written the request about my own dismissal to stop this pressurization. In addition, our vice-minister of education Zhuk summoned the director and practically ordered him: either Syrytsa asks for dismissal or the educational institution doesn't pass the inspection certification. In the presence of all the administration the director told me: if you don't write the request, our educational institution won't be certified this year in December. But the main reason why I wrote the request to release me is because I was against the repressions. They threatened the students with dismissal.'

**On 15 December** the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (*Hramada*) issued a note of protest against the politically motivated harassment of teachers and students. The statement reads: 'On 14 December the rector of Homel State Technical University Stanislau Sarela fired the lecturer on political science, postgraduate of the Belarusian State University and undergraduate of the European Humanities University Iauhen Furseieu. BSDP considered this dismissal as lynching for public and political activity. Iauhen Furseieu is the chair of Homel city BSDP organization and member of the Central committee of the party. The pretext for the dismissal of Ia. Furseieu was his summons to the curriculum session of the European Humanities University. The rector S.Sarela refused to sign the leave of absence to Mr Furseieu despite the fact he had no right to do this according to the law and the collective agreement... In March 2005 the chair of Mahiliou city BSDP organization Pavel Usau was fired from Mahiliou State University. Such actions of the administration of higher educational establishments mustn't remain unpunished'.

### 13. Persecution of opposition-minded youth activists and organizations

**On 12 January** the citizen of Mahiliou Maksim Dvaretski was sentenced to 3 days of jail for the graffiti *Freedom to Marynich!*. He was detained at night and taken to Mahiliou Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. There the police composed a report under article #156 of the Code of Administrative Violations (small disorderly conduct). At 11 a.m. on 12 January Maksim Dvaretski was taken to court. The trial lasted several minutes. The police stated that he 'swore when making the graffiti'. Judge Tyblenka refused to listen to the witnesses of the detainee and turned up his petition for advocacy services.

**On 17 January** 23-year old twins Aliaksei and Siarhei Zhuraulious were fired from the fire brigade in Polatsk for being the proxies of the candidate of the BPF Valeryia Som to the parliament. They were made to retire 'on their own free will'. The brothers consider this firing as a violation of the fundamental human rights and the Constitution, but say it even strengthened their political conscience instead of crushing them.

**On 19 January** in Minsk activists of the youth movement *Zubr* held a picket of solidarity with the political prisoners Mikhail Marynich, Valery Levaneuski and Aliaksandr Vasilieu. At 4 p.m. about twenty members of *Zubr* filed in line in Valadarski St., opposite the investigative isolator where Mikhail Marynich was kept. They held Marynich's photos in their hands. The action participants said they would hold such support pickets every month. The picket lasted for half an hour. The police came to the place of the action several minutes after its end.

**On 23 January** the police detained the oppositional activists who handed out orange flysheets devoted to inauguration of the president of the Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko. In the fly-sheets of the unregistered movement *Lemon* the orange revolution was condemned for the facts that the citizens of the Ukraine woke up in a free country, can elect their president and the Supreme Court had more authority than presidential word. 'You'd rather read *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* newspaper, watch Belarusian TV and be pleased with the happy life that resulted from the wise government of Lukashenka', advised the fly-sheet. Among the detainees there were:

1. Artsiom Buryla
2. Iury Lapitski
3. Kanstantsin Leushunou
4. Siarhei Osipau
5. Volha Sytsko. The police composed reports for activity on behalf of un-

registered organization and distribution of printed production which was harmful to the state and public order.

**On 28 January** the activist of *Maladaia Hramada*, former student of Belarusian Academy of Arts Dzmitry Chartkou passed his appeal for political asylum to the Embassy of the Ukraine in Belarus. He explained his deed in the following way: 'I was made to take my documents away from Belarusian Academy of Arts. During the last electoral campaign some workers of secret services warned me about the possibility of physical liquidation and told us to be very careful. Then I was pressurized to take my documents away from Belarusian Academy of Arts. For me the main thing is to secure my family and friends from danger. That's why I decided to make even more political step and file the request for political asylum in the Ukraine.' Mr Chartkou took his documents from Belarusian Academy of Arts, where he was a first-year student at the department of film-production. He said the administration of this educational establishment insisted on it and that the reasons were his detention during the after-referendum opposition action of 19 October 2004 and participation in orange revolution in the Ukraine.

**On 28 January** three activists of *Zubr* – Maksim Dvaretski, Mikola Iliin and Pavel Uhrynovich – were detained in the Russian-Belarusian University in Mahiliou for handing out the independent newspaper *Vybor* and taken to Mahiliou Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs.

**On 2 February** Homel Chyhunachny borough administrative commission considered the question of punishment of Volha Suzko and Kanstantsin Liasunou. The matter is that on 23 January they handed out fly-sheets on behalf of the unregistered youth movement *Lemon*. The fly-sheets were dedicated to the inauguration of Viktor Yushchenko. The youngsters stated they didn't distribute the fly-sheets, but simply took several copies from the counter when they saw people reading some bring papers. Despite this, they were fined. The commission explained: 'Next time they won't read garbage!'

**On 3 February** Homel Chyhunachny Borough Court started the consideration of the administrative cases against Volha Sudzko and Kanstantsin Liasunou who are charged with activity on behalf of the unregistered organization *Lemon*. Judge Kozyrau listened to the defendants' witnesses and then ruled to interrogate the police witnesses who composed the detention reports and the witnesses who were invited to sign the report after the detainees refused to do it. At the trial Volha and Kanstantsin said they didn't know much in jurisprudence, but the judge didn't offer propose them to take advocates. On the contrary, he sarcastically asked them whether they knew their rights or he had to remind them. The next sitting was appointed on 15 February.

**On 10 February** the activists of *Zubr* movement Pavel Iukhnevich and Andrei Baranau were detained at the check-point of Minsk Tractor Plant for handing out *Svobodnaya gazeta* newspaper, devoted to Belarusian political prisoners Mikhail Marynich, Valery Levaneuski and Aliaksandr Vasilieu. The police took the detainees to Minsk Partyzanski Borough Board of Internal Affairs and composed on them reports for violation of part 3 of article #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations, distribution of printed production without data-line.

**On 14 February** activists of the *Young Front* and other democratic youth associations organized the performance *Heart of Europe* in Kastychnitskaia Square in Minsk. In the evening about 100 young opposition activists including members of the *Young Front*, the Belarusian Student Association and pupils of the Belarusian Humanities Lyceum gathered in the square. All of them had blue scarves, shawls or armlets with yellow stars. The action participants lit Bengal lights and started to congratulate passers-by with the holiday. In several minutes riot squads ringed the square and started to push demonstrators out of it. At the same time, the square was occupied by washing cars snow plough cars that allegedly came there to remove snow from the square. After this a group of young people moved to the oppositional activists Anatol Liabedzka, Stanislau Shushkevich and Aliaksandr Milinkevich to congratulate them with St. Valentine's Day. A man in plain clothes tried to detain one of the organizers of the 'Heart of Europe' action Siarhei Lisichonak on the way home. On 14 February the *Young Front* activists managed to congratulate diplomats of 11 countries including the EU members, US and the Ukraine with the holiday by passing special notes to them. Different kinds of oppositional actions were organized in 17 more cities of Belarus.

**On 17 February** the judge of Homel Chyhunachny Borough Court Viktor Kozyrau fined Kanstantsin Lesunou and Volha Suzko for activity on behalf of unregistered public organization. This was the second punishment issued to them. The court considered the police reports that were composed on 23 January, when the youngsters were detained for handing out fly-sheets of the unregistered movement *Lemon* that were devoted to the inauguration of Viktor Yushchenko in the Ukraine. A policeman in plain clothes saw V.Suzko and K.Lesunou holding fly-sheets and detained them. On 2 February Homel Chyhunachny borough administrative commission already fined them for distribution of fly-sheets without data-line. This time they were fined for activity on behalf of unregistered organization.

**On 26 February** in Barysau the police came to the house of the activist of *Zubr* movement Aliaksandr Malchanau. They didn't find him home and composed a report for non-implementation of the parental duties on his mother

(violation of article #162 of the Code of Administrative Violations). The reason for it was that the youngster was often detained by the police.

**On 2 March** it became known that Mikhail Staravoitau, under-aged activist of *Zubr*, was pressurized in Barysau. The teenager and his mother were several times summonsed 'for a talk' to the local inspection on minors. Once he was summonsed there right from the classes at the technical college where he learned.

**On 7 March** the police detained a coordinator of the *Zubr* movement Iauhen Afnahel. He was stopped and searched in the center of Minsk. The policemen found a white-red-white flag and took him to Minsk City Police Board #1 of Leninski borough.

**On 10 March** the activist of the *Zubr* movement Iryna Toustsik was expelled from Belarusian State Pedagogic University. She was a last-year student and studied well. Iryna stated the reason for the expulsion was her public and political activity. According to her, the dean of the philology and culture department Aliaksandr Luhouski repeatedly called her to his office and asked to stop the activity in *Zubr*. Aliaksandr Ihnatchyk, chair of the university upbringing department, rejected the political motivation of the expulsion. On the other hand, he said: 'BRSM (Belarusian National Youth Union, pro-governmental youth organization) – is a public association and I don't know what *Zubr* is. It is an unregistered association. Students must behave properly, especially if we educate future teachers. Before that about a dozen of *Zubr* members were expelled from different educational establishments: Siarhei Androsenka, Maksim Dvaretski, Raman Kazakevich, Aliaksandr Kursevich, Dzianis Liashchynski and Iauhen Skrabutan. Some of them applied for rehabilitation at the higher educational establishments, none of which were satisfied.

**On 11 March** the activist of *Zubr* movement Maksim Viniarski was detained after the action in support of Mikhail Marynich. In the end of 2004 Minsk Frunzenski Borough Court sentenced him to 15 days of jail for distribution of independent newspapers. That's why after the detention he was taken to Minsk Frunzenski Borough Board of Internal Affairs and then for 15 days to the detention center in Akrestsin St.

**On 12 March** *Zubr* activists threw down from the house on the crossing of Pianerskaia and Leninskaia streets of Mahiliou fly-sheets with urges to release the prisoner of conscience Mikhail Marynich. The police detained Iauhen Suvorau and took him to Mahiliou Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. There they confiscated from him several dozens of fly-sheets and composed a violation report for distribution of printed production without data-line.

**In the evening of 15 March** the police detained the members of the *Young Front* Artur Finkevich and Dzmitry Dashkevich in Kastychnitskaia Square of Minsk. The guys wanted to take part in the action that was devoted to the Constitution Day, but were taken to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs instead.

**On 15 March** judge of Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court Aliaksei Bychko found Artur Finkevich and Dzmitry Dashkevich guilty of violating part 2 of article #167.1 of the Code of Administrative Violations, and arrested both for 15 days. He ignored their solicitations for advocatory services and didn't admit to the court hall other members of the *Young Front* who wanted to come there in order to support the defendants. Thus, the judge violated the constitutional rights of Artur Finkevich and Dzmitry Dashkevich and conducted a closed trial.

**On 23 March** the police officers Chuchvaha and his partner detained the student Iulia Sivets and the young workman Aliaksandr Hekht. They were accused of distributing the flyers of the unregistered young movement *Lemon*, whose contents allegedly damage the state and public order.

**On 24 March** the administrative committee of Barysau City Executive Committee issued a warning to the *Zubr* movement activists Aliaksandr Malchanau and Mikhail Staravoitau. Aliaksandr Malchanau and Mikhail Staravoitau were detained for collecting signatures in support of the political prisoner Mikhail Marynich.

**On 25 March**, Freedom Day, the youth of the BPF Party started to hang white-red-white stripes on trees in the center of Minsk. The action started at 2.30 p.m. In half an hour three of its participants were detained by the police and taken to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs. One of the detainees was let go immediately. On two others the police composed reports for violation of article #143.2 of the Code of Administrative Violations. Besides, they tore passport that belonged to one of the detainees. At 7 p.m. the guys were let go.

**On 25 March** the member of the Belarusian Student Association Aliaksei Trubkin came to the rector's office of Polatsk State University in order to congratulate the university workers and students with the Freedom Day. He brought fly-sheets that explained the meaning of this day for Belarusian history. D.Lazouski, rector of the university, asked the guy to wait a bit and called for the university guards and the police. The police drew a report for violation of part 3 of article #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations (distribution of printed editions without data-line).

**On 1 April** seven activists of *Zubr* movement were detained in the town of

Smaliavichy for participation in the action of support to political prisoners. The youngsters stood opposite Smaliavichy District Executive Committee, holding the portraits of the former minister and diplomat Mikhail Marynich and the leaders of the businessmen's movement Valery Levaneuski and Aliaksandr Vasilieu. In several minutes after the beginning of the action they were detained by the police and taken to Smaliavichy District Board of Internal Affairs.

**On 1 April** in Homel members of the unregistered movement *Lemon* wanted to hold a meeting in support of Lukashenka's policy. However, Homel City Executive Committee didn't permit the action. The member of the movement Siarhei Siamionau thusly commented on the action that took place despite the official prohibition: 'The main aim of the meeting was to collect signatures for renaming Lenin Square of Homel to Lukashenka's square. We also wanted to hand out lemon candies and photos of the first president with the explanation that these were healing photos and candies. If one licks a remedial candy and looks at the photo, he/she would immediately get satisfied with the wage and the cost of the public utilities. We also planned to use the following banners: 'Forcible work assignment is a student's dream' and 'Chernobyl zone is the best place for recreation'. The meeting had all features of a Fool's Day action.'

**On 1 March** at a trolleybus stop in Homel the police inspector Andrei Piskunou detained the member of the unregistered movement *Lemon* Siarhei Siamionau for 'identification'. The detainee was kept at a police station for three hours. The police searched Siamionau's belongings and found portraits of Lukashenka and candies in his bag. They wanted to confiscate the portraits, but Siamionau didn't let them do it.

**On 2 April** in Mahiliou the police detained the activist of *Zubr* movement Maksim Dvaretski for handing out fly-sheets with the urge to release Mikhail Marynich at the entrance of the city stadium *Spartak*. The police took the detainee to Mahiliou Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs and drew a report for violation of part 3 of article #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations (distribution of printed editions containing no data-line). Then the youngster was let go. Soon the report will be considered by the borough administrative commission.

**On 2 April**, the day when they union treaty between Belarus and Russia was signed, activists of the *Young Front* held a performance near the Russian Embassy. Almost all police authorities were present there. The youngsters passed to the Embassy their congratulation with the anniversary. At the entrance of the embassy the police preventively detained several action participants. One of them, Barys Haretski, carried the organization's gift to the embassy, a cake with the inscription 'Belarus + Russia = revolution'. During the



detention the cake first fell on his clothes and then down on the feet of the policemen. This time the police decided to let the guys go without composing any reports. Policemen in plain clothes followed the *Young Front* activists till they got into public transport.

**On 9 April** in Mahiliou the police detained the activist of the *Zubr* movement Pavel Uhrynovich, who was accused in having written 'Freedom to Marynich!' graffiti on the fence near the Belarusian-Russian University. He was detained on the other side of the street. The police failed to prove his relation to the graffiti and had to release him. Nevertheless, they confiscated from him a paint balloon. They didn't any documents during his detention, violating the law demands, and also refused to show their police certificates.

**On 12 April** it became known that the student of the Olympic Reserve College in Pleshchanitsy Pavel Karaniukhin was threatened with expulsion from the college for participation in oppositional actions. The college director and vice-director often called him for talks and insistently proposed to him to abstain from participation in oppositional actions. Pavel often distributed fly-sheets and took part in a number of actions, organized by the *Young Front*. Karaniukhin: 'The vice-director on educational work clings to me and my friend all the time because of my political activity. I am a member of *Young Front* and my friend also has democratic views. We have often participated in oppositional actions. He thinks that we mustn't study in the college and it would be dangerous to make us ski on the same field with president.' The vice-director lury Tsikhan started working at the college a month ago. He explained the situation in the following way: 'Everyone who studies here must be a patriot of his fatherland. Patriot is the one who loves his homeland and wants it to be world-known and won't escape abroad if someone proposes to him more money there. The guy's mind hasn't formed yet, so it's too early to make any conclusions about him. Who is he – a front guardian, patriot or simple Belarusian? First of all, it is necessary to discriminate who incited him that president is bad and he hates him. I have talked to him many times. He has no ideas yet. He is an immature material. That's why it is necessary to work with him.'

**On 12 April** the administrative commission of Barysau City Executive Committee considered the administrative cases against the under-aged activists of the *Zubr* movement who were detained on 31 March for participation in the action of solidarity with the political prisoner Mikhail Marynich. Vasil Harbylenka, Aliaksandr Malchanau and Mikhail Staravoitau were fined 60 000 rubles (about 27 US dollars). The administrative commission warned all other under-aged *Zubr* activists who held the action in Smaliavichy on 31 March.

**On 14 April** the administrative commission of Navapolatsk City Executive

Committee considered the administrative case against the member of Belarusian People's Front Aliaksei Trubkin. On 25 March he came to the rector's office of Polatsk State University in order to congratulate the university workers and students with the Freedom Day. He brought fly-sheets that explained the meaning of this day for Belarusian history. D.Lazouski, rector of the university, asked the guy to wait a bit and called for the university guards and the police. The police drew a report for violation of part 3 of article #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations (distribution of printed editions without data-line). Though the trial was open, eleven interested persons, among whom there were representatives of press, weren't admitted to it. The chair of the administrative commission fined Aliaksei Trubkin 102 000 rubles (about 45 US dollars).

**On 21 April** the students of Polatsk State University Volha Semenchukova and Aleh Viazhevich were detained for handing out the student newsletter *Moccasin* to other students. They were detained by the first vice-rector of the university Belarusava, and the vice-rector for ideology Tsyhankou. It was them who called the police that took the students to the police station, where they made reports registering their alleged administrative violation by terms of article #172 of the Administrative Code of Belarus (distribution of printed materials without imprint, whose contents aim to damage the state and public order, the rights and the legal interests of citizens). The consideration of the students' case by the administrative commission of Navapolatsk City Executive Committee was appointed on 28 April in the case against Aleh Viazhevich and on 12 May in the case of Volha Semenchukova.

**On 21 April** in Orsha the police detained Ihar Kazimirchak, the chair of the local Council of youth organizations, for handing out non-state editions. Youth activists handed out the newsletter of the *Young Front* 'Youth – Aye' and booklets of the Belarusian Student Association to students of Orsha Pedagogical College. At first the college workers invited I.Kazimirchak to an office 'for a talk'. He agreed, but instead of talking with him, they immediately phoned to the ideological department of Orsha City Executive Committee, where they were advised to phone to the police. Ihar Kazimirchak was taken to a police station. The police composed on him a report for distribution of printed production without the data-line.

**On 22 April** two *Zubr* activists, Natallia Ushka and Alena Kopach were detained for distributing the independent newspaper *Vybor* in Minsk. The girls were taken to Minsk Savetski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. The detainees didn't answer phone calls. The girls were detained during the distribution of the newspaper in secondary school #19 in Minsk. The police were called by the vice-principal Liudmila Anifer.

**On 22 April** Minsk the police detained the *Zubr* activists Ala Kovach and Nadzeia Nosik on the suspicion they hanged white-red-white flag on the roof of the building facing the presidential residence. The girls were detained when going down from the roof. However, later the police had to let them go, because there was no evidence that the flag was hanged by the detainees.

**On 25 April** the trial of Siarhei Niahatsin, coordinator of Mahiliou branch of the *Young Front*, started at Mahiliou Leninski Borough Court. He was charged with distribution of printed materials without the data-line printed on them, small disorderly conduct and resistance to the police. According to Siarhei Niahatsin, in the evening of 23 April he carried a bag with about 300 copies of different democratic newspapers. The bag ripped, which turned the attention of the police patrol that detained him. The final sitting of the court was appointed on 29 April.

**On 26 April** five youngsters were detained in Hrodna for handing out flyers with information about the harmfulness of radiation and pieces of advice how to get radio-nuclides from the body. The police took the detainees to Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs, confiscated about 30 flyers and then let them go.

**On 26 April** in Minsk several hundreds of the opposition activists gathered on the corner of Frantsysk Skaryna Av. and Engels St. in order to pass a petition to Aliaksandr Lukashenka's administration and take part in the traditional procession *Chernobyl Way*. The authorities ordered to disperse the peaceful demonstration. The way to the administration was blocked by the police. About three dozens of police cars and buses with riot police and internal army forces inside occupied the adjacent streets. Nevertheless, the people managed to proceed to the corner of Kastychnitskaia Square. Among them there were the leaders of the United Civil Party, Belarusian People's Front and the Belarusian Freedom Party. The representative of the *Young Front* Dzmitry Dashkevich read aloud the text of the petition to the country's authorities and collected the public appeals in order to pass them to the administration. The delegation of *Chernobyl Way* with Maryia Bahdanovich at the head managed to convince the police to let them to the administration under the police supervision. Among the action participants there were also activists of the Ukrainian youth organization *National Alliance*, the Russian movements *Going without Putin*, *Oborona*, youth fractions of the Union of Right Forces and *Yabloko* Party. Ukrainians carried their banners and orange flags. Before the beginning of the action the police detained in Kastychnitskaia Square 14 citizens of Russia. They were taken to the police station in Marx St. There the police put down their passport data and then let them go. The detainees joined the procession. In several minutes the clear-up started there. The riot police first of all sized the people

who held banners and posters. Four Ukrainian national walked in line with *Young Front* members. They had the national blue-yellow flags wrapped around the neck and shoulders. The police detained the Ukrainians with the especial ferocity. A riot policeman tore one of the blue-yellow flags. The police also confiscated a party flag from a member of *Going without Putin*. The coordinator of this movement Maksim Petrov said: at first the police beat us in the legs. Russian students carried the banner 'For our and your freedom!'. The police grabbed our flag, tore and burned it. The police led three priests that intended to take part in the procession into a yard and kept them there for a while. Among the detainees there were Maryia Bahdanovich (chair of Minsk regional branch of the United Civil Party), the activists of the *Young Front* Dzmitry Dashkevich, Pavel Lisichonak and Ales Smolski, the citizen of Zhodzina Siarhei Murashka, the leader of Belarusian Freedom Party Siarhei Vysotski and many schoolchildren. About 20 persons were taken to Minsk Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs (BBIA), about 10 – to Tsentralny BBIA. All in all, more than 40 persons were detained. Almost half of them were Russian citizens, and four – citizens of the Ukraine. Russians and Ukrainians were the first to be detained and were violently beaten by the police. The detainees spent the night at the detention center in Akrestsin St.

**On 27 April** it became know that among the detainees there were 14 citizens of Russia, 5 citizens of the Ukraine and 8 citizens of Belarus. The administrative cases of 4 Ukrainian and 10 Russian citizens were considered at Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court. The police accused them in violation of the public order during the demonstration. The five Ukrainian citizens received the following sentences:

1. Andriy Bokach – 15 days of jail;
2. Andriy Hrymaliuk – 10 days of jail;
3. Ihor Huz, deputy of Volyn Regional Deputy Soviet – 10 days of jail;
4. Aleksandr Maflay – 10 days of jail;
5. Oleksiy Panasiuk – 10 days of jail.

Sentences issued to the detained citizens of Belarus:

1. Anatol Biakasau – 10 days of jail;
2. Dzmitry Dashkevich – 12 days of jail;
3. Mikita Dziadziushka – 10 days of jail;
4. Aleh Hnedchyk – 10 days of jail;
5. Siarhei Lisichonak – 10 days of jail;
6. Kirył Shymanovich – 10 days of jail;
7. Siarhei Vysotski – 10 days of jail.

The Ukrainian consul Vasil Serdeha spent several hours trying to meet with the detainees. He was allowed to attend the trial. After its end he informed

journalists that he was very surprised when he heard that 'Long Life Belarus!' slogan was a violation of the Belarusian legislation. Russian citizens from the political organizations *Oborona*, *Molodoye Yabloko* and *Going without Putin* were sentenced to 5-15 days of jail. Among the arrested Russian citizens there were also three journalists who didn't have accreditation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus with them. Pavel Romanov, journalist of *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, was sentenced to 10 days of jail, Aleksey Ametov, journalist of the *Russian Newsweek* magazine – to 15 days. The police stated all the detained Russians would be judged in the House of Justice, where Minsk Leninski Borough Court is situated. Their friends came there in the morning. Among them there was the deputy of Yaroslavl municipality Yuliya Malysheva. She asked the judge Liubou Zhaunerchyk and the policemen who and where would judge the Russian citizens. Finally, the judge answered to her and the secretary of the US Embassy that the detainees had already been sentenced to different times of jail on the ground floor of the building. Nobody saw them. Yuliya Malysheva said: 'We are indignant. Our friends were judged secretly. We weren't informed. We don't know where they are. The judge came out and said 14 persons were judged. We don't know what part of them are Russian citizens. The judge said she wouldn't give any information and call any surnames.' Belarusians were judged at Minsk Leninski Borough Court. The following sentences were given:

1. Maryia Bahdanovich, chair of Minsk regional branch of the UCP – fined a sum equal to about 2 000 US dollars;
2. Dzmitry Dashkevich, *Young Front* activist – 12 days of jail;
3. Siarhei Lisichonak, vice-chair of the *Young Front* – 10 days of jail.

**On 28 April** the administration of the Russian party *Yabloko* expressed its indignation at the imprisonment of activists of the youth branch of the party and other Russian citizens. In private, Evgeniya Dilendorf, press-secretary of the leader of *Yabloko* Grigoriy Yavlinskiy, said: 'It is absolute lawlessness. People are charged with the crimes they haven't committed. A part of the people were detained at authorized meeting, they didn't violate anything. The largest part of people was detained after the end of the meeting. They didn't demonstrate any political agitation – slogans, badges – nothing. The riot police ringed them and pulled into busses. Now we have a very clear vision of the image of the Belarusian authorities. The detentions of *Yabloko* members present only a small, barely noticeable dash in comparison to what Lukashenka has been doing for years.'

**On 28 April** the administrative commission of Navapolatsk City Executive Committee considered the administrative case against the second-year student of Polatsk State University Aleh Viazhevich, initiated for handing out *Mocasin* bulletin. Having familiarized with the detention report and the content of

the edition, the administrative commission ruled to close the case because the absence of corpus delicti and return the confiscated copies of the edition to the owner. It was the first case in Navapolatsk when administrative commission justified a person who was detained for distribution of independent edition.

**On 29 April** Aleksandr Blokhin, Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Belarus, asked the Belarusian authorities to ease the administrative punishment to the imprisoned Russian citizens. On 30 April Minsk City Court decreased the arrest terms for them, and in the afternoon the youngsters left for Moscow on a train. Among the arrested Russian citizens there were:

1. Aleksey Ametov, journalist of *Russian Newsweek* magazine;
2. Ivan Bolshakov;
3. Yevgeniy Goncharov;
4. Semyon Gurd;
5. Anna Kobilov;
6. Mikhail Permyakov;
7. Maksim Petrov;
8. Vitaliy Reznikov;
9. Vadim Rezvy;
10. Mikhail Romanov, journalist of *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* newspaper;
11. Irina Vorobyova;
12. Ilya Yashin;
13. Pavel Yelizarov;
14. Anatoliy Zinger.

**In the evening of 30 April** members of Belarusian oppositional and youth movements together with youth organizations of Russia and Ukraine held an action near the detention center in Akrestsin St., where the arrested people were kept. 40 people gathered outside the prison wall. The police didn't show any reaction. Among the action participants there were representatives of the *Young Front*, *Zubr*, representatives of the Russian oppositional organizations *Going without Putin*, *Oborona* and the Union of Right Forces. The people lit candles and stood silently, expressing their solidarity with the political prisoners who were kept behind bars: 4 members of the Ukrainian party *National Alliance*, 8 members of the *Young Front* and the leader of the Belarusian Freedom Party Siarhei Vysotski. The action participants urged to express solidarity with the persons who were still in jail.

**In the evening of 1 June** the student of the journalist department of Belarusian State University Alena Andreieva was summoned for a talk by the department's Dean Siarhei Dubovik. He talked with her about her initiative to collect signatures for rehabilitation of the journalist of *Narodnaia volia* newspaper Volha Klaskouskaia who was expelled from the department for political

reasons. The dean threatened to expel Andreieva from the university. The official reason for the expulsion of Klaskouskaia was that she didn't manage to pass some exams in time. However, Klaskouskaia's year-mates think she was expelled for political reasons. They expressed it in their statements which they passed to the recently appointed dean Siarhei Dubrovik. The initiator of the establishment of the 'committee on Klaskouskaia's rehabilitation' Alena Andreieva was summoned for a talk after the dean consulted with people in plain clothes for about 45 minutes. After this the dean accepted Alena Andreieva together with two vice-deans. Andreieva: 'They said that in my statement I lied and students are expelled for every kind of lie. I answered I didn't doubt the possibility of such measures. I don't know whether the dean threatened to me or just informed that I was expelled as well.' Alena Andreieva is still sure that the measures applied to her friend Volha Klaskouskaia were much stricter than in usual cases: for instance, she was deprived of the possibility to try passing the exams once again. Volha Klaskouskaia's year-mates think she was expelled for working in *Narodnaia volia*.

**On 1 June** the *Young Front* activists lined at the entrance of the Ministry of Education, holding the posters 'Children Want to Learn'. Among the action participants there were also many well-known politicians and political activists: the head of the Belarusian PEN-center Liavon Barshchouski, the director of the closed Belarusian Humanities Lyceum Uladzimir Kolas, the chair of the BPF Party Vintsuk Viachorka, the chair of the United Civil Party Anatol Liabedzka, etc. They passed to the ministry the note of protest against the harassment of the youth who openly expressed their political and public views. This letter was signed by about 30 famous scientists, literary workers and public activists, such as Aliaksandr Vaitovich, Nil Hilevich and Iury Khashchavatski.

**1 June** was the eighth day of the hunger-strike of protest against the expulsion of democratic youth from educational establishments. The six youngsters who kept on hungering in Zhodzina were visited by the members of the Council of the Belarusian Intellectuals Liavon Barshchouski, Siarhei Zakonnikau, Heorhi Likhtarovich and Uladzimir Kolas. 'I have contradictory impressions. On one hand, I am glad that these children showed such decisiveness in defense of their rights and views. On the other hand, it is very painful that the state and the authorities, who must care about youth and really help them, provoke our children to such situations and deeds. Of course, we urged them to stop the hunger-strike, because on one hand it is protest, but on the other it's not worth to sacrifice one's health,' pointed Uladzimir Kolas. According to the leader of Zhodzina branch of the *Young Front* Pavel Krasouski the hunger-strikers were also visited by the medics that were sent by Zhodzina City Executive Committee and who examined them. There were also representatives of HRC *Viasna* who brought their doctor. It was Andrei Vitushka, executive direc-

tor of the Belarusian Association of Medics. He advised the people how to hunger. Three days before another five youth activists joined the hunger-strike. Among them there was 22-year-old Valery Matskevich, who went on hunger-strike in Babruisk.

**On 1 June** the chair of Vitsebsk branch of the *Young Front* Ianis Chuchman was summoned by the local police inspector Aliaksandr Kavalenka. At first the policeman said he wanted to have a prophylactic talk with the oppositional activist, but when Chuchman came to the police station, a report was composed on him. On the policeman's table he saw Xerox copy of the independent newspaper *Vitsebski kuryer* with the photo of the banner 'Liberate Political Prisoners!' that was hanged by the *Young Front* to protest against the imprisonment of participants of the *Chernobyl Way* action. Chuchman's surname was mentioned in the article. The mentioned police report became a sensation in Vitsebsk – it's the first time a representative of oppositional movement was charged with a violation on the basis of a newspaper article.

**On 3 June** the students who signed the petition under the note of protest against the expulsion of the journalist of *Narodnaia volia* Volha Klaskouskaia from the university, were summonsed by the dean Siarhei Dubovik. According to Alena Andreieva, the student who initiated collection of the signatures, the administration of the faculty tried to convince the students she cheated swindled them. The administration of the faculty of journalism summonsed Alena Andreieva for a talk and stated the student distributed slanderous information. The dean didn't let her pass the credit on his subject, Social and political problems of CIS, saying she wasn't ready to pass it.

**On 3 June** the sitting of the Commission on affairs of minors of Zhodzina City Executive Committee took place. Siarhei Murashka's father was invited there. The human rights activist Aliaksei Lapitski also tried to get there with his Dictaphone. Though the sitting was opened, the chair of the committee categorically ordered him to leave the sitting hall. Finally, a policeman forcibly pulled Lapitski out. At the sitting the director of Zhodzina Polytechnics asked the commission to permit Murashka's expulsion from the polytechnics 'The situation in quite weird', commented the lawyer Valiantsin Stefanovich. 'The procedure of expulsion is described in the ruling about technical educational establishments, was adopted by the Ministry of Education in 2003. According to paragraph 38 of this ruling, a minor can be expelled from such educational establishment only for systematic violations of its statute and the internal regulations. At first he/she can be rebuked and expulsion is the last measure. A minor can be expelled only on the agreement of the Commission on the cases of minors of the local executive committee and only in the case all other measures applied gave no result. In this situation the order about expulsion was issued without



permission of the commission on cases of minors and now the director asks the commission to permit what he has already done, which is a gross violation of the law. Meanwhile, Murashka had neither rebukes nor warnings issued to him this year, his parents weren't let familiarize with the internal regulations of the polytechnics, that's why we don't know even whether there's really a paragraph that prohibits participation in unauthorized mass actions. We know about it only from what the director says. Frankly speaking, I really doubt such point really exists. In any case, this is an evident case of political repression of a regime's opponent. That's why Murashka's parents will complain against the director's order to the court.'

**On 6 June**, the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the hunger-strike the youth activists of Zhodzina decided to stop it, yielding to the insistence of their parents, relatives and almost all visitors. One of the action's results was that the youth of Zhodzina turned the public attention to the massive expulsions of opposition-minded youth from the educational establishments of Belarus. For instance, in Zhodzina, the population of which is 60 000 persons, seven youngsters were expelled from colleges and institutes. It is an eloquent evidence of the purposeful discrimination of democratic youth in the country.

**On 7 June** the police detained the participant of the hunger-strike in Zhodzina Aliaksandr Vinahradau. According to Pavel Krasouski, one of the organizers of the hunger-strike, in the afternoon of 6 June Mr Haroshka, vice-chair of Zhodzina City Board of Internal Affairs and chair of the inspection on affairs of minors, phoned to him and asked to come to him for a talk. Krasouski didn't come there. At the same time, criminal search police detained another hunger-striker, Aliaksandr Vinahradau, at his flat and drove away in unknown direction.

**On 8 June** Alena Andreieva and Hanna Kavaliova, students of the extramural part of the journalism department of Belarusian State University passed to the BSU rector Vasil Strazhau and the education minister Aliaksandr Radzkou their complaint against actions of the dean Siarhei Dubovik. The week before he refused to examine the students saying they were 'morally unprepared'. The students stated it was his revenge for the campaign on collecting signatures for rehabilitation of their year-mate, journalist of *Narodnaia volia* newspaper Volha Klaskouskaia. In their appeal the students wrote that the actions of Siarhei Dubovik were lawless, violated the rights of students and presented danger to their education. Both signers thought their public activity must be a reason for discrimination from the side of the department administration. They also asked the officials to check all the facts and take the appropriate measures to defend their right to education.

**At about 5 p.m. on 8 June** in Svetlahorsk the police detained Siarhei

Siamionau, activist of Homel youth center *Hart* allegedly on suspicion that he had bought drugs. However, at the police station the police major Zygun composed a report about distribution of printed production without data-line on behalf of unregistered organization, because *Third Way* stickers were found in Siamionau's bag. The police confiscated the stickers together with 100 US dollars and 100 Euro the detainee had with him.

**In the evening of 9 June** activists of the youth of BPF Party, the public initiatives *Voka* and *Chas* organized an action against the renaming of streets and avenues. They lined along Frantsysk Skaryna Av. near the tube station *Academy of Sciences*, holding the street signs 'Frantsysk Skaryna Avenue' in their hands. Some of the action participants also handed out portraits of Skaryna and fly-sheets with information about the renaming of the main avenue of Minsk. The action lasted for a quarter of an hour. Then the riot police pushed its participants to the remote streets of Sliapianka suburb.

**In the afternoon on 11 June** five police officers got over the high fence of the private house of Viktor Karneienka in Paleskaia St. in Homel and burst into the house. The police captain Pryshchepau said that they came to check whether the telephone call information that a girl was being violated in the house was true. In fact, at that time representatives of the unregistered movement *Lemon* spoke with their colleagues from Russia and the Ukraine about their daily problems. The police tried to shoot the present persons with a camera, but the youth didn't let them do it. Having taken explanations from the activist of *Lemon* Siarhei Siamionau, the police left the house. The politician Viktor Karneienka considered this intrusion a provocation and intended to complain against the lawless police actions to court and prosecutor's office.

**On 3 July** sixteen activists of the Young Christian Social Union – Young Democrats (a youth branch of the United Civil Party) went out to Surhanau St. in Minsk at noon, where they handed out to the passers-by badges with portraits of Frantsysk Skaryna and Piatro Masherau and fly sheets calling on joint action in defense of the earlier names of the central Minsk avenues and streets renamed by Aliaksandr Lukashenka's decree. The action participants walked only several hundreds of meters before a special police squad caught up with near the *Riga* department store. The police ringed the young people, ordered them to show identity documents and then took to the police bus. Eight action participants were taken to Minsk Savetski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. There the young people had to provide explanations and give up their agitation materials, after three hours they were released. The young activists of the BPF Party had planned yet another protest on the Svislach River near Masherau Av. However, the police preventively detained the action coordinator Andrei Sukhaverkhi and Dzmitry Kazlouski, and the action did not take place.

**On 3 July** in Hrodna an action of the youth wing of the United Civil Party started under the slogan: 'The capital of each of the six Belarusian regions must have a street named after Vasil Bykau'. The participants handed out to Hrodna residents fly sheets with a call to struggle for naming a street after Bykau. During the action Hrodna police detained seven UCP activists.

**On 12 July** the police detained two activists of the youth movement *Zubr*. Mikita Shutsiankou, under the legal age, and Maksim Viniarski distributed the *Vybor* newspaper outside the car plant. The youths were taken to a police station. The police received an order to carefully examine the contents of the newspaper to identify the article of the Code of Administrative Violations, which should be used to draw up a report about the violation.

**On 14 July** Pavel Madshara, an activist of the *Zubr* movement and a student at the Belarusian philology department at Frantsysk Skaryna Homel State University was expelled from the university for political activity. The problems started the month before, when Pavel Madshara was taking his summer exams. He was called to the military committee. A man who introduced himself as a KGB agent met him there. He insisted that Pavel accept his collaboration offer, promising help with exams. In the event of refusal, the KGB agent threatened the young man would have serious problems during the exam session. Pavel refused to cooperate point-blank. Several days later he was invited to the department dean, where he was warned he would not pass this session. He passed the first two exams successfully, and then encountered problems. Then the university head signed the expulsion order for Pavel Madshara.

**On 19 July** In Mahiliou a student of the construction department Andrei Razumkou, a *Zubr* movement activist, was expelled from the third year of the Belarusian-Russian University for his political activity. Earlier he was repeatedly detained during the street protests. The last time this happened this year in May for an action in commemoration of the disappearance of Iury Zakharkanaka. Andrei Razumkou was punished with a huge fine for taking part in this action. The most probable reason why the *Zubr* activist was expelled from the university was the order of the infamous Minister of Education A.Radzkou *On measures of preventing the attempts to involve students in illegal political activity*, which provides for expulsion of students that have taken part in protests.

**On 19 July** two activists of the unregistered movement *Zubr* were detained in Mahiliou. Valadar Tsurpanau and Maksim Dvaretski handed out *Vybor* newspaper outside *Tsentrally* department store. The police detained them and kept in the police station for about three hours, drew up reports registering administrative violations: for distributing printed materials without an imprint, and in the case of Valadar Tsurpanau – for failing to obey police orders.

**On 21 July** at 5 p.m. *Zubr* activists came out into Iakub Kolas Square in Minsk. The young people unfolded a slogan 'Free Political Prisoners!' and also portraits of the political prisoners Mikhail Marynich, Siarhei Skrabets, Andrei Klimau, Valery Levaneuski, Mikola Statkevich and Pavel Seviarynets. Approximately five minutes after the action started, the riot police that outnumbered the protestors attacked the young people and detained almost all of them. Some of the action participants sat down onto the pavement to protest against the illegal detention. The riot police attempted to raise them, snatched the portraits from their hands, dragged them along the ground. As a result of the action Daryia Barabas, Illia Bohdan, Ian Davidovich, Alena Kapach, Aliaksandr Kurbatski, Uladzislau Nestser, Aliaksandr and Natallia Ushko were detained and taken to Minsk Savetski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. The police drew up reports by terms of article #167-1 of CAV against Aliaksandr Ushko and Aliaksandr Kurbatski.

**On 30 July** in the evening in Homel the police of Homel Chyhunachny Borough Board of Internal Affairs and people in plain clothes broke into the private house of the famous politician Viktor Karneienka in Paleskaia St. The house owner was not in at the time, and in the courtyard the member of the United Civil Party Ales Karnienka together with young Homel residents organized a discussion on *Problems of the Youth in Belarus*. In justification of their intrusion the police said they had received a telephone call – the house allegedly contained a mine. Neither the police nor the field engineers brought there by the police found any explosives. By the way, many noted that the field engineers of the military unit 5525 had arrived without specially trained dogs. Instead of proposing a safe evacuation option, the police with the chief of Chyhunachny BBIA colonel Nekrashevich at the head detained the young people in the courtyard and took ten of them to the police station for identity identification. Those under the legal age were also detained. While at the station the police asked the detained people why they had gathered in the house in Paleskaia St., on the second level they broke open the door to one of the room, allegedly looking for mines. After they found nothing explosive they made a report. However, they found three packs of the books by Sharamet and Kalinkina *Accidental President* published in Russia. The regional department of KGB was interested in the books. Its representative Aliaksandr Ardabieuv refused to provide any commentary. However, after signing a report registering the absence of explosives in the house, the field engineers left the privately-owned house, the police with the KGB representatives at the head started another search in the house of the politician. The police and Ardabieuv himself leafed through the books, newspapers and bulletins found in the house. They confiscated not only copies of the *Accidental President* but also the bulletins *Hramadzianskia initsyiatyvy, Tut i zaraz* and some others.

**On 30 July** Barysau police detained activists of some youth organizations taking part in the traditional Independence Cup soccer tournament held for the fifth year in a row. On 30 July teams from Maladechna, Mahiliou, Minsk, Sma-liavichy and Barysau were taking part in it. The police showed interested in the sports event and detained four participants, members of the movements *Zubr*, *Free Belarus* and the *Volat* Center. The chair of the youth center *Volat* Dzmitry Barodka said: 'Before the tournament they came to make a pitch and marking, and had small flags to indicate the corners. The flags were white-red-white and small - they held them in hands. A patrol that was passing by stopped and detained them, taking to the district board of the police, where they spent about five hours.' The police made a report on one of the detained people, a member of the *Volat* Center Ales Hihel.

**On 8 August** Minsk Partyzanski Borough Court sentenced Dzmitry Dashkevich and Artur Finkevich to 10 days of jail for participation in the action of solidarity with the Union of Poles in Belarus they held near the Polish Embassy in Minsk.

**On 15 August** the internet site of the *Young Front* [www.mfront.net](http://www.mfront.net) was blocked by unidentified people. According to the chair of the *Young Front* Dzmitry Dashkevich, the site was blocked on the initiative of the secret services. 'The blocking of the *Young Front* site is, in our opinion, caused by the active position of the *Young Front* structures across the country and an active information campaign. Because from the early 2004 till 2005 the young front internet site at [www.mfront.org](http://www.mfront.org) was not available – someone has bought the young front hosting for the nearest five years. You cannot fail to notice that our site was blocked after repeated blocking of the UCP site by secret services. Thanks to the preserved technical base of the site and the prompt action by the owners of the young front site hosting, we were able to resume work almost immediately after the blocking', said Dzmitry Dashkevich. To make sure such provocation does not repeat, the *Young Front* planned to launch an authentic Internet site under a different name and using the services of another hosting company.

**On 17 August** in Vilnius young activists of democratic organizations of Belarus together with Lithuanian and Ukrainian colleagues staged a performance *For Free Belarus*. Young people with pasted mouths and hands tied up with the same piece of string marched from the embassy of Belarus to Vilnius City Council with posters and white-red-white flags. Outside the City Council the boys and girls untied their hands. Then the action participants took the strips off their mouths and started to shout 'Long Live Belarus!' in chorus. The action was initiated by the youth organization *Movement of Young Centrists of Lithuania*. According to the chair of this organization, Julia Lisovskaja, the pur-

pose of the action was to turn the attention of Lithuania and European Union to the absence of freedom in Belarus and persecution of the democratic political forces. This was also an event that showed the solidarity of the young people that live in the three countries, who relax in the summer camp here, and according to them they staged this action spontaneously, having prepared everything in several hours. The unauthorized action participants passed over to the embassy a declaration of protest against the pressure exerted by the authorities on the activists' families, the disappearance of politicians in Belarus and violations of the democratic principles.

**On 24 August** in Minsk in Peramoha Square the police detained the *Zubr* movement coordinator Uladzimir Kobets and the activists of the Georgian youth organization *Kmara* Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze. The people behind the detention introduced themselves as criminal investigation officers from Minsk Maskouski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. One of them gave his surname – Kalatsei. The detained activists were taken to the criminal investigation department of Maskouski district in Hrushauskaia St., where police officers talked to each of them separately. Kobets had to give his fingerprints, they also filmed everything; no charges were brought, they only asked questions about the place of employment. In several hours Uladzimir Kobets was released, but the whereabouts of the citizens of Georgia and what the authorities plan to do with them were not known. According to some sources, they may be deported from Belarus for acting in breach of the registration rules for foreign nationals. At the same time, the information department of Minsk Police Board confirmed detention of two citizens of Georgia 'during 'the police raid in *Zviazda* hotel where they were staying'. The Minsk police information department head Aleh Slepchanka stated that the documents of the Georgian citizens 'which contained either corrections or erasures' caused the police suspicion.

**On 26 August** Georgia discussed the detention of the activists of the Georgian youth organization *Kmara* in Minsk. Tbilisi called absurd the accusations of the Belarusian KGB that Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze interfered into the internal affairs of Belarus. The Minister of education and science Kakha Lumaia personally knows Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze. He said that their arrest in Minsk was perceived by the Georgians with pain because, in the minister's opinion, they were not guilty of anything and were detained illegally. 'The regime that treats its own people in such a way (I mean the opposition and the public associations) act in the same way toward the foreigners. I think that this regime is doomed – the Belarusian people themselves will dump it', said the Georgian minister. The *Kmara* movement activist Giorgi Meladze, a close friend of Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze, said that he didn't believe the statements made by the Belarusian KGB, according to which his associates allegedly interfered into the internal affairs of Belarus, took part in unau-

thorized protests led by the opposition, or distributed printed periodicals with a destructive content. Mr Meladze informed that Luka Tsuladze is a theater director who stages plays in different theaters in Georgia. Giorgi Kandelaki graduated as a political scientist from the philosopher's faculty, currently works as a journalist, contributes to various media in Georgia. At the same time, both Tsuladze and Kandelaki are *Kmara* activists and took part in the revolutionary events in Georgia. Mr Meladze said that the arrest of his friends was perceived in Georgia as an event very unpleasant but quite common for Belarus today. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia assessed these actions as 'provocative' and demanded 'immediate release' of the detained activists.

**On 26 August** the administration of the detention center based in Akrestsin St. in Minsk refused to the arrested *Kmara* activists the right to defense and food parcels. Guards of the detention center said they could not solve this problem because the center's head was away. A representative of the Embassy of Georgia in Kyiv came to Minsk, he tried to solve the problem but failed.

**On 26 August** Liubou Valevich, judge of Minsk Leninski Borough Court, sentenced to 10 days of jail Aliaksandr Kurbatski, Aliaksei Liaukovich and Natallia Ushko, the activists of *Zubr* movement who took part in the action of solidarity with the arrested activists of the Georgian movement *Kmara*. The action was qualified as violation of part 2 of article #167 of the Code of Administrative Violations. Its participants were detained by the riot police, who tore the banner with the inscription 'Set Free Our Georgian Brothers!', broke the flagstuffs of the national flags of Georgia and Belarus. The picket participants sat down on the ground. The police pulled the action participants into the busses or carried them in. Some of the protesters were also beaten.

**On 26 August** an unusual youth flash-mob was held in Minsk. The aim was to remind the people about the renamed streets of the capital. Some 20 youngsters split into three groups and made a symbolic race along the main avenue. First came the bikers – 8 guys rode down the avenue in a line yelling and singing. They were followed by another group called 'sportsmen'. The race was finished by rollers. All the participants were wearing t-shirts with Skaryna's face on them. According to one of the guys, V.Dabranach, 'we have got used to the new name, besides the words 'independence' means a lot to us, but the barbarous treatment of culture in Belarus is intolerable'.

**On 26 August**, as became known to the Human Rights Center *Viasna*, the citizens of Georgia Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze were still in the detention center of the Main Department of Internal Affairs of Minsk City Executive Committee. The deportation procedure did not occur, they were not sent home by the Minsk-Tbilisi flight. The reasons why they were kept in custody were not

known. According to the official information, the decision to deport the citizens of Georgia was taken by KGB because of 'their interference into the internal affairs of the Republic of Belarus'. According to the KGB version, 'interference' was that Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze had several meetings with representatives of unregistered youth organizations (*Zubr, Young Front, Lemon*) and allegedly took part in the distribution of unregistered printed materials. The detention of Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze was sanctioned by the prosecutor of Maskouski Borough of Minsk.

**On 29 August** the lawyer Pavel Sapelka, whose powers were registered according to the effective legislation on Friday 26 August, again visited the special detention center, planning to see the detained citizens of Georgia but failed. He wanted to familiarize his defendants with the complaint about the illegal decision of the Belarusian authorities to deport the *Kmara* leaders and pass over a food parcel prepared by the Human Rights Center *Viasna*.

**On 29 August** *Kmara* movement activists arrested to 15 days. The trial over the citizens of Georgia was conducted in secret without a lawyer, by terms of article #156 of CAV of Belarus, petty hooliganism. The lawyer Pavel Sapelka again was not allowed to see the citizens of Georgia. He went to the Main Department of Internal Affairs of the Minsk City Executive Committee and talked with the vice-head of the public order department. Thus, the lawyer was told that on 29 August the citizens of Georgia were arrested to 10 days by the Minsk Maskouski Borough Court. The trial was conducted secretly and the foreign citizens were deprived of the right to defense.

**On 30 August** Belarusian human rights activists made the third fruitless attempt to pass a food parcel to the imprisoned activists of *Kmara* Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze. This time the guards said they had quarantine, the day when vagabondage were brought to the detention center, as a result of which the center allegedly couldn't accept food.

**On 30 August** the consul of Georgia in Ukraine Zurab Kvachadze was allowed to visit the detention center in Akrestsin St. in Minsk and meet the activists of the Georgian youth organization *Kmara* Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze who were kept in the center since 24 August. Mr Kvachadze said that after this meeting the 'conditions of custody for the citizens of Georgia were improved'. During the meeting with his imprisoned compatriots Mr Kvachadze also tried to find what happened to them at the detention center (on 29 August the head of Minsk police, general Kuliashou stated the Georgians had started a fight with their cell-mates had been sentenced to 15 days of jail for it). The Ambassador of Georgia in the Ukraine Grigol Katamadze, who directed a consul to Minsk for support to the Georgian citizens, said: 'It's a great pity that two



citizens of Georgia have been kept in isolation in Minsk for almost a week already and till today's morning neither lawyers, nor representatives of our Embassy had the possibility to meet with them... We asked representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus to pass to us the Georgian citizens for bringing them home. However, the problem still remains unsolved.' The Ambassador also was surprised at the conditions in which *Kmara* activists were kept: 'There are no bed-clothes, we twice tried to pass them food, but the parcel wasn't accepted by the guards. How can it be this way? We live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, don't we? That's why it is necessary to treat people in a more civilized way.' He also stated G.Kandelaki and L.Tsuladze were going to complain against the verdict of Minsk Maskouski Borough Court according to which they were sentenced to 15 days of jail for 'petty hooliganism'.

**On 30 August** Lali Kandelaki and Atsiko Mikadze, the mothers of the *Kmara* activists arrested in Belarus, demanded the Belarusian authorities to give their children back. The Belarusian law enforcement agencies did not allow her son to phone home even once. Lali Kandelaki was very anxious: 'That he was detained by police in Belarus I feel so terrified, I think he may be beaten there, or poisoned, because of all of this I may go crazy', said the woman. The mothers of the Georgian citizens arrested in Minsk said that their sons have never before been to Belarus and they did not believe that their sons could have committed some crime there.

**On 1 September** several Ukrainian NGOs and a Georgian children's dance ensemble organized a 30-minute picket *Lesson in Democracy and Culture* in front of the Belarusian embassy in Kyiv, protesting against Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze's arrest in Minsk. A dozen policemen were sent to guard the embassy. They looked with favor on the pickets. One of the policemen even picked up a flysheet with Kandelaki's face and an inscription 'He is a journalist, not a criminal!' on it and stuck the sheet to a lamppost. The participants shouted: 'Freedom to political prisoners!', 'There is no stopping freedom!' and 'Khmara!' (No more!). Georgian children in national dresses shouted 'Georgia!' and 'Sakartvelo!' and danced. The participants tried to petition the embassy requesting to release G.Kandelaki, L.Tsuladze and their three Belarusian friends. However, nobody came to take it, so the pickets promised to send the petition to A.Lukashenka.

**On 2 September** Minsk City Court overturned Maskouski District Court's decision according to which two Georgian citizens G.Kandelaki and L.Tsuladze had been sentenced to 15 days of imprisonment. One of the Court's officials said that the case was sent for a review, while the Georgians were freed from detention. After the Georgian Consul to the Ukraine Zurab Kvachadze special-

ly came to Minsk to render assistance to his compatriots, they were released from the detention center in Akrestsin St.

**On 2 September** the first sitting on the fact of Siarhei Murashka's expulsion from Zhodzina Polytechnics took place at Zhodzina City Court with participation of the judge A.Papliouka, Siarhei Murashka, his lawyer Pavel Sapelka and the defendant – director of Zhodzina Polytechnics P.Talerchyk. The human rights activist Aliaksei Lapitski and the plaintiff's father Aliaksandr Murashka weren't invited, because Ala Papliouka declared she would hold only pre-trial sitting with the aim to collect additional materials and documents concerning the subject of the argument and the pleas of the sides. At the sitting the sides set out their positions, presented the pleas and made petitions.

**On 5 September** the 10-day arrest to the three activists of *Zubr* movement who had taken part in the picket of solidarity with their arrested Georgian partners Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze was over. About 20 *Zubr* members took care of the prisoners during these 10 days, passed food parcels and press to them. Aliaksandr Kurbatski, Aliaksei Liaukovich and Natallia Ushko were met with flowers and champagne at the entrance of the detention center in Akrestsin St.

**On 5 September** the *Kmara* activists Luka Tsuladze and Giorgi Kandelaki came from Minsk to Kyiv. It became a considerable political event in the Ukraine. The press-conference that was dedicated to it was opened by Vladyslav Kaskiv, leader of the organization Pora and one of Viktor Yushchenko's advisors. The Ukrainian participants of the press conference promised to do everything possible for democratization of Belarus and the Georgian activists promised that those who ordered their arrest would be imprisoned as well. Givi Targamadze, the chair of the Georgian Parliament's Defense and Security Committee called the events in Minsk a rescue operation. He also stated that even representatives of the Ukrainian Mediterranean Airlines took an unprecedented step and delayed one of their flights for 1,5 hours so that Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze could get onboard, because their stay could result in some other provocation, staged by Belarusian authorities. 'This is a victory of both Georgian and Ukrainian diplomacy', Mr Targamadze stated. Giorgi Kandelaki stated that he would maintain contacts with his Belarusian friends and would come to Minsk as soon as he would be able to, because his passport contained no seals that prohibited entrance to Belarus. He also promised to pay off those who arrested him. Luka Tsuladze thusly evaluated the situation in Belarus: 'Everybody is afraid. The air gets hotter, but, to my mind, everything will end well their. We hope for it.' 'Georgia is far from the intention to interfere with the internal affairs of Belarus, but we won't admit illegal actions against our citizens and will defend our citizens all over the world, especially if they are inno-

cent', stated the president of Georgia Mikhail Saakashvili at the meeting with Luka Tsuladze and Giorgi Kandelaki. The president also expressed his gratitude to the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Georgian Embassy in the Ukraine and the Ukrainian diplomats for liberation of the *Kmara* activists.

**On 10 September** the activist of Barysau branch of *Zubr* A.Hihel, received a refusal for his complaint against the police lawlessness. Hihel and his three friends were arrested on 31 July during an amateur tournament for the Cup of Independence in Barysau. The paper received from Barysau District Board of Internal Affairs says that the police's actions were partly wrongful, and lieutenant V.Berazinski's actions would be considered by a honor court for police subalterns.

**On 14 September** Zhodzina City Court started the trial on the complaint of the activist of Young Front Siarhei Murashka against his expulsion from Zhodzina Polytechnics. The trial was led by the judge Ala Papiouka. Siarhei Murashka was a good student and even received an enhanced scholarship for his progress. The teachers of the polytechnics allegedly didn't remember the circumstances of his expulsion, that's why the judge asked them to present additional materials and summon as witnesses some Murashka's mates from the polytechnics.

**On 19 September** in Barysau activists of youth movements held an action in defense of the liberty of speech. They protested against the persecution of the local independent editions by the city authorities. About 50 representatives of different youth movements took part in the action. According to the local activist of *Zubr* Mikhail Kandrashou, it was a flash-mob: 'They started to impose on us the newspapers that are subdued to our authorities and print only what the authorities need instead of real facts. We demonstratively threw the newspaper *Adzinstva* into garbage cans.' In fact, the non-state editions of the city – *Borisovskiye novosti* and *Kurier is Borisova* were in a hard situation. The well-known Barysau journalist Mahilin said: 'The city used to have a unique situation – the total circulation of independent editions exceeded the circulation of the newspaper of the newspaper that was founded by the city's administration. Doubtlessly, the authorities could hardly be satisfied with it.'

**On 19 September** Zhodzina City Court took the side of the administration of Zhodzina Polytechnic who expelled the activist of the *Young Front* Siarhei Murashka. The judge Ala Papiouka ruled that the administration didn't violate the law by doing so. During the trial the director of polytechnics Piatro Talerchyk and a group of teachers tried to prove the guy was expelled for violation of the internal regulations of the educational establishments and that he used to receive rebukes for missing the classes and conflicts with teachers. Howev-

er, they said nothing about his good progress, because of which he even received enhanced scholarship. Aliaksei Murashka, Siarhei's father, was disappointed with the court verdict. 'It's a shame to fight children', he said. S.Murashka's defense lawyer Pavel Sapelka stated his client was expelled illegally. Firstly, the administration was to have obtained the agreement of the commission on minors before the expulsion, not after it. Secondly, the law allowed expelling students from educational establishments only for systematic violations.

**On 22 September** in Warsaw there were held several actions in support of democracy, human rights and freedom of speech in Belarus. One of them was an attempt to hand a petition over to the Belarusian Embassy, and the other one was a picket in the center of the Polish capital. None of the Belarusian diplomats left the embassy to meet the special envoy of Warsaw's mayor for women and family affairs Ms Jana Kluzik-Rostkowska, and after a while a voice in the phone box advised to leave the petition in the mail box. 'I arranged in Warsaw a meeting of the capital residents who had once taken an active part in the uprising and the work of *Solidarnosc*. During this meeting of the *Solidarnosc* veterans they signed a petition to the Belarusian authorities that urged them to stop reprisals against their own citizens. Here we have one hundred signatures,' said Ms Kluzik-Rostkowska. Almost at the same time in the center of Warsaw there was an action entitled Fax the Regime staged by the youth wing of the influential party Law and Justice. About three dozens of its participants handed out to the passers-by pieces of paper with an appeal to stop persecution against the opposition and independent media, and fax numbers of the Belarusian officials, and called on the passers-by to send the papers to Belarus.

**On 22 September** it became known the police were actively looking for the organizers of the explosion in Vitsebsk. They detained five suspects, some of whom were youth activists. Organized crime department officers first asked questions about explosives but then collected fly sheets, party documents and white-red-white flags. To the mind of the oppositional activists, the police just used the complicated situation to morally pressurize them. The police started searching the flats at night. At about 3.30 a.m. the police came to the 22-year-old *Young Front* activist Alena Stuk. 'They told me to give them my weapons! Am I the most dangerous terrorist here? I only have some kitchen knives. They searched everywhere, even under my bed. They just showed the order – and immediately started acting! Haven't found anything, the policemen went away. In the morning they conducted some more searches.' Dzianis Dzianisau, the leader of the local youth branch of UCP, was not home at the time. However, the police explained to his parents that they were looking for the people who had organized the 22 September explosion, or for related evidence. However,

according to their story the police spent most of the time in the son's room. After they found nothing, they took away CDs with the famous political cartoons, the documents Dzianis had brought from seminars in Poland and Ukraine, and also papers with signatures petitioning for one of the city streets to be named after Vasil Bykau. The police followed almost the same scenario searching the apartment of the leader of the local Young Front organization Viktor Shliakhtsin, the place of a member of the youth society Sevenths Side Stsiapan Tsishutsin. They did not follow any explosive devices, but when the human rights activist Valery Shchukin and a member of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee Pavel Levinau tried to enter the Tsishutsins' apartment, the police ordered them to leave the place immediately, promising to call in riot police in case of insubordination.

**On 25 September** during the distribution of the times of the Belarusian programs on *Euronews*, the student of the Barysau professional ecological lyceum Andrei Malasai, 19, activist of the civil initiative *For Clean Barysau!* was detained. 330 fly sheets were taken away from the boy. A. Malasai was brought to Barysau City Department of Internal Affairs where they interrogated him and took his fingerprints. The boy was videoed. On the following day the case of A. Malasai was considered by the administration of the educational establishment. During the consideration it was made clear to the boy that he might be expelled from the lyceum.

**On 27 September** it became known the police searched the flats of the 17-year-old pupil Andrei Ushenka and the 24-year-old worker Uladzislau Anishchanka in Vitsebsk. The searches were allegedly related to the recent explosions in the city. However, the police paid interest not to explosives, but to the structure and the activity of *Zubr*. The police also examined the personal belongings of the members of the Conservative-Christian Party BPF Uladzimir Pleshchanka and Aliaksandr Salauian who were detained in the street. They found fly-sheets in Pleshchanka's bag and told him to wait for summons to a sitting of the administrative commission.

**On 1 October** the delegate to the Congress from the *Young Front* Siarhei Marchyk had to return to Baranavichy. The police paid a visit to his mother and stated that in the case he didn't come to the police to register there he would be expelled from his educational establishment and his father would be fired.

**On 8 October** activists of the unregistered movement *Zubr* hung a white-red-white flag on one of the highest towers of the city of Barysau. Thousands of citizens could see the flag.

**In the evening of 10 October** the coordinator of *Zubr* movement Mikita

Sasim threw down from the roof of a house in former Frantsysk Skaryna Avenue a pile of fly-sheets with the urge to join the action of 16 October. When he came down by the fire-escape he was detained by a KGB agent. The police composed on him a report for anti-sanitation, that's how they qualified throwing down the fly-sheets. Then they accused him in small disorderly conduct – he allegedly used foul language and didn't react to the policemen's words. He spent three days at the detention center in Akrestsin Street. On 10 October Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court sentenced him to the three days of arrest which he has already spent. After the trial Mikita Sasim came to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs. There he was detained once again and taken to Baranavichy military committee, where he received the summons to come for medical examination the following day. On 11 September he came there and showed the medical certificates witnessing that on 16 September he received cranial trauma with brain concussion, after which he received a direction for further examination.

**On 11 October** the police detained Maksim Viniarski and Iauhien Alekhu for distribution of fly-sheets with the urge to take part in the Day of Solidarity with the regime's victims. They threw down several hundred of fly-sheets from the roof of a multi-stored building not far from Kamarouski market. The detainees were charged with violation of article #143 of the Code of Administrative Violation (anti-sanitation). At the same time, the police picked from the ground the fly-sheets so that passers-by couldn't take them.

**On 12 October** it became known that the administration of Hrodna State University threatened to expel the leader of Hrodna organization of *Young Front* Iauhien Skrabutan from the third year of the of the faculty of Belarusian philology. He was called to the office of the provost on educational work Tatsiana Badziukova. She showed to him a flysheet with a picture of a person in a mask with a slingshot and inscriptions 'Don't let to smear the honor and glory of the nation'. The flysheet also contained the number of the mobile phone, which, according to the provost, belonged to Mr Skrabutan. 'It's a dirty provocation', said the activist. 'This number was registered by my year-mate and the SIM-card was passed to me. However, I lost it long ago and now have another number. I have nothing to do with this flyer.' T.Badziukova accused the guy of distribution of flysheets on behalf of *Young Front*, 'treachery to the state youth policy' and 'terrorism'. She promised to expel from the university Skrabutan and his year-mates who had any relation to the *Young Front*.

**On 12 October** the political council of the democratic forces of Belarus supported the initiative to create an international tribunal to investigate the crimes committed under Lukashenka's regime. This initiative comes from Liudmila Karpenka, the widow of the renowned Belarusian politician, who died in April

1999 in unidentified circumstances. She proposed to establish the organization that could prepare the documental basis for the future trial of the organizers of the political kidnaps and murders in Belarus in 1999 and 2000. The public tribunal is intended to collect testimonies from all those who had relation to the investigation of the cases of the missing persons. Liudmila Karpenka also proposed to interrogate the witnesses who asked for political asylum abroad, being afraid of persecution from the side of the Belarusian authorities.

**On 14 October** in Brest the office of the Center of support to youth initiatives *Dzedzich* was raided by the police. The officers of Brest Maskouski Board of Internal Affairs knocked on the door of the *Dzedzich* office at 5 p.m. but no one opened the door. Having left 'surveillance' outdoors they departed. In about an hour, when the head of the organization Zmitser Shymanski was about to close the office, there came another knock on the door. Zmitser stepped out to see the police and closed the office door, but the vice-chief of Maskouski Board of Internal Affairs Mikalai Siamionau said that they had received information about a fight and screams coming from the *Dzedzich* office. He ordered that the office be opened for inspection. 'Maybe there are dead people scattered all around the place, and you do not let us inside', said Captain Siamionau. Shymanski refused to open the door because the police did not have a warrant from the prosecutor, which would authorize the search. After that the police forced the keys out of the Foundation chair's hands. After accessing the *Dzedzich* office, the police found no corpses. However, instead of departing they took an interest in the printed materials found: the bulletins *Dzedzich* and *Naviny BNF* and also fly sheets *Will there be a revolution in Belarus?* that were mass-distributed in Belarus by activists of democratic organizations. At the same time the police banned the use of mobile communications and searched the people in the office.

**On 21 October** Valozhyn police detained about 30 representatives of the youth organizations, who were going to Hrodna by three minibuses in order to take part in the Youth forum. According to one of the arrested persons, Vasil Lepesh, the road police stopped the busses near Valozhyn at about 9 a.m. The detainees spent about 4 hours at Valozhyn District Board of Internal Affairs. Vasil Lepesh told the official reason for the detention: 'They said it was connected with the special police operation related to the explosions in Vitsebsk. They ostensibly received some information that something connected to these explosions would take place at this highway, that's why they decided to detain us to be on the safe side.' As a result of this detention the Youth forum in Hrodna was disrupted. Sviatlana Karaliova, an organizer of the forum, said: 'Obviously, this is yet another piece of evidence showing how difficult it is to organize such events in the Republic of Belarus. The forum will

be postponed, because the goal of the forum is to consolidate the youth organizations. And also search for efficient methods of interaction and work in Belarus.'

**On 21 October** the rock concert in support of *Bobrov* bear took place. About 2 000 people came there. After the speech of the leader of the rock-band *NRM* Liavon Volski (who stated he intended to hold a concert of his 'blacklisted' band in Babruisk next year, after the presidential election) youth started chanting 'Long Live Belarus!'. The members of the *Young Front* Dzianis Buinitski and Siarhei Latsinski unrolled a large white-red-white flag and starting waving it above the crowd. The riot police immediately detained them. At Babruisk Pershamaiski Borough Board of Internal Affairs the guys were searched. In Buinitski's belongings they found some booklets of the *Young Front* that were immediately confiscated by the head of the local KGB branch. The police composed on the *Young Front* members reports for violation of article #156 of the Code of Administrative Violations, petty hooliganism and let them go. The trial was appointed on 24 October.

**On 22 October** in Mazyr the police detained the activists of the youth wing of the United Civil Party and the youth center *Hart* and also the citizen of France Sophi Vazniak and the citizen of Poland Michai Papina. The youth activists held informational meetings in Homel and Mazyr. The meeting in Mazyr took place in a private house, but was stopped by a dozen of police officers, who stated they were looking for firearms. They found no guns, but checked the documents of the people present and detained the foreign citizens and the persons who had no passports. Mrs Vazniak said the police didn't return the passports to her and Michai Papina. The policemen said they would drive them to the railway station and deport to Poland. Sophi Vazniak was surprised at such decision of the Belarusian police, because she didn't commit any violations and had all necessary documents for stay on the territory of Belarus.

**On 24 October** in the temporary isolator in Babruisk there took place the closed trial. The judge on administrative cases Tatsiana Tarabuieva was brought to the isolator and judged there the *Young Front* members Dzianis Buinitski and Siarhei Latsinski. She punished them with two days of jail. Closed administrative trial is one of the inventions of the Belarusian judiciary. According to article #299 of the Code of Administrative Violations administrative cases are to be considered openly. In order to increase the upbringing and preventive role of such trials they can be conducted in the working collectives, the place of study or habitation of the offender. The Code of Administrative Violations doesn't have the norms permitting to conduct administrative trials at isolators without admission of public.



**At about 2.30 p.m. on 25 October** at the crossroads of Nezalezhnastsi Av and Kazlou St in Minsk two members of the *BPF Youth*, Pavel Batuiou and Ales Mazanik, were detained for distributing *Narodnaia volia*. The police officers took them to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs. 'The detentions for the distribution of *Narodnaia volia* are illegal. This is a periodical officially registered in the Republic of Belarus, and, correspondingly, it can be distributed, including the free-of-charge basis. The detained young people have not violated the effective legislation in any way. Most probably, the police were given the task to stop the distribution of the independent newspaper using any methods,' commented the lawyer Valiantsin Stefanovich.

**On 26 October** in Hrodna the police detained the third-year student of the faculty of Belarusian philology of Hrodna State University Iauhen Skrabutan. That day a conference dedicated to student self-government took place at the university. Mr Skrabutan attended it. The room was guarded by senior students. According to Skrabutan, one of them came close to him, made a photo and then passed it to the police. After the end of the conference the student guards and the police detained Iauhen Skrabutan, stating that he distributed flyers at the conference. Then Mr Skrabutan was driven to Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs, where he had a talk with the investigator, who had a pile of flyers informing that students were expelled from the university. Skrabutan said he had no relation to these flyers.

**On 2 November** the youth of Mahiliou conducted protest action in support of the newspaper *Narodnaia volia*. Scores of activists of the *Zubr* movement and other youth organizations went to the public transport stop in front of the building of Mahiliou executive committee carrying copies of *Narodnaia volia*. There they started to read the paper. This action did not go without the police. But the policemen did not disturb the participants.

**On 2 November** Pavel Batuiou who was detained for the distribution of the newspaper *Narodnaia volia* filed a complaint with the prosecutor's office against lawless police actions. Pavel Batuiou together with Aliksandr Mazanik on 25 October at the crossroad of Nezalezhnastsi and Masherau avenues distributed the newspaper *Narodnaia volia* free of charge. Policemen approached to them and without introduction suggested to go to the police car and then proceed to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs. The policemen did not explain the reason for the detainment. At the BBIA the police major H. Kamera confiscated 527 copies of the paper *Narodnaia volia* and entered it in the report of confiscation. Policemen demanded a written explanation from him and wanted to subject to fingerprinting and image acquisition but he refused. In his complaint: 'I consider the actions of policemen, my detainment in particular, illegal as they broke my civil rights and interests. *Narodnaia volia* is an official

edition of the Republic of Belarus so I have all rights to distribute it free of charge.' Mr. Batuieu demanded to make a check-up and to call those guilty to account for violation of his civil rights according to the law.

**On 5 November** in Homel the activists of the movement *Zubr* Pavel Madshara and Andrei Holyshau were detained. The detainment was conducted by the criminal investigation police department. The youngsters were told that they are 'suspected of murder and robbery'. They were convoyed Homel Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs, searched and then set free in too hours.

**In the evening of 8 November** the member of the movement *Zubr* Uladsislau Barodka and the member of the UCP Dsianis Zalutski were arrested near Savetskaia Square in Mahiliou. The arrest took place under the command of the police sergeant Ruslan Savitski. The youngsters were distributing the newspapers *16*. They were transported to a police station. There about 400 copies of the publication dedicated to the Day of Solidarity and the badges 'I Love Belarus' were confiscated from the detainees. After the confiscation report was drawn out, Barodka and Zalutski were released.

**On 9 November** some students of Baranavichy State University, members of the *Young Front* were summonsed to the dean's office for a talk. The talk concerned the dissemination of the information about the common opposition candidate coming to Baranavichy among the students. The head of Baranavichy branch of *Young Front* Siarhei Marchyk said: 'A lady teacher approached me and asked me to go to the dean's office. At once I understood why they call me. In the study of the dean a pedagogical provost waited for me. She started with the question: 'What for you were handing out the newspapers? Where did I get so much of them? Who else in the university was engaged in disseminating such literature? Who and pays us for that and how much do they pay?' Then the dean of our faculty has joined the provost. All our conversation (about 45 minutes) was accompanied by threats: they said, soon there are examinations, and I along with my friends who were also engaged in distributing the newspapers can have no hope for passing the tests. Besides, they threatened us with big problems for our parents' jobs.'

**On 12 November** the flat of the public activist Vadzim Bohdan in Svetlahorsk was searched. The owner was absent. The parents said the flat was searched by the police, possibly together with a KGB agent. The visitors showed the order and stated they searched for drugs. The name in the order was incorrect – Uladzimir instead of Vadzim. In fact, they searched for printed materials and multiplying equipment and confiscated the informational bulletins *16* devoted to Solidarity Day action and 30 copies of *Rehiianalnyiia naviny* newspaper.

**At night of 12-13 November** the police detained the members of *Zubr* movement Andrei Baskorau and Iauhen Suvorau while they were pasting fly-sheets with number 16 in ring. The detainees were taken to Mahiliou Kastrychnitski Borough Board of Internal Affairs, where the police composed on them the reports for violation of article #143 of the Code of Administrative Violations.

**On 13 November**, Uladzimir Levaneuski, the son of the leader of Hrodna entrepreneurs, was arrested. The police confiscated from him a number of copies of the *Pradprymalnik* bulletin. The report wasn't drawn up.

**At 8.30 a.m. on 15 November** in Homel the *Zubr* activists Ruslan Hlazzkou and Pavel Madshara were detained for the distribution of information about Solidarity Day. Mr Khadosau, the head of the third section of Homel Chyhunachny Borough Board of Internal Affairs, personally detained them. The *Zubr* activists were taken to the police for identification. There they were searched and then released without a report compiled. During the detention, the police used four-letter words and insulted the detainees.

**On 15 November** Vadzim Bohdan, an activist of the youth movement in Svetlahorsk (Homel region), was second time called to the local police office to testify the results of search in his apartment. The search was conducted with the matter to find drugs but the police confiscated printed materials. Next morning the investigator decided to search again, this time in order to find 'homebrew'. But after a talk with the member of Belarusian Helsinki Committee A.lauseienka and when the investigator saw a crowd of youth movement members near Vadzim's house, he changed his plans. Then a KGB official came to the police office to discuss the details of Vadzim's case. According to Vadzim's words since that time the policemen became polite and did not use psychological pressure any more.

**On 16 November** the administration of Vitsebsk State University cancelled the round-table discussion on the topic of *Youth policies in the Republic of Belarus*. The initiative came from the local youth center *Spadchyna*. It was expected that this event would be attended by the representatives of the executive and legal branches of different levels, who would discuss with the leaders and activists of the third sector the issues of interaction between NGOs and the state structures. At the last moment the university administration told the round-table discussion organizers that a 'pipe had burst' so there was no place for the meeting.

**On 16-17 November**, on the eve of Lukashenka's visit to Mahiliou, the police detained there about 30 *Zubr* activists (almost all of those who had at least once faced administrative charges). The activists Andrei Paluda and

lauhen Suvorau were detained in a *Ford* car, because a road policeman noticed a sticker with *Pahonia* coat of arms on the rear window. The detainees were accused in insulting the police and not following their orders. On 17 November the police detained Valadar Tsurpanau in his own apartment and taken to Mahiliou Kastrychnitski Borough Board of Internal Affairs 'for a pre-emptive talk'. The police officers did not allow the detained activist's representative Barys Bukhel to attend the talk. After three hours of talk, V.Tsurpanau was not released. B.Bukhel was told that now he was being interrogated as a witness. V.Tsurpanau has been kept in Kastrychnitski BBIA for over 5 hours. All arrests in Mahiliou were plainly groundless. The police had the list of those who were to be detained. The arrested persons were taken to Kastrychnitski BBIA and asked questions about *Zubr* and other oppositional organizations. The policemen didn't compose the detention reports.

**At 2.30 p.m. on 17 November** in the subway passage of the tube station *lakub Kolas Square*, a police officer Kaspiarovich detained the *BPF Youth* activist Makar Vauchok who was distributing the newspaper *Narodnaia volia*.

**On 21 November** in Mahiliou there began the trials of the activists of the youth movement *Zubr* Andrei Paluda and lauhen Suvorau, who were detained by the road police on the Solidarity Day, 16 November, and accused of hooliganism. The witnesses in the trials over Andrei Paluda and lauhen Suvorau were only two road police officers. They stated the defendants swore and expressed their dissent with the police actions. According to the police witnesses, when they stopped the car, Paluda and Suvorau didn't react to their demands and started to call names. Those who had drawn up the reports and headed the police group did not show up at the court because of 'family reasons' (in the judge's words). The absence of the primary witnesses was the reason why the court hearings were transferred to another date.

**On 23 November** the judge of Mahiliou Leninski Borough Court Karaliou sentenced the activist of the *Zubr* movement Andrei Paluda to the minimal sum of fine (about 8 US dollars).

**On 23 November** in Minsk the police detained lauhen Afnahel was detained together with the car driver. The police kept Mr Afnahel in the public security department of a Borough Board of Internal Affairs for two hours. The police searched lauhen Afnahel to find stickers featuring a solidarity action. The police took from him a written explanation and released him without drawing up a report.

**On 24 November** Uladzimir Shymau, rector of Belarusian State Economic University, informed Tatsiana Khoma, a student of the international economic

relations department of BSEU, she would be expelled from the educational establishment. Two weeks before she was elected to the Council of the Union of National Students' Association of Europe (ESIB), the largest European students' organization that deals with the defense of the rights and interests of the students in Europe. The official reason claimed by the university administration is that Tatsiana missed three days of academic studies without the permission of the dean's office to attend the ESIB Congress in France, which elected her to the new leadership of the organization. In the order for expulsion of Tatsiana Khoma it was said: 'The administration of the university discovered that the student Tatsiana Khoma on her own and without any reasons went to France and stayed there on 11-14 November 2005, during the time of classes. Taking into consideration the complicated political situation in France and the emergency state in a number of the cities, the deed of the student T.Khoma could result to unpredictable tragic results. The behavior of the abovementioned student can be qualified not only as a gross violation of the internal regulations of the university (it wasn't the first violation), but also as open disrespect to BSEU as an organization that bears juridical and moral responsibility for guarantees of the security of students during the process of studies.' Tatsiana Khoma stated the real reason for her expulsion was political: 'They called 'unofficial and unauthorized trip abroad' and absence from classes during three days as the reason for my expulsion. During my visit to France I was elected to the administration of the European student organization ESIB. When the rector's office found about it, they decided to expel me. Then the university's administration qualified my going abroad as insult to BSEU and used such form of disciplinary punishment 'in conformity with the internal regulations and articles of the Labor Code'. I'd like to point that during the four years of my study at the university I didn't have a single admonition and was one of the best students among my year-mates. I am indignant: the rector hasn't talked to me even once. In the morning of 24 November I was invited to the vice-dean's office. There sat a man, who 'wanted to speak with me'. I know that in such situations I had the right not to speak with nobody who weren't from the university about anything that wasn't related to education. That's why I asked him to introduce himself. He said he was a worker of the university's department of upbringing. He asked me what ESIB was, who financed it, how it treated Belarus and whether it passed any resolutions concerning our country. The following day I found out he was from KGB. Probably, it explains why my question was solved so quickly. On 25 November, when I got to know the order about my expulsion was signed, I was evicted from the dormitory. I was ordered to move away within two-hour term. I was simply thrown out of the university and the dormitory into the street, on a snowy day. All workers of the university I happened to meet with expressed to me their support. I believe that Belarusian students are also in sympathy with me, I feel it. The ESIB administration contacted the international educational, student and human rights organiza-

tion. Thanks to them people in many countries of Europe found about my situation. I am very grateful to them for their support.' The lawyer Valiantsin Stefanovich commented: 'It was the first time when administration of a university didn't conceive the real reasons for the expulsion. According to the order the student was expelled for 'unauthorized travel abroad'. Should she have asked for rector's permission? It is a violation of article #30 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus that guarantees to Belarusian citizens the right to go abroad and return without any obstacles.'

**On 25 November** in Zhodzina the police turned attention to the non-state newspaper *Naziralnik*. According to its editor, the *Young Front* activist Pavel Krasouski, he was summonsed to Zhodzina police for explanations. The circulation of the edition was 299 copies, that's why it didn't need the state registration. *Naziralnik* informed readers about the city's events and turned their attention to the social and economic situation there.

**On 28 November** Mahiliou Leninski Borough Court held a trial on the administrative case against the activist of *Zubr* Iauhen Suvorau. The judge Alena Dyblenka sentenced the youth activist was sentenced to a minimal sum of fine (about 8 US dollars) under article #156 of the Code of Administrative Violations (disorderly conduct).

**On 30 November** Tatsiana Khoma directed to the Ministry of Education the complaint against the order of the rector of Belarusian State Economic University for her expulsion. According to the procedure, the ministry has a month for consideration of her complaint. However, Tatsiana hopes the ministry would answer earlier, because the examinations period will soon begin. Tatsiana Khoma also thinks that in the case the answer of the ministry was negative it would only confirm the rumors that the order to expel her from the university came from the ministry. In this case the student intends to apply to court.

**In November** in Svetlahorsk (Hemel region) the authorities increased the pressurization of the democratically oriented youth. After the Solidarity Day action the district authorities held a council of the chair of educational establishments with participation of a KGB agent. At the council they were ordered to pressurize pupils at the local technical college and secondary schools #4, #9 and #10. 'All senior pupils who have friends among active youth are summonsed to directors of their schools for 'prophylactic talks' with participation of unknown persons in plain clothes, who don't work at the schools. The pupils are threatened with expulsion, restrictions of foreign travels, etc. Their parents also receive telephone calls with threats. The directors say they will have to report on the results of these measures', said the local activist Vadzim Bohdan.

**On 1 December** the Human Rights House Foundation and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee condemned the expulsion of Tatsiana Khoma from the Belarusian State Economic University. They submitted the note of protest to Aliaksandr Radzkou, the education minister of the Republic of Belarus. There it was said: 'The Norwegian Helsinki Committee and the Human Rights House Foundation consider the decision to expel Ms Khoma from the University as politically motivated, and a totally disproportional reaction against a senior student. The Norwegian Helsinki Committee and the Human Rights House Foundation have no access to the internal rules and regulations Ms Khoma is accused of having violated. However, according to the article #13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, anyone has the right to leave any country, including her own, and to return to it. Any limitations on this right can only be exercised in accordance with law and when they are considered absolutely necessary in a democratic society. On the basis of this, the BSEU administration, while stating the personal security of Ms Khoma as the reason for why leaving the country has caused an offence against internal University rules, clearly fails to justify the expulsion of the young student. Moreover, Ms Khoma right to study is protected by the International Covenant on Economic and Social and Cultural Rights, after which she has the right to a higher education on a non-discriminatory basis. Expelling a senior student who has proved an academic merit because she has traveled abroad can only be viewed upon as discrimination based on assumptions on her political opinions. The Norwegian Helsinki Committee and the Human Rights House Foundation therefore ask you to annul the unlawful decision to expel Ms Tatsiana Khoma made by the BSEU administration.' The letter was signed by the Executive Director of the Human Rights House Foundation Maria Dahle and the General Secretary of Norwegian Helsinki Committee Bjørn Engesland.

**On 1 December** the youth from 15 countries of Europe including Lithuania, Cyprus, Great Britain, Poland, Ukraine and Belarus held an action of protest against the expulsion of Tatsiana Khoma from Belarusian State Economic University near the Embassy of Belarus in Lithuania. The action was organized by the Lithuanian union of students' representations, the largest student organization in Lithuania. The students explained it was an action of protest against violations of human rights in Belarus and they were indignant at the expulsion of an active student for participation in the international student movement. Youngsters held wallpapers with brick-wall ornament on them, which symbolized the 'state wall'. They covered the bricks with the inscriptions *Liberty of movement!* One of the action participants also held the historic flag of Belarus – white-red-white. The students didn't authorize the action at the major's office, that's why the police soon arrived. The policemen explained that it wasn't allowed to hold actions counting more than nine participants and warned

the protesters could be fined otherwise. The students split into several parts and the problem was solved.

**On 2 December**, following the decision by the Belarus State Economic University to expel a fourth-year student, Ms Tatsiana Khoma, for participating in a meeting of the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) without the permission of the university, the European University Association suspended the university's EUA membership, and called upon its members to cease all cooperation with the institution. EUA also called upon all its member universities to support ESIB's campaign to reinstate Ms Khoma at the university and to continue her studies and other activities on behalf of students free from harassment.

**On 2 December** Ales Mazanik, member of the organization committee of BPF Youth was detained in Kastychnitskaia Square in Minsk for handing out *Narodnaia volia* newspaper and taken to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs.

**On 2 December** in Homel the police detained the activists of *Zubr Pavel Madshara* and Andrei Hurevich, who arrived there from Minsk. At first the policemen explained they suspected the detainees in the theft of a mobile phone in Zhlobin and searched the guys' belongings. There they found informational materials about the 16<sup>th</sup> action (Day of Solidarity with Political Prisoners, 16<sup>th</sup> day of each month) and confiscated them.

**On 6 December** the rector of the Belarusian State Economic University Uladzimir Shymau refused to meet with the delegation of the Ambassadors of the European Union, who intended to discuss with him the expulsion of the student Tatsiana Khoma. Heads of the diplomatic missions of the EU countries expressed their concern with limitation of the rights and liberties of Belarusian students and expressed the hope Tatsiana Khoma would be given the possibility to continue studying at BSEU.

**On 8 December** the administration of Vitsebsk Veterinary Academy illegally searched the room of Liubou Kuchynskaia at the academy's dormitory in absence of the student. Then she was called to the provost's office. At first he said that he would pass all the materials found in the room right to KGB and she would leave his office in handcuffs. Then the student was summonsed by the rector, who also threatened she would be expelled from the academy. According to Kuchynskaia neighbors, the search in her room was conducted by Audachonak, a functionary of the trade-union committee, the pro-rector on upbringing Lukina and an unknown person in plain clothes. The initiators of the search took it all with them. The alleged reason for the illegal search was



an anonymous telephone call informing the officials the student had prohibited printed materials in her room. The administration representatives really found there about a thousand of different fly-sheets and stickers and confiscated them. They also paid visits to other rooms, but didn't search them.

**On 9 December** Dzmitry Shymanski, chair of the Fund of support to youth initiative *Dzedzich*, got Brest Maskouski Borough Prosecutor's Office to issue the official warning to Mr Mikhailau, a policeman of Brest Maskouski Borough Board of Internal Affairs who on 14 October took part in the search of the organization's office. Short after the search he complained to the prosecutor's office, demanding to bring a criminal case against the police. The prosecutor's office conducted a check-up, refused to bring a case on illegal actions of the police. On the other hand, the prosecutor's office agreed the police violated the procedure of the search – even despite the videotaping of the search the policemen didn't compose the report on the results of the search. As a result the prosecutor's issued a warning to Mr Mikhailau.

**On 12 December** the administration of the Belarusian State Economic University (BSEU), started to pressurize the students who collected signatures against the expulsion of the fourth year student Tatsiana Khoma. After the students collected more than 500 signatures the deans' offices started calling them for 'explanatory talks'. The university administration told the students BSEU was a state educational establishment, had to uphold the state policy and therefore also had to expel Tatsiana Khoma. Tatsiana Khoma's friends who live in BSEU dormitory #3, were visited by the man who introduced himself as Uladzimir Mikalaievich. He also met with Tatsiana Khoma on 24 November, the day she was expelled from the university. He asked her about the activity of the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) and their vision of Belarus.

**On 12 December** the students of the Economic Academy of Poznan started to collect signatures for acceptance of Tatsiana Khoma to this educational establishment with appointment of scholarship. This was the initiative of the Cultural-educational Center in Poznan. The initiators also stated that in the case Ms Khoma was rehabilitated at the place of study in Belarus, that place could be given to another student of economic profile, expelled for political reasons.

**On 14 December** Svetlahorsk District Court fined the youth activist Vadzim Bohdan 300 000 rubles. On 11 November the police examined Bohdan's flat and found there printed editions related to the Day of Solidarity. The Administrative Code provides punishment for such violations as violation of the order of production or distribution of printed editions. However, according to

Bohdan, police didn't present any evidence that the materials were printed or distributed – they just found the newsletters lying in the flat.

**On 15 December** in Zhodzina an administrative case on suspicion in violation of the law *On press and other mass media* was brought against the editor of the non-state informational bulletin *Naziralnik* Pavel Krasouski. When he issued the fourth number of the bulletin, the local police summonsed him and demanded explanations. 'They said they wanted to bring a criminal case against me for defamation of a state official. They clang to a cartoon that was E-mailed to me by a citizen of Zhodzina,' said Mr Krasouski. The policeman Viachaslau Iliich specified P.Krasouski was charged with violation of article #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations, illegal production of distribution of mass media.

**On 15 December** in Homel the police of Homel Chyhunachny Borough Board of Internal Affairs detained Pavel Madshara for 'distribution of fly-sheets about the Solidarity Day action'. According to the human rights activist from Homel Anatol Paplauny, the police must have watched Madshara, because during the detention he didn't hand out any fly-sheets, but simply walked with the bag with fly-sheets on his back. The police confiscated all the fly-sheets.

**On 15 December** Human Rights Center *Viasna* received a letter that witnesses the oppression of the students who come from provinces at the dormitories of state educational establishments. I am writing to you because I feel very indignant at what happened today in the morning. The dormitory administration, where I live, came to our place this morning and forced us to sign a paper instructing us to have the light on in our room from 8 p.m. till 8.30 p.m. on the 16 day (Freedom Day). What would have happened if I had refused to sign the paper does not need explaining. This shows that the authorities are afraid of even such actions. I call on everyone: Light up a candle for 15 minutes and tell your friend and relations about this, because FREEDOM must not be just a word void of any meaning! Ordinary student. (I do not sign the letter because I am a student of a state university and so may be expelled because of this letter).

*P.S.* Please publish this letter because I can no longer stand the oppression.

**On 15 December**, the eve of the Solidarity Day, the administration of dormitories #5 and #6 of the Belarusian State Technical University prohibited their dwellers to leave the dormitories after 6 p.m. on 16 December and turn off the light since 6 p.m. till 8.30 p.m. (On the Solidarity Day people express their solidarity with the political prisoners of Belarus and families of the missing public and political activists by turning off the lights and lightning candles in their windows).

**On 19 December** Babruisk Pershamaiski District Court continued to hear an administrative case against Dzianis Buinitski and Siarhei Latsinski by terms of article #167-2 of CAV (use of unregistered symbols). After explanations and evidence given by witnesses, the judge Tatsiana Tarabuieva ruled to return the minutes and materials of the case to the Board of Internal Affairs of Babruisk City Executive Committee for attachment of the evidence proving that the flag used at the concert was not registered, and that the flag itself.

**On 20 December** the Council of Svetlahorsk district branch of the Frantsysk Skaryna Belarusian Language Society received a refusal from the head of the local internal affairs department to an open statement regarding the inspection of Vadzim Bohdan's apartment – a member of the Republican council of BLS. Among the periodicals that, according to the police chief, were aimed at 'damaging the state and civil order' were stickers that featured the figure 16. The statement adopted on 17 November at a session of Svetlahorsk Council of BLS said that during the search of the apartment the police officers accused Vadzim of advocating fascist views. The statement also said that the police pressurized V.Bohdan, while taking explanations from him. The accuracy of all information included into the statement was confirmed by V.Bohdan – the statement was both discussed and adopted in his presence. In particular, the response provided by M.Rahovich, chief of the local department of the police, said: 'After examining the apartment the police officers found printed materials, which described the activities of unregistered political movements *Zubr*, *White Legion* and stickers featuring the figure 16, stickers with the inscription *Today Ukraine - tomorrow Belarus*, and also a list of officials of the district. 'Because the content of the printed materials was aimed at inflicting damage to the state and civil order, the police officers decided to confiscate the printed materials. With respect to Mr Bohdan, a report was made, which registered an administrative violation by terms of article #167-10 of the Code of Administrative Violations of Belarus,' said the police chief. According to him, the police officers did not exert any pressure on Mr Bohdan. The response notes that at the request of Mr Bohdan a representative of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee was allowed to read these materials. He did not reveal any violations of the current legislation. None of the police officers, says the response, did not accuse Mr Bohdan of advocating fascist views.

**In the evening of 20 December** outside the KGB office in Homel the police detained Dzianis Chykaliou, Andrei Kirylau and Dzmitry Sauchanka who were putting up portraits of the *Zubr* activist Andrei Zaitsau brought to suicide through the fault of KGB four years ago. The detainees were taken to Homel Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs where the department chief said that if the guys continued to act in the same way this week, they would get at least five days of arrest each. After that they were released, no report made.

**On 22 December** in Pinsk the police detained Aliaksandr Liulchau for 'identification'. They took him to Pinsk Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs and examined his belongings in absence of civil witnesses. When Liulchau demanded from them to bring witnesses, the chair of the BBIA said he would kick him in the hand and his boot would leave an imprint on his forehead. The policemen also threatened to lead Liulchau to the cellar and beat him there, insulted and intimidated him. Finally, they confiscated from him fly-sheets with information about Aliaksandr Milinkevich and composed a report of violation of article #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations (distribution of printed editions that were produced with violation of the legal order).

**On 22 December** in the central market of Hrodna the police detained Valery Levaneuski's son Uladzimir Levaneuski and took him to Hrodna Kastrychnitski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. There they composed on Jr Levaneuski the report of confiscation of 250 copies of the bulletin *Predprinimatel* he had with him. The second report was composed on violation of part 3 of article #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations, distribution of printed production without the date-line, despite the fact Levaneuski didn't distribute the bulletin.

**On 23 December** in Vitsebsk KGB agents detained Aliaksandr Darafeieu, a democratic movement activist and a member of the initiative group of the united opposition candidate Aliaksandr Milinkevich. The authorities allegedly suspected him of being involved with the Vitsebsk explosions. So far it has proved impossible to find out more about the charges leveled against Mr Darafeieu because he was taken from Vitsebsk to the capital and is being kept in the Minsk KGB office. The human rights activist Aliaksandr Bialiatski believes that the authorities are using this to intimidate the opponents of the ruling regime, those who live in Vitsebsk in the first place, and do what they can to achieve this goal.

**On 24 December** men in plain clothes detained the *Zubr* activist Pavel Iukhnevich near the Church of St. Symon and Alena in the center of Minsk. They drove him to Minsk Maskouski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. There he was searched. The police found several stickers and composed on him a report for violation of part 3 of article #172 of the Code of Administrative Violations (distribution of printed editions without the date-line). In four hours the activist was released.

**In the morning of 27 December** a policeman and two persons in plain clothes searched the flat of the *Zubr* activist Siarhei Rykau. They confiscated some informational materials. After they searched they took Mr Rykau to Minsk Maskouski borough police department #2 and then to Minsk Maskouski Borough Board of Internal Affairs, where he was interrogated by two KGB agents.

They asked him about the places where printed materials were kept and about the leaders of *Zubr*. He refused to answer and they let him go without composing any reports.

**On 27 December** Piatro Zykun, the vice-chair of Svetlahorsk District Board of Internal Affairs, familiarized the public activist Telman Masliukou with the report of administrative violation that was composed as a result of the search of Masliukou's flat. According to the police, Mr Masliukou was suspected in illegal keeping of drugs and arms. In the report the police gave the following charges to the activist: 'He brought from Minsk printed editions that contain urges of the unregistered organization *Zubr* and thus acted on behalf of unregistered political organization'. The printed editions the police found were informational bulletins 16 that contained information about the Solidarity Day and a material of *Zubr* that wearing jeans and things made of jeans in Belarus became a symbol of craving for freedom.

**On 27 December** the police took explanations concerning the bulletin *Mastouskaia prauda* from the activist of Aliaksandr Milinkevich's initiative group Aliaksandr Zarembiuk, deputy of Masty District Deputy Soviet. After a session of the deputy soviet a policeman came to Mr Zarembiuk and invited him to Mastry District Board of Internal Affairs. There the police presented to the deputy a letter from the ideological department of the local executive committee. There it was said that it wasn't necessary to register the bulletin *Mastouskaia prauda* because its circulation was only 299 copies, but it was issued with violations of the law, because such data as the number of the license, the number of the order for printing and the place of printing weren't specified. Aliaksandr Zarembiuk told the police he had nothing to do with the printing of the bulletin.

## 14. Pressurization of political and public activists by secret services

**On 23 January** Vital Ruhainy, pupil of the last form of a secondary school in Mahiliou, was called to the director's office. A man in plain clothes applied to him, introducing himself as a KGB agent. He asked the fellow about the educational seminar for journalists (that was held on 21-22 December by the Belarusian Association of Journalists) and the Belarusian representation of F. Ebert Fund. The KGB agent warned the guy, who was going to become a

journalist and therefore took part in a number of educational seminars, he was dealing with 'bad people'. When Vital Ryhainy objected that both organizations acted in the country openly and legally, the anonymous answered they would soon put an end to it.

**On 30 January** unknown persons severely beat Liudmila Ananieva, wife of the founder and editor of the independent newspaper *Vremya*. At about 4 p.m. the woman entered the porch of her house and immediately got a hard blow in the face. After the second blow she fell on the floor and the man started beating her when she was lying in the pool of blood. Neighbors heard her screaming and ran out of their flats, which made the unknown man flee with the bag of oranges he tore from the woman's hands. A car was waiting for him round the corner. The neighbors said that a suspicious man walked on the fourth floor. The bag with oranges was found not far from the house.

**On 5 February** the activist of the United Civil Party Aliaksandr Vauchanin stated that Zhodzina law machinery tried to intimidate him. They accused him in libeling the Belarusian secret services, because he applied for the political asylum in the Ukraine. Zhodzina prosecutor Viktor Litvinenka came to his work and demanded from him to sign the publication of his appeal in *Narodnaia volia* and the document where it was said a criminal case was initiated against him for libeling the secret services.

**On 7 February** the leader of the parliamentary group *Respublika* Siarhei Skrabets and a friend of his almost got into an accident, because an unknown person spoiled the steering in his car. He considered it as an attempt of the secret services to kill him and applied to the prosecutor's office, asking to investigate this fact.

**On 17 February** the administrative commission of Minsk Frunzenski Borough Executive Committee issued an oral warning to Aksana Novikava. On 11 January Novikava was detained by the police, as she was raising funds for 'an orange revolution' in Belarus, and was accused of begging. All 11 members of the commission gathered together to review the administrative protocol against Aksana Novikava. This was the second sitting. Only four officials turned up for the first sitting. Aksana Novikava argued that due to the lack of quorum, the commission decision would not be legal. The sitting was postponed. The two witnesses, a man and a woman, who were invited to the second sitting, said that Aksana Novikava had been walking around with a mug with an orange strip, and collecting money for a revolution. This was what the policemen called begging.

**On 22 February** Siarhei Skrabets was denied political asylum in the Russian Federation. Skrabets received the answer from the Presidential Adminis-

tration of the Russian Federation, to which he applied in the end of 2004. He grounded his application for political asylum with persecution from the side of Belarusian authorities and the wish to guarantee security to his family and himself. However, the Russian authorities refused to give him political asylum, pointing at the absence of visa regime between Belarus and Russia.

**On 2 March** the *Specter* publishing enterprise refused to print the pre-elector fly-sheets for Siarhei Matusevich, candidate to deputies in Hrodna election circuit #52. It happened after on 27 February unknown persons had entered the printing house, showed unknown documents and taken away 2 200 fly-sheets from the printing house. After it the printing house returned to the account of the local executive committee the money that were issued for printing of the agitation materials and refused to print anything related to the election. As a result, the candidate applied to the circuit election commission and the prosecutor's office.

**On 24 March** it became known that KGB attempted to recruit Veranika Lazouskaia, a participant of the *Free Political Prisoners!* actions and a *Zubr* movement activist. Veranika Lazouskaia was detained during the 11 March action for unfolding the poster *Release Political Prisoners!*. On 22 March he got a phone call suggesting she should come to the Minsk Frunzenski borough department of KGB for 'a talk'. Veranika Lazouskaia refused to go to the KGB department without official summons. Her father went instead. The KGB agent showed Veranika's father a diskette which allegedly contained information on the girl, and said that Lazouskaia should agree to cooperate with the KGB unless she wanted problems entering a university.

**On 30 March** Siarhei Lisichonak, vice-chair of the *Young Front* and member of the Belarusian People's Front, was stopped in the center of Minsk by a KGB agent, who introduced himself as 'Kiry!'. At first he spoke about Young Front and the activation of its work during the recent street actions. Then he said that Pavel Seviarynets (accused on a criminal case) was 'on the hook' and it became simpler to limit his political activity. He also stated that KGB wanted Seviarynets to ask for political asylum abroad. Then the KGB agent proceeded to Siarhei Lisichonak. He proposed to him to present information about Young Front to KGB and instead promised that the organization would be able to conduct any meetings and assemblies without any troubles. He also said that in the case Lisichonak refused, KGB would make political provocations with the aim to discredit him. The KGB agent also threatened Lisichonak with other forms of intimidation. Nevertheless, S.Lisichonak refused to cooperate, though he was asked to 'seriously think it over'.

**At night between 30 April and 1 May** Siarhei Lisichonak, arrested for

participation in *Chernobyl Way* peaceful rally, was transferred from prison to the infectious hospital in Krapotkin St. The reason was that the youngster's blood pressure was too high and he had aches in kidneys.

**On 1 May** in Homel the police detained the youngsters who called themselves participants of the *Lemon* movement. They intended to hold the action *It Won't Be Sweet* which included handing lemon candies and portraits of Lukashenka to citizens. The detainees were kept at Homel Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs for three hours without composing any violation reports. The same action was to have taken place in Minsk, but on 30 April its coordinator, Homel citizen Siarhei Siamionau was detained in Minsk, taken to Minsk Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs and then transferred to the detention center in Akrestsin St.

**On 2 May** Minsk Leninski Borough Court considered the administrative case against Siarhei Siamionau, representative of the *Lemon* movement from Homel, and then sentenced him to 2 days of jail for violation of article #156 of the Code of Administrative Violations (hooliganism). These two days the detainee already spent in the detention center in Akrestin St. before the trial.

**On 5 May** Alexiy Panasiuk, who was sentenced to 9 days of jail for participation in the Chernobyl Way procession in Minsk, was deported to the Ukraine. The Ukrainian consul Vasil Serdeha drove him there by his car.

**On 6 May** nine persons, arrested for participation in the opposition's action of 26 April, were released from the detention center in Akrestsin St. in Minsk. Half of them were Ukrainians and the other half – Belarusians. More than fifty people gathered at the entrance of the detention center, leaders of oppositional parties, members of the *Young Front* and *Zubr* and businessmen among them. They had orange ribbons on their sleeves to express solidarity with the Ukrainians. On this day the 10-day prison term ended for Ihor Huz (leader of the Ukrainian organization *National Alliance*), Andriy Hrymaliuk and Alexander Maflay. Andriy Bokach was arrested for 15 days, but released before time in order to deport from Belarus together with compatriots. Workers of the Ukrainian Embassy drove them to the Ukraine by their personal cars. When the gates of the detention center opened and the embassy car drove out of it, people gave way to it and saw off the Ukrainian citizens. All of the Ukrainian citizens who were sentenced to arrest for participation in the action of 26 April, were deported. They are also prohibited to enter the territory of Belarus for five years. The appropriate seals were put into their passports. The following Belarusian citizens were released as well: Siarhei Vysotski, leader of the unregistered Belarusian Freedom Party, the members of the *Young Front* Kiryl Shymanovich, Anatol Bekasau, Aleh Hnedchyk and Siarhei Dziadziushka. Siarhei Vysotski kept a hunger-strike.



**In the evening of 6 May** in Vitsebsk members of the *Young Front* hanged on the banisters of Blakhin bridge the large banner 'Set political prisoners free!'. That's how they expressed their solidarity with the imprisoned participants of the Chernobyl Way procession in Minsk. The banner was hanged at the time when the working day on some of the local factories was coming to an end. That's why many passers-by could see the banner.

**In the evening of 7 May** in Mahiliou two activists of the *Zubr* resistance movement were punished for the action they staged outside the Mahiliou KGB office in commemoration of the anniversary of the disappearance of the former Minister of Interior of Belarus Iury Zakharanka. The picket was prevented by the police who detained 12 people and made detention reports. After this Andrei Razumkou and Iauhen Suvorau were again detained by the police for distributing the independent newspaper *Vybor* in the central streets of Mahiliou, and taken to the police station and then to the court that dealt with their participation in the 7 May action. The court found guilty the *Zubr* activists of having taken part in an unauthorized event and insubordination to the police, and imposed large fines on them: Andrei Razumkou – about 450 000 rubles and Iauhen Suvorau – more than 500 000.

**On 7 May** Basmannyi court of Moscow continued the consideration of the cases of the participants of the protest action, held in front of Belarusian Embassy in Russia. Its activists demanded from Belarusian authorities to release Belarusian and Ukrainian citizens who were put in jail for participation in Chernobyl Way action in Minsk. The activist of *Yabloko* youth movement Ivan Bolshakov, who was among the persons arrested in Minsk during Chernobyl Way, was sentenced to four days of jail for the picket in front of Belarusian Embassy. In the evening of 7 May the same sentences to another *Yabloko* member, Egor Shalayev and the member of *Going without Putin* movement Vadim Rezvy. The non-party participant of the action Piotr Karnaukhov was fined 1 000 Russian rubles. Before that the court punished another three participants of the action: Dmitriy Kokarev, member of *Oborona* movement, *Yabloko* members Semion Burd and Vitaliy Reznik were sentenced to six days of jail. The picket participant Irina Vorobyova was fined 500 Russian rubles. The majority of the prisoners also took part in Chernobyl Way in Minsk. The prisoners went on hunger-strike of protest against the politically motivated punishment.

**On 10 May** the youth protest action against the renaming of three Minsk streets took place in the center of the capital. About 400 people took part in it, 7 of them were detained. Such organizations as the *Young Front*, youth initiative *Voka*, the Youth of Belarusian People's Front and pupils of Belarusian Humanities Lyceum participated in it. The information about the action was distributed through internet and SMS. The result was a massive flash mob in

Minsk. At 7 p.m. about 400 people lined up in Kastyrychnitskaia Square and took on fascias with letters SOS. Two riot squad units started to push them to the center of the Square. When the action participants started singing *We'll Come out in Close Columns* national anthem the police started to seize activists. When the action participants sat down on haunches, the police bus moved in their direction. The police detained Barys Haretski, Pavel Shavel, Artsiom Tsepliakou, Fransishak Viachorka, Mikhail Vouchak and two more guys. The detainees were pulled into the police bus with the number KI 6225. They said the police swore on them, threatened, searched and confiscated mobile telephones. In an hour the bus took them to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs and. At 9.15 p.m. they were let go without any explanations or apologies.

**On 12 May** the administrative commission of Navapolatsk City Executive Committee tried the student Volha Semenchukova, who on 21 April handed out *Moccasin* bulletin at the local university. She was charged with distribution of printed editions without the data-line. Having familiarized with the police report and the content of the distributed bulletin, the commission decided to stop the case because of absence of the corpus delicti in the actions of the accused person.

**On 12 May** Navapolatsk City Court was to have considered Aliaksei Trubkin's complaint against the actions of the administrative commission of Navapolatsk City Executive Committee. Let us remind that on 25 March, Day of Freedom, Mr Trubkin handed to the administration of Polatsk State University fly-sheets with congratulations, for which he was fined 102 000 rubles. The trial was postponed to 18 May.

**On 12 May** 17-year-old Siarhei Murashka, second-year student of Zhodzina Technical College, was expelled from this educational establishment for participation in the action of 26 April, at which he was detained. Murashka's friends from the local *Young Front* branch held a picket of protest against his expulsion near Zhodzina City Executive Committee: 'We held a picket of support to Siarhei Murashka who was expelled from the college. He studies well, but the system decided to expel him. About 15 persons took part in the picket. We stood near Zhodzina CEC with posters 'Smolski, Murashka, Chartkou, Krasouski, Savich: who is the next?'. It is the fifth case in Zhodzina when the authorities remand activists of our organization. We passed our petition and appeal to Zhodzina City Executive Committee. In our appeal we demanded to rehabilitate Siarhei Murashka and stop the persecution of active youth in Zhodzina. The action ended without detention, but the police put down the names of its participants. I believe the authorities can continue the persecution campaign,' said Pavel Krasouski, chair of local *Young Front* branch.

**On 13 May** the administration of a secondary school in Zhodzina proposed the parents of the *Young Front* member Ales Smolski to transfer him to another school. The reason was the administration received from the police the note about Smolski's detention at the *Chernobyl Way* action of 26 April. Before that Ales Smolski was expelled from Suvorov Military College for membership in the *Young Front* and collection of signatures for renaming of the educational establishment (Suvorov was a Russian general who swam in blood the insurrections against Russian Empire on the territory of Belarus). Many members of Zhodzina branch of the *Young Front* became victims of harassment: Pavel Krasouski was expelled from a pedagogical college, Siarhei Savich – from the Police Academy, Dzmitry Chartkou – from producer department of the Belarusian Academy of Arts, Siarhei Murashka – from a polytechnic college. The *Young Front* members said the school administrations of Zhodzina asked pupils to answer to the following questions: 'What is patriotism and nationalism?' and 'Will you take part in unauthorized oppositional actions?'. That's how the authorities checked the effectiveness the school administrations conducted the ideological work. The administration of Hrodna State University expelled the members of *Young Front* who studied at the philological department – Ales Kursevich, Iauhen Skarabutan and Ales Zarembiuk. Iauhen Skrabutan was detained and tried for the graffiti 'Let's Stop Russification!'. Being under age, he managed to resume his studies at the university. He said: 'Ales and I were expelled for graffiti. I wasn't of age at that time and complained to the prosecutor's office against the illegal expulsion from the university. My friend had to move to Poland to continue his studies.' Ales Zarembiuk showed an excellent progress in studies. He faced problems after he registered as a candidate to the deputies of Masty Town Deputy Soviet at the election. He said: 'The administration of the educational establishments and the rector's office – all these people really work on orders of higher officials. During the first session I received only excellent marks. I am a member of the *Young Front*. I registered as a candidate to the deputy soviet. My rivals didn't like it. I came to the university and they said they expelled me for 'untimely return to studies after academic vacation', as it was stated in the order. So, they expelled me completely illegally and also violated my deputy status.' The activist of the *Young Front* Kiryl Shymanovich is a student of the juridical college of the Belarusian State University. He was arrested for 10 days for participation in the *Chernobyl Way* action. As a result the college administration tried to expel him for 'missing classes without a good excuse'. The members of the youth movement *Zubr* Mikita Shutsiankou and Iliia Palonski learned at a polytechnic gymnasium. They were detained for handing out *Vybor* newspaper. The gymnasium administration warned their parents the children wouldn't learn there and were only allowed to finish the last quarter of the year. Before this Maksim Hromau and Katsiaryna Klimko were expelled from the pedagogical college, Iryna Toustsik from Belarusian State Pedagogical University and Raman Kazakevich – from

Institute of Radio Engineering. The leaders of youth organizations stated the pressurization of youth activists would be much stronger on the eve of the presidential election.

**14 May** – 10 years has passed since the Belarusian language lost its status as the only state language, and the white-red-white flag with the *Pahonia* coat of arms ceased to be symbols of the state. On the night of 13 and 14 May the *Young Front* activists put up several dozens of the white-red-white flags in protest at the anti-state referendum of 1995 that changed the national symbols. National flags were hoisted in Minsk, Vitsebsk, Brest, Homel, Mahiliou, Hrodna, Lida, Masty, Zelva, Zhodzina, Orsha, Baranavichy, Babruisk, Smalia-vichy, Asipovichy, Polatsk and Khotsimsk. In Minsk the *Young Front* put up the flags at the entrance to the city, in the center of the city, and on a bridge over the Svislach River. In Vitsebsk a three-meter flag appeared next to the regional executive committee, and the entire city had the stickers saying 'The city belongs to us'.

**On 15 May** Skaryna Av. in Minsk, which A.Lukashenka renamed recently, saw another peaceful action of protest against the insult on the historical memory of the Belarusians. Over fifty young people, who represented the youth initiatives *Voka*, *Free Youth* and the *BPF Youth*, walked from the Kastrychnitskaia tube station to Iakub Kolas square holding portrait of Skaryna and his well-known aphorism about patriotism and books in their hands. Other people were joining. On their way there were detained by the police officers several times. The surprising thing happened at Peramohi Square, where a patrolling officer read Skaryna's famous quotation, when talking to his chief over the walkie-talkie: 'Just like animals born in a desert know their holes, birds know their nests, and bees protect their hives, so people should have great love for the place they were born and grew up'. When the officer asked what to do, he got the following response: 'Wish them luck'. However, after entering the territory of the infamous Savetski BBIA, the participants of the impromptu procession came against much fiercer opposition from the police. Outside the philharmonic society, Frantsishak Viachorka was detained, who played the part of the printing pioneer with a book under the arm and a cloak over his shoulders. When laying flowers to the monument of Iakub Kolas, Aliaksei Halaunia, Pavel Miatlitski, Uladzimir Bychynau, Vasil Verameichyk, Dzmitry Shostak, Ruslan Serbin and Artsiom Rusanenka were detained. They were all taken to Savetski BBIA, where they were released without reports composed, explanations given and apologies offered.

**On 18 May** Navapolatsk City Court dealt with an appeal against the ruling passed by the administrative commission with respect to an administrative offence by terms of part 3 of article #172 allegedly committed by a BPF mem-

ber Aliaksei Trubkin. Mr Trubkin was detained on 25 for congratulating the rector of the Polatsk State University on the Day of Freedom. Based on the evidence given by the vice-rector of PSU Tsyhankou, Judge Fedziukevich decided that the greeting card had to bear the issue details (as is the requirement for periodicals) and upheld the administrative fine of 102 thousand rubles.

**On 19 May** the student Aksana Tsimchanka, 20, was fined 30 000 rubles. The girl was accused of distributing unregistered printed materials in commemoration of the Chernobyl disaster. Brest Leninski borough administrative commission heard the case against the student Aksana Tsimchanka on the basis of a 26 April report that registered her alleged violation. On this day an action called *Candle of Remembrance* took place in Brest, which was devoted to the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. The police then detained Ms Tsimchanka because she was allegedly distributing leaflets produced in violation of the respective law. In particular, the police argued that because the leaflets had been printed in Smolensk, they could not be distributed in Belarus.

**On 24 May** in the center of Minsk the police detained six youngsters who took to the street with portraits of the Slavonic printing pioneer Frantsysk Skaryna. Among the detainees there was Frantsishak Viachorka (song of the BPF chair Vintsuk Viachorka). The detainees were taken to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs.

**On 25 May** four members of the Zhodzina-based *Young Front* organization went on hunger strike to protest against the wave of expulsions from universities. According to Pavel Krasouski, the chair of the Zhodzina branch of the *Young Front*, the following students have been expelled for political reasons over the past month: Kirył Shymanovich – legal school of BSU, Siarhei Murashka – polytechnic college, Ales Smolski – military school, Siarhei Savich – academy of the interior, Dzmitry Chartkou – arts academy. On 24 May Pavel Karaniukhin was expelled from Pleshchanitsy-based state school of the Olympic reserve. The *Young Front* members Natallia Maksimava and Volha Halubets, who are students in Zhodzina women's gymnasium, were threatened they would be deprived of the opportunity to carry on with their studies. To protest the repressive actions by the authorities, Dzmitry Chartkou, Iauhen Valkavets, Ales Vinahradau and the minor age Siarhei Murashka went on hunger-strike. They think this is the only opportunity they have to defend their right to education. The strikers argued that the action would only end after Siarhei Murashka was allowed to carry on with his studies, and after pressure on Natalia Maksimava and Volha Halubets were stopped. They hoped that in this way they would be able to stop reprisals against the youths whose political views didn't agree with the policies of the authorities. Before the hunger-strike, the *Young Front* members went to the local city executive committee, requiring

that reprisals against the colleagues be stopped. Several dozens of young people signed under a petition. But the authorities didn't react to the statement in any way. At the same time, Zhodzina St. cleaners carefully took down all of the leaflets put up throughout the city which informed of the *Young Front* hunger-strike.

**On 25 May** in Mahiliou two activists of the *Zubr* resistance movement were punished for the action they staged outside the Mahiliou KGB office in commemoration of the anniversary of the disappearance of the former Minister of Interior of Belarus Iury Zakharanka. The court found them guilty of having taken part in an unauthorized event and insubordination to the police, and imposed large fines on them: Andrei Razumkou will have to pay about 450 000 rubles, and Iauhen Suvorau – more than 500 thousand rubles.

**On 26 May** the judge of Mahiliou Leninski Borough Court Siarhei Karaliou fined the activist of the *Zubr* movement Ivan Shauchenka a sum worth about 200 US dollars for participation in the action *Chain of Concerned People* that took place on 7 May.

**On 27 May** the number of hunger-strikers in Zhodzina increased. Dzmitry Chartkou, Siarhei Murashka, Iauhen Valkavets and Aliaksandr Vinahradau who kept hungering since 25 May, were joined by Pavel Karaniukhin and Siarhei Marchyk. Pavel Karaniukhin was expelled from the sportive school of the Olympic reserve, situated in Lahoisk district, when the school administration was informed about his relation with democratic youth. He learned well and participated in the district and regional competitions, but it didn't help. Siarhei Marchyk said: 'I came from Baranavichy, where I head the local *Young Front* branch, to support my friends in Zhodzina'.

**On 30 May** the activist of Barysau branch of the *Zubr* movement Mikhail Kandrashou joined the hunger-strike of Zhodzina activists. It's worth mentioning that in autumn 2004 Mr Kandrashou was expelled from Barysau technical college #85 for political activity.

**On 30 May** the representative of the *Young Front* in the Ukraine Ihar Shchakarevich declared a hunger-strike in support of the demands of his friends in Zhodzina. He thusly commented his deed: 'I've gone on hunger-strike because the situation of the guys is familiar to me. I was expelled from Hrodna State University in 2004, during the parliamentary election. I faced problems with the police and had to move to the Ukraine. My hunger-strike is an action of solidarity with the guys and an attempt to turn the attention of the Ukrainian authorities to the situation of the oppositional youth in Belarus.'

**On 30 May** the *Young Front* held a press-conference. There it was an-

nounced that three more youth activists joined the hunger-strike – Dzmitry Dashkevich, Artur Finkevich and Valery Matskevich. The organization planned a number of actions on 1 June. Firstly, its partners in the EU countries, EU and Russia would hold pickets outside Belarusian Embassies. Secondly, on that day *Young Front* members were going to pass an appeal to Aliaksandr Lukashenka and the education minister Aliaksandr Radzkou, demanding to stop the state terror towards the oppositional youth.

**On 3 May** a KGB agent visited the member of the *Young Front* Siarhei Lisichonak in hospital. He tried to recruit Mr Lisichonak, but didn't succeed. The talk lasted for five minutes only.

**On 17 May** it became known the number of riot squad policemen in Minsk will be increased by 15-20%. The Ministry of Internal Affairs explained this decision with the necessity to provide better security of citizens during mass measures. The riot squad was established in the beginning of the 1990-ies for combating organized crime. According to the leaders of the oppositional political movement, drawing this unit to guarding the public order during mass actions is a politically motivated decision and the enhancement of the riot squad with new members is a part of the preparation to the presidential election. We should also remind that in the beginning of 2005 A.Lukashenka signed the order according to which the army and the police have to execute all his direct orders.

**On 9 June** the Belarusian border guards detained for almost five hours the car of the chair of Minsk city UCP organization Ihar Shynkaryk. He was driving one of the leaders of the entrepreneurs' movement Anatol Shumchanka, Mikalai Statkevich's wife Tatsiana, Iury Khadyka's mother Valiantsina, Viachaslau Siuchyk's mother Halina and UCP activist from Babruisk Iryna Kachan to one of the Lithuanian sanatoriums for medical treatment. The border guards examined the personal belongings of each passenger and kept phoning their authorities all the time, asking for instructions. They almost dismantled Shynkaryk's car looking for something prohibited, but managed to find only several flyers.

**On 2 August** the Council of Svetlahorsk district organization of the public association Fransishak Skaryna Belarusian Language Society stated that an officer of the interregional KGB Board in Svetlahorsk phoned to Aliaksandr Rautsenka and asked him to come to the office. A. Rautsenka is a member of the group that returned from Czech where its members familiarized there with the activity of the local self-government. The group included representatives of Belarusian Language Society, other NGOs, businessmen and journalists. 24-year-old A.Rautsenka went to Czech as a freelance journalist (he published articles in a number of newspapers in Svetlahorsk and took part in preparation

of materials for the local TV in Svetlahorsk). The KGB officer demanded from A. Rautsenka to tell why the group went to Czech, what they did there, which places they visited, what they talked about, etc. He paid especial interest to Telman Masliukou, one of the visit's coordinators, and other representatives of NGOs. The same day Mr Rautsenka informed other participants of the visit to Czech about this 'talk'. As a result they composed a note of protest and submitted it to the chair of the KGB Board in Svetlahorsk and the prosecutor of Svetlahorsk inter-regional prosecutor's office.

**On 23 August** Homel police detained for half an hour Lail McMillan, an employee of the political department of US Embassy to Belarus. This happened in the private apartment in house 35 in Lenin Av. The meeting of the US diplomat with the public activists of Homel was to have taken place in the house of the Homel politician Viktor Karneienka at 52 Paleskaia St. But the police and the firefighters blocked the access to the house under the pretext of a WW2 bomb found in the neighboring house. That's why the meeting was transferred to the apartment owned by the member of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (*Narodnaia Hramada*) Iury Zakharanka. Under the pretext of combating illegal migration the police came to check the passports of those in the apartment. They even threatened to break the doors open unless the owner lets them inside. Even after Lail McMillan produced his diplomatic documents, the police did not allow the US citizen to leave the flat, demanding from him to show his passport. The US diplomat jeep was thoroughly scrutinized not only by the police and people in plain clothes, but also by a TV crew from the local TV company. The US Embassy expressed its concern over the 23 August detention of its member of staff Lail McMillan in Homel, who was going to have a meeting with the Homel political activists in a privately-owned apartment.

**On 1 September** Anatol Liabedzka, the leader of the United Civil Party, was detained at the customs of *Minsk-2* airport for more than 2,5 hours on his way home from the celebration that was devoted to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Solidarnosc* trade union in Poland. At first the border guards checked his passport for more than half an hour, consulting their administration. Then customs officers examined the politician's belongings. They paid interests to the materials of the conference *From solidarity to freedom* that took place in Gdansk and Warsaw. As a result the officers confiscated the conference programs, lists of participants, their biographies, CDs, *Orange Revolution* digest of poems in English and Ukrainian and a book devoted to the establishment of *Solidarnosc*. In the confiscation report it was stated that this information could be harmful to political and economical interests of Belarus.

**On 20 September**, as he took floor in front of young KGB agents, the KGB



head Stsiapan Sukharenka referred to the work by foreign intelligence services as 'extremely aggressive and hysterical'. 'In the west and overseas many start to feel bad as they look at the course the Belarusian president is taking the country along', declared Stsiapan Sukharenka. He assured that the Belarusian intelligence services may report 'certain results of work aimed to disclosing spies and stopping the attempts to recruit Belarusian citizens' and also said that the committee was not going to deny the ideals of Felix Dzerzhinsky. What should be remembered, however, is that it was Felix Dzerzhinsky who started the practice of executing hostages and mass terror based on class principle. The ideals to which Stsiapan Sukharenka refers were formulated by Felix Dzerzhinsky in the following way: 'KGB is no court. KGB is a defender of the revolution. KGB must defend the revolution and defeat the enemy even if its sword may at times fall on the heads of those innocent... The right to execute is extremely important to KGB.' A Radio Liberty correspondent contacted the Press Service of KGB of Belarus asking for information about the western spies disclosed by the Belarusian KGB agents. The head of the public liaisons center of KGB Valery Nadtachaieu did not disclose such information. Neither did he name the western foundations that are allegedly used as cover for intelligence work against Belarus.

**On 20 September** in Minsk a regiment of special police started work, which includes parts of the former riot police of the capital. This regiment is subordinated to the head of Minsk police general Anatol Kuliashou, the regiment commander is Lury Padabed, who earlier was in charge of the Minsk riot police and personally took part in the dispersal of many opposition-led actions, for which he was banned entry to the EU countries. They do not keep secret the goals of the new units within the city police – maintaining public order during mass street actions, including opposition-led ones. General Anatol Kuliashou said that well- and specially-trained staff must deal with such issues. The politician Andrei Klimau, who is sentenced to personal restraint, said that the new regiment of special police was due to Aliaksandr Lukashenka preparing for the 2006 presidential elections.

**On 23 September** Derek Hogan, the head of the political and economic department of the US Embassy in Belarus, visited Brest. During his stay there he was watched by the police and the state TV. One of Hogan's meetings was related to the situation of the independent regional press in Belarus. It took place at the editorial office of the newspaper *Brestskiy kurier*. At the very start of the visit a crew of the local TV Company came to the room, with the cameraman starting to shoot the meeting participants right away. Derek Hogan got most of the attention, though the journalists of the state television did not ask him any questions. During his stay at the office a police car and the paparazzi stood outside.

**On 23 September** KGB attempted to recruit of the head of the Mahiliou branch of the youth public association *Young Social Democrats - Young Hramada* Pavel Usau. The activist had just returned from a trip to Poland, where he had been staying at the invitation of the mother organization to learn the course of preparation for parliamentary elections. It was this 'business trip' that aroused interest of the KGB agent. KGB thought up a combination to lure the activist known in the city for a talk. An unidentified person phoned Mr Usau and asked for consultation regarding registration of a new civil organization. However, he would not listen to the advice on the phone, insisting on a face-to-face meeting. At an agreed time and place in the center of the city a well-dressed young man with good manners and a smiling face got out of a car to meet Usau. He proposed that they talk in the car instead of standing out in the street. After this happened, the stranger showed his ID and asked for an 'altogether different' piece of advice (assuming Mr. Usau was 'a patriot of his land'). The KGB agent, according to the ID produced, was a senior operative of the Regional Board of KGB Hrybaila. He proposed Pavel should tell him about his trip to Poland and share information about what our foreign neighbors think of Belarus. Mr Usau refused to talk and left. The discontent KGB operative had to leave the scene with nothing. Mr Usau had enough time to tell Hrybaila that he would tell the independent media of the incident.

**On 30 September** the Belarusian border guards didn't let in Belarus the group of members of the Polish party *Law and Justice* who were going to Minsk to attend the Congress of Democratic Forces. The deputy of the Polish parliament Filip Libicki, two advisers and a political scientist of the party Przemyslaw Faligowski came to the transition point Kuznica-Bruzhi at 7 p.m. Eight hours later they were informed they wouldn't be let in Belarus. According to Mr Libicki, the formal reason was that they didn't present the permission of the driver's wife to whom the car on which they drove belonged, to used it for their trip of Belarus. According to the border guards, this permission also had to be translated into Russian and signed by a notary. 'We didn't find such demands at the website of the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and none of the workers of the Belarusian Embassy informed us about it when we applied for visas', commented Libicki.

**On 4 October** in reply to the appeal of group Svetlahorsk citizens (Homel region) the prosecutor Svetlahorsk Inter-district Prosecutor's Office and the head of Svetlahorsk Inter-district KGB Branch recognized competent the actions of the KGB agent towards the local journalist. The appeal was sent to them in the middle of August after a KGB agent summonsed for a 'talk' the non-staff correspondent of a number newspapers and Svelahorsk TV who had paid a visit to Czech together with a group of persons with the aim to familiarize with the activity of the local self-government in the fields of education, cul-

ture and social care. During the conversation the KGB agent demanded from A. Ravutsenka who was one youngest participants of group (24 years old), to answer some questions about the purpose and the content of the trip abroad. In the appeal that was submitted by the group of Svelahorsk citizens it was stated that the right to leave the country and come back without any restriction are unalienable and are guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The applicants consider the actions of the KGB agent as a manifestation of political investigation and attempt of special services to control the activity of public organizations and make moral and psychological influence on citizens, because the visit to Czech wasn't kept in secret.

**On 15 October** the mobile operator *Velcom* blocked the SIM card of the mobile phone owned by Natallia Radzina, an officer of the press service of the civil initiative *Charter'97*. The company said this had been done on the order of the security department of the company. The phone was only switched back on 17 October. The phone was switched off without warning, though the subscriber had enough money on her mobile account. *Velcom* operators said they could not disclose the reasons for the blocking. The day before the journalist sent out SMS messages calling on the receivers to take part in the Day of Solidarity on 16 October. According to *Charter'97*, the message was also received by the officers of the press services of the Interior Ministry, KGB and the Main Board of Internal Affairs and others.

**On 20 October** investigators came to the financial and law department of Baranavichy State University. The chair of Baranavichy branch of *Young Front* Siarhei Marchyk said the following about it: 'The dean of the department came to our group right in the middle of the class and asked me out for a conversation. One investigator was there during the conversation (unfortunately, I did not note his name and position). He said that in the night of 18 and 19 October someone stuck on some of the buildings in Baranavichy stickers staying 'Wind of Change – Young Front' and the guard of Baranavichy secondary school #11, where some of the stickers had been found, had provided a description of a person that looks like me. The investigator asked ordinary questions like where I was in the night of 18 October and whether I saw such stickers before, whether I know people involved with 'anti-governmental activities', which organization I represent and so on. After I was released, my group mate Andrei Iuruts, a member of *Young Front*, was also asked out for a conversation. After the investigators left, I was called to the dean's office and again (the third time in the recent month) and pressurized ideologically. They threatened me with expulsion from the university and promised to 'help' with failing the session exams (the most insulting thing is that I believe what they promise to do). I was told that I had already 'tired them with my pluralism' – It was quite interesting to hear it from the finance and law department administration. Following these

events I went home, hoping that everything was over and I could relax. I should not have hoped so. News awaited me at home. My mother said that the vice-chair of Baranavichy KGB phoned my father at work and threatened I would be expelled from the university, promised they would arrange search in the house and launch an administrative action against me for distributing anti-governmental materials. Apart from that, my father twice had to visit the head of the ideology department of the machine tools plant (where my father works) who talked with him on obvious topics.'

**On 25 October** the representatives of the US Embassy Derek Hogan and Lyle McMillan paid a visit to Hrodna. There they met with representatives of the local NGOs and political parties. During the meeting with journalists of independent web-sites a film crew came in. One of its members stated he wanted to speak to the Embassy officers. They weren't let in, because they were not invited to the meeting. After the end of the meeting the American diplomats left the room and the cameraman started to film them outdoors without their permission.

**On 27 October** Aliaksandr Kazulin, the leader of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party *Hramada*, attempted to leave from the *Minsk-2* National Airport to attend the assembly of the Swedish Social-Democratic Labor Party in Malmø. During the examination the customs officers found in his belongings the documents which he called 'party correspondence'. As a result the politician was detained and missed the flight to Frankfurt am Mein. Kazulin stated he wasn't carrying any illegal property or documents: 'The information I had can be found on the web. There was no information related to any subversive activities...'. He also stated his intention to sue the customs office for the insult of his moral and business reputation.

**On 27 October** the chair of the United Civil Party Anatol Liabedzka was detained at *Minsk-2* airport on return from Strasburg, where he together with the leader of BPF Party Vintsuk Viachorka negotiated with the EU authorities, deputies of the European Parliament and representatives of the Council of Europe. The police confiscated the information he carried with him for 'being dangerous to the political and economical interests of Belarus', as it was said in the confiscation report.

**On 28 October** Minsk Kastrychnitski borough passport and visa service didn't put a permissive seal for foreign travels (this anachronism still exists in Belarus) to Iryna Toustsik, coordinator of the human rights service of *Zubr* movement. Instead, the service officials said KGB had some questions to her.

Mahiliou, Shklou and Horki. The business visit to Mahiliou region started with the meeting with the representatives of NGOs and political regional structures. The meeting was organized by the civil Fond of assistance to sustainable development. During the whole meeting in front of the private house the participants were under the intent view of the Belarusian state TV and almost inconspicuous people in plain clothes.

**On 6 November** in Homel an activist of the movement *Zubr*, a student of the fifth year of Homel State University Aleh Petukh was called to the provost on ideology S.Khanenia. The conversation took place in presence of an unknown man who did not introduce himself. That man suggested Petukh to tell everything about the movement *Zubr* but the student refused to do so. After it the unknown man started to threaten that Aleh might have some problems with health and his studies.

**On 10 November** the special services attempted to recruit the activist of *Zubr* movement Alena Kopach. She was summonsed to the police station located in the tube, where two persons in plain clothes waited for her. One of them introduced himself as the criminal investigations officer S.Sazonau, another one didn't introduce himself but asked questions about *Zubr* movement and its structures. He was interested where the information outlets that *Zubr* activists disseminate are stored. He said that Alena's study in the university depended on the answers to these questions. After the girl refused to answer the questions, he threatened Alena that they would meet again in another place.

**On 28 November** the chair of KGB Stsiapan Sukharenka stated the Belarusian KGB would make everything possible to prevent destabilization in the country as a result of mass protests of the opposition during the presidential election of 2006. According to Sukharenka, a number of the Western countries, especially the USA, were interested in the change of the authorities during the presidential election of 2006 as a result of a 'color revolution'. According to Mr Sukharenka, the US used the resources of international and foreign NGOs for preparation of the special groups that were to be used for organization of street actions in Belarus. According to him, the main organizers of the street actions could be the unregistered youth organizations *Young Front* and *Zubr*. However, the KGB chair emphasized that the main threat to the national security could become not the internal opposition, but the pressure of the West. General Sukharenka called the plans of the EU and the US to finance the foreign TV and radio broadcasts to Belarus 'a threat to the national security'. It was Stsiapan Sukharenka who on behalf of A.Lukashenka introduced to the Chamber of Representatives the amendments to the Criminal Code that provided criminal persecution for organization of mass riots, activity on behalf of

unregistered organizations and passing 'knowingly false information' about Belarus to foreign states and organizations.

**In the evening of 2 December** the search in the flat of Telman Masliukou, activist of Svetlahorsk branch of Belarusian People's Front and chair of Svetlahorsk district organization of Belarusian Language Society, was conducted by six policemen – Kanstantsin Kukharenka, Dzmitry Rahalevich, Aliaksandr Ziazitka, etc. — with Piatro Zykun, vice-chair of the district police board at the head. Kukharenka said 'it smelled with drugs' in the porch and they had a recording of a telephone call to the police concerning production of drugs in this porch, that's why they wanted to examine several flats. They presented to Mr Masliukou the order for examination. In fact, they opened bookcases and wardrobes, which can be done only during searches. One of the policemen turned on a video camera to tape the procedure, but turned it off when Masliukou asked him to show his documents. The police confiscated some numbers of *Rehiianalnyia naviny* (T.Masliukou is its chief editor), materials and stickers with information about the day of solidarity with political prisoners, several UN brochures concerning the situation of human rights in Belarus, four books *Belarus – scenarios of reforms*, the book by V.Fiaduta *Political biography of Aliaksandr Lukashenka*, five computer CDs (two of them – with ads of *Amway* concern and two concerning the development of business in the Ukraine). They also confiscated two copy machines. Being asked about the reason, Piatro Zykun answered he suspected these machines were used for production of printed materials that were distributed in the city at night. T.Masliukou turned the attention of the police to the fact that the copy machines were of A4 format, whereas the confiscated materials were either of A3 format (twice bigger) or produced by printing houses. Only three copies of the confiscated materials, instructions how to behave during detention by the police, were of A4 format.

**On 5 December** two persons in plain clothes came to the place where Iulia Liskouskaia worked and introduced themselves as KGB agents. They asked her about *Zubr* movement, its activists, the printed production and the sources of financing. The girl refused to answer. Then they proceeded to insults and intimidation. One of them said a brick could fall down on her head. Besides, from their talk Ms Liskouskaia understood they bugged the telephone. When Liskouskaia demanded from them to tell their names, they refused to do it.

**On 5 December** Telman Masliukou was summonsed to the police in the capacity of 'law-offender' for an interrogation concerning the results of the 'examination' of his flat. The interrogation was conducted by the chair of the district police board M.Rahovich, vice-chair P.Zykun, vice-chair of the law and order department K.Kukharenka and the local inspector V.Novikau. Being asked

about the copy machines Mr Masliukou said one of them belonged to him and the other was given for keeping by a friend and none of the confiscated materials were produced with this equipment. According to V. Novikau, the violation was that T. Masliukou didn't register these machines at the police. P. Zykun expressed his indignation concerning the recent publication in *Rehiianalnyiia naviny* about the search in the flat of the local activist Vadzim Bohdan, conducted on 11 November. The policemen also asked Mr Masliukou about the unregistered organizations *White Legion*, *Zubr* and *We Remember*. It had no relation to the case, that's why T. Masliukou didn't answer.

**In the evening of 17 December** the BPF Party activist, a participant of the protest action by bus drivers Andrei Baranau received a telephone call. At this time only his wife and a little child were in. Andrei Baranau himself was out working. The caller did not identify himself and proceeded to threats: 'Your husband is a member of an opposition party that is against the current authorities, he has to abandon the party otherwise he may face bad consequences in the future'. The woman did not keep up the conversation and hung up, after several minutes the same man called again and again started to threaten and intimidate. All in all, the apartment of the BPF Party Andrei Baranau received three telephone calls in the evening.

**On 19 December** the information presented on 18 December by the First Belarusian TV Channel was called lies by the embassy of France to Belarus. *Visa Blackmail* claimed that the employees of the French embassy told the Belarusian youths to take part in opposition-led events. This was the information disclosed by two unidentified young people filmed from their backs. These people said that in 'private talks' with the embassy representatives they were allegedly advised to 'take part in street opposition-led actions' so as to get visas to the countries of the European Union. 'The French embassy dismisses such conversations as impossible. This is part of the propaganda war aimed to present the European Union as an enemy of Belarus', said the statement made by the Embassy of France. The diplomats of the embassies of Germany to Belarus were indignant at what was shown on TV. Martin Hecker called the episode to be a lie that 'undermines the relations between Belarus and Germany'. 'What is indicative is that top level Belarusian officials, members of the government and parliament together with their relations willingly come on visits to Germany, a country criticized by them. Obviously, so far they have normally received a long term multiple entry visa. At the same time there has not been a single case of a Bundestag deputy or a member of the Federal Government receiving a similar long term visa for entry to Belarus. But if the people who take state decisions and representatives of the state media say the opposite we will find it hard to maintain our good neighborly relations to the same extent,' said the German Ambassador Mr Heck.

**On 23 December** Aliaksandr Lukashenka ordered to revive the secret services by employing professionals and increasing the financing of KGB. 'I am not afraid to say on the eve of the presidential election, and people must know it that we will create a strong secret service for defense of the interests of the state and our people', he said, commenting the news appointments in KGB. According to the budget for 2006, 760 billion rubles (about 350 million of US dollars) will be spent on the police and secret services. However, the budget didn't specify how much will be given to the police, to KGB and to the presidential security. The Belarusian parliament that adopted the budget also doesn't have any effective control mechanisms to watch the use of this money.

**On 27 December** one of the leaders of the Conservative-Christian Party BPF Siarhei Papkou tried to exchange money at a currency exchange office. The cashier said one of the banknotes was forged. After this Mr Papkou spent several hours giving explanations to the police. Then policemen from Minsk Maskouski Borough Board of Internal Affairs searched his premises. The vice-chair of the party Iury Belenki thusly described the procedure of search: 'They looked through everything including the party documents... They turned on the computers, opened the files. When we asked them to present to us the documents that allowed them doing it, they refused.' Mr Papkou considered it as a provocation. A criminal fact was brought on the fact. According to Siarhei Papkou, the police didn't state the banknote was forged – only that it had 'traits of forgery'. The incident took place soon after the registration of the initiative group of the chair of the Conservative-Christian Party BPF Zianon Pazniak.

## 15. Facts of cruel or inhuman treatment of participants of protest actions, detainees and prisoners

**On 7 March** it became known that the prisoner of Orsha penal colony #8 Mikhail Marynich had a heart attack, as a result of which the right half of his body was paralyzed. Anatol Lukashevich, the head of the colony, partially confirmed this information. He said Marynich was kept in the medical department of the colony and the state of his health was 'satisfactory'.

**On 10 March** in the women's penal colony UZh 15/4 in Antoshkin St. in Homel dozens of imprisoned women were hospitalized. All of them had similar symptoms: headache, high temperature and vomiting. The colony had its in-



ternal medical service, which, together with the colony administration, asked for support the regional center of hygiene and epidemiology in order to find what the reason of the disease was. Viktor Naralenkau, chief doctor of the center, confirmed that the center's personnel were analyzing the food and examining the ill women. He also said they would be able to tell the reason of the illness only after the end of the expertise.

**On 14 March** Vadzim Saranchukou was released after the 10-day arrest for alleged participation in unauthorized meeting of entrepreneurs. Mr Saranchukou was kept in a cold separate cell. During first four days the police didn't let to pass him toothpaste and confiscated his inhaler which he used because of his asthma. However, he was lucky enough not to have any serious seizures during the imprisonment.

**On 15 March** it became known that Mikhail Marynich's relatives weren't allowed to meet with him. This information came from his son Pavel Marynich. We were told to come in four months.

'According to our information, my father is kept at stationary hospital isolator of colony #8 in a separate ward, that's why we can't get any information about the state of his health', he said.

For 14 March there was appointed the medical council with the aim to evaluate the state of Marynich's house and define the appropriate kind of treatment. On 11 March Pavel Marynich sent the urgent telegram to the prosecutor general Piatro Miklashevich: 'At present M.Marynich doesn't receive medical aid because of absence of specialists. As a result, his state of health deteriorated. I demand urgent prosecutor's reaction.' He didn't receive the answer. The relatives and the defense lawyers continued struggling for his transfer to Minsk for competent medical examination.

**In the morning of 21 March** Mikhail Marynich was taken from the city prison hospital to the national scientific-practical center of cardiology. There took place a medical council with the participation of the center's doctors. However, Marynich's sons weren't informed about its results. They managed to see their fathers in a distance and for a very short time. Pavel Marynich said: 'We saw him, but didn't recognize at first. He was dressed in the black prison uniform, his head was shaved. He was very thin and pulled one of the legs. The color of his face was very unhealthy. The state of his health scares us.' The doctors of the national scientific-practical center of cardiology said nothing about their conclusion, referring to the medical secret. After the council Mikhail Marynich was taken to the prison hospital in Kalvaryiskaia St.

**On 4 May** Larysa Barysevich, whose son was beaten by the riot squad policemen, applied to Minsk Leninski borough prosecutor's office with the de-

mand to bring a criminal case on the fact of the beating and to punish the policemen who abused their powers. Larysa Dzienisevich said the following to HRC *Viasna*: 'On 26 April 2005 my 14-year-old son Danila Barysevich and I stood at the crossing of Frantsysk Skaryna Avenue and Lenin Street. We watched the meeting without taking part in it. When we were about to leave the avenue, two riot squad policemen burst at my son. They twisted his arms so violently he screamed and pulled him to the nearest yard. I ran after them and saw them pull him into the bus. My son didn't resist to them, but they used non-motivated physical force. Then the bus drove to Minsk Leninski borough police station. In 40 minutes I saw him there. One of his arms was very swollen and he complained the wrist hurt badly. The ambulance came only in 2 hours since the moment when the police injured the wrist. The preliminary diagnosis of the ambulance doctors was 'fracture of the wrist joint'. They drove him to hospital #6. The X-ray of Danila's hand in the traumatology department showed injury of the wrist ligaments.'

**On 25 May** Mikola Statkevich, chair of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (*Narodnaia Hramada*), the *European Coalition* coordinator went on hunger-strike of protest against the degrading conditions of imprisonment. The politician believes that the police and special detention center officers specially created unbearable conditions. After the verdict was passed, he had to spend a lot of time in the cell at a police station, then was driven around Minsk in a prison van. Only at night Mikola Statkevich finally arrived at the special detention center in Akrestsin St.: 'The cell houses five people. They have all been to prison several times, but they are calm. Among them is a person ill with dysentery. My experience as an officer who took soldiers from the north to a desert for exercises is enough to know what kind of a sickness it is. He is not taken to hospital, and he is feeling very bad. He has all the symptoms of dehydration. He just lies still. I get an impression that the sick man is used as a bacteriological weapon against me, as a means of pressurizing me, making me change my behavior under the threat of infection. In fact, I only have one method of stopping this degrading treatment of the man - by going on hunger-strike,' said Mikola Statkevich.

**On 21 June** Human Rights Center *Viasna* received letters and complaints passed by the convicts of Mazyr-based maximum security prison. The prisoners asked for the letters to be transferred to international human rights groups so that they could bring to attention the overall situation of the prisoners in Belarus and in Mazyr prison, in particular. The handed over letters contain evidence of treatment of the convicts in the prisons of Belarus. It should be noted that Belarus occupies one of the first places in Europe in terms of convicts per person. The Human Rights Center *Viasna* continues to monitor how the Republic of Belarus fulfills the *UN Convention against Tortures and Other*

*Brutal, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment* signed on 10 December 1984 and ratified by our country. The information contained in the letters shows that in Mazyr maximum security prison tortures and other types of brutal and inhuman treatment are used against prisoners. The convicts to these tortures, despite the requirements of the Execution and Penal Code of the Republic of Belarus, cannot file their complaints with prosecutor's organs or the top officials of the Prison Administration. This situation violates not only the effective legislation of the Republic of Belarus but also the principles laid down in the *Minimal Standard Rules of Treating Prisoners* adopted by UN on 30 August 1955. As follows from the letters, in the penal facilities the prosecutor's office does not exercise appropriate control over the observation of laws in penal facilities as it should. Also, the prison administration does not work properly, the imprisonment conditions are terrible, there is hardly any medical help provided to the prisoners. This leads to a situation, where the prisoners in prisons are tortured, mass protests are staged, prisoners damage themselves.

**On 4 July** the sons of the political prisoner Mikhail Marynich had a meeting with his father in the prison hospital, where he had been taken several days before due to deterioration of his health. Pavel Marynich: 'He does not feel ok, we saw signs of the stroke. His hand and leg did not get back to normal. The eye infection turned out to be very serious, he said he could lose eyesight'.

**On 8 July** the wife of the disappeared cameraman of the Russian TV channel ORT Dzmitry Zavadzki Sviatlana filed with the prosecutor's office a complaint about a trauma sustained to her during the breakup of the Chain of Concerned People in Kastychnitskaya Square in Minsk as one of the riot police officers (master sergeant) gave the woman a powerful punch in the face. In the evening Sviatlana Zavadzkaia felt bad and decide to go to the hospital so that her injuries could be registered. According to the doctors, the wife of the disappeared journalist sustained a cerebral cranial trauma. Sviatlana Zavadzkaia was not going to let the police office get away with the beating, all the more so that the fact of the beating was recorded by a cameraman of the First Russian TV Channel and broadcast on television later on. During these days the viewers of the TV channels ORT and NTV repeatedly saw what had happened. The backs of the riot police driving people off the square, the women with Sviatlana right in the middle of them. All of a sudden a riot police officer threw his left hand forward and then delivered an instantaneous punch in Sviatlana Zavadzkaia's face with his right. The Minsk police claimed that allegedly Zavadzkaia was the first to attack the police officer, saying that the police officer had also suffered an injury – Sviatlana had allegedly cut his lip.

**On 26 July** the wife of the disappeared Belarusian journalist Sviatlana Zavadzkaia was summonsed to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Prosecutor's Office. The investigator asked questions about what happened at Kastychnitskaya Square, where the riot police officer twice punched Sviatlana Zavadzkaia in the face during the dispersal of commemoration action. The conversation with the investigator of Minsk Tsentralny Borough Prosecutor's Office Dzmitry Luhin lasted for about an hour. After Sviatlana described to the investigator everything related to the incident, she was again sent for medical examination. Earlier the doctors had confirmed traces of two punches on the face, and they did not change their diagnosis. Also, during the conversation with the investigator Sviatlana named the people who could give evidence. We would like to remind you that the wife of the disappeared ORT cameraman Dzmitry Zavadzki insists the riot police officer was the first to hit her and demands that he be criminally punished. She didn't know the name of this man, but his face could be seen in the film shown on Russian TV channels after the incident. According to Sviatlana Zavadzkaia, the investigator did not disclose this man's identity to her. The investigator warned Sviatlana Zavadzkaia that most probably the examination would take longer than expected.

**On 1 August** it became known that the prosecutor's office turned down the claim Sviatlana Zavadskaia to bring a criminal case against the riot policeman who hit her in the face during the action that took place in Kastychnitskaia Square on 7 July and was devoted to the anniversary of the kidnap of Zavadskaia's husband. After a check-up the prosecutor's office declared there was no corpus delicti in the actions of the riot policeman – Sviatlana Zavadskaia allegedly provoked a fight and he had to defend himself.

**On 8 August** it became known Svetlahorsk police killed a watchman of Svetlahorsk heating plant at a sobering-up station. Piatro Zykun, vice-chair of Svetlahorsk police, refused to comment on the incident, whereas Dzmitry Berabiou, vice-prosecutor of Svetlahorsk district, said that the killer, a policeman who worked at the sobering-up station, was arrested and given charges under article #426 of the Criminal Code, excess of the official powers. The father of the killed Vasil Shavialenka, retired police officer Mikhail Shavialenka, said: 'I went to the prosecutor's office. The prosecutor said that my son was killed at about 1 a.m. on 4 August. He was driven to the sobering-up station by the police. They detained him 30 meters from home, though he asked them not to do it. They twisted his arms and took him into the car. According to the father, they started torturing the detainee after he phoned home. They smashed his head and broke the nose. There are bruises across the head, legs and neck, and rope marks on the wrists. The duty policeman smothered him. He put his elbow under my son's chin and strangled him for three times.'

**On 10 August** S.Zavadzkaia learned the inspection papers initiated on the basis of her claim to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Prosecutor's Office. That's how she got to know the names of the two policemen who presented the case – Davidovich and Martsinkevich. The prosecutor's statement said, 'Only after a blow to the face from Zavadzkaia Davidovich acting in self-defense and preventing Zavadzkaia's unlawful actions threw his arms towards her and touched her face with his right palm. Thus, we define no elements of crime in Davidovich's actions.' According to the papers, the statement is based on the testimony given by the policemen and Zavadzkaia only, while other participants of the picket were not interrogated. It looks strange that Davidovich went to Minsk hospital #2 to record the battery at 00.30 on August 8, after Zavadzkaia had submitted a claim to the prosecutor's office and had recorded her blows. She expressed her doubts concerning the objectivity of the inspection – 'It said that it was me who committed a lawless act and beat TWO policemen. We will collect all the claims, and I hope such action will be punished sooner or later with other people in power.'

At night of **28-29 August** the activist of *Zubr* movement Iauhen Suvorau was detained by the policemen who had detained him two months before for distribution of newspapers. This time they took him to Minsk Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs without any explanations. There they groundlessly used violence towards him. They put his hands and feet in two pairs of handcuffs and then chained them together behind his back, which is called 'swallow' in criminal jargon. In about two hours they let him go, without registering his detention. Being asked why they mocked at him the policemen answered it was prophylactic work.

**On 30 august** the journalist Ivan Roman sent a complaint to the prosecutor's office for inhuman conditions in the Shchuchyn detention center. Before the repeated congress of the Union of Poles in Vaukavysk, Ivan Roman was detained in Shchuchyn together with the UPB activist, journalist Andrei Pachobut, and kept in separate cells for a day. Together with I.Roman, as he puts it in his complaint, there were tuberculosis-infected inmates. The fleas bit him so badly that the traces can be well seen three days after.

**On 17 September** Mikita Sasim, one of the organizers of the protest action of 16 September, and went to clinical hospital #2 in Minsk because of the strong headache he started to feel after the action. The doctors diagnosed a cranial trauma and directed him to clinical hospital #9. It's worth mentioning that M.Sasim wasn't the only victim of the police violence at the action – some other participants also received lighter bodily injuries. The same day he complained to Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs against the illegal beating.

**On 22 September** Mikita Sasim, a *Zubr* movement activist beaten by riot police during a remembrance action the previous week, was discharged from hospital. Mikita Sasim stated his intention to sue the riot police officers who beat him. He didn't know his surnames, but said it was possible to find it out, because there was a videotape with their faces. Minsk Tsentralny Borough Board of Internal Affairs was 'investigating the fact of the beating' at the time.

**On 30 September** the college board of the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Belarus held a council concerning the conditions of the prisoner's life at the open correctional facilities. In the open correctional facilities more than 7 000 people do 'labor' sentences, which is almost every fifth prisoner. The Prosecutor's Office of Belarus examined the conditions of these people. It found out that the numerous open prisons in Belarus are overcrowded, the conditions there do not meet the law demands, many of the prisoners do not have a steady job or receive their pay in time. The board of the Republican Prosecutor's Office that considered the 'labor' settlement situation at a special session decided to eliminate the shortcomings by adopting two measures. First, increase the responsibility of the officials in charge and even punish those for neglect. Second, the members of the prosecutor's office have been recommended to adjust their positions in the proceedings where the judges hesitate between sending a defendant to a 'labor' settlement or prison.

**On 12 October** the trade union activist and journalist from Hrodna Ivan Roman received the answer from Shchuchyn District Prosecutor's Office. He appealed against the conditions in the police isolator of Shchuchyn. He was kept there at night of 26-27 August in a overcrowded cell together with persons ill with tuberculosis. In addition, he was bitten by fleas. In the answer, signed by the prosecutor H.Dysko it was said that the medical expertise didn't recognized him to have been bitten by the vermin despite the fact that he had presented the appropriate certificate from the dermatovenerologic dispensary. What concerns beds and bed-clothes, the isolator didn't have it because the police had no money for it, the prosecutor explained.

**On 19 October** Human Rights Center *Viasna* received the appeal of the convict Siarhei Karytkin who has been serving his sentence in Mazyr-based correctional facility #20 that witnesses inhuman treatment of prisoners. The convict failed to receive the evidence of consideration of his appeals in appropriate agencies. That is why his last hope is to send the appeals to an independent human rights organization to attract in order to attract attention of international structures to the condition of the penitentiary system in Belarus and his particular case. The lawyer Uladzimir Labkovich commented on the statement: 'The facts mentioned in the letter are real in our correction facilities because, unfortunately, neither Belarusian human rights activists nor interna-

tional human rights activists have access to these places. We receive such appeals quite often and I should note that tortures in correction facilities are an ordinary phenomenon. Thus, we can state that the convicted are treated like beasts and their lives do not cost anything. The convicted are threatened by the administration of those facilities where they serve their punishment. At the same time it should be noted that the prosecutor's office that must supervise the functioning of the penitentiary system does not address such statements and very rarely responds to them following procedures established by law.'

**On 21 October** Human Rights Center *Viasna* stated that the practice of torturing participants of peaceful street actions is preserved in Belarus. The human rights activists conduct the appropriate monitoring. It involves the use of evidence provided by street action participants, those who suffered from the police violence; information received from the activists of public organizations and political parties who have met with brutal treatment by the police. This information includes evidence from the *Zubr* movement activists beaten during the *We Remember!* action on 16 September 2005. Here's the information provided by the coordinator of the human rights service of the *Zubr* movement Iryna Toustsik: 'On 16 September some members of the community and I came out to Kastychnitskaia Square to show solidarity with the families of the people who disappeared and the political prisoners, and all who do care about the future of Belarus (on 16 September 1999 Viktor Hanchar and Anatol Krasouski disappeared). The riot police started to ring the people with portraits of the disappeared people, and force them off the square. In response to the questions 'Why?', we heard foul language and threats of physical reprisal. After a few minutes they started to use physical force, stamped on the people's feet and twisted the arms of the action participants. As they did so, they continued to use bad language, insults and threats against the people with the portraits. I would not try to reproduce what they were saying because of the four-letter words they used. Mikita Shutsiankou was grabbed by the face. Mikita had the traces of the fingers of a riot police officer. It did not matter to the riot police who they were dealing with: boys or girls. They pushed into the backs, heads, stomachs and chests. As a result, Natalia Ushko sustained a bruise of the right knee, which was registered in a policlinic. Mikita Sasim was taken to hospital with a craniocerebral injury (complaint filed with the prosecutor's office). Pavel Iukhnievich and Uladz Nestser sustained injuries in the chest, back and legs. I (Iryna Toustsik) had bruises in the hands, because the riot police brutally grabbed me by the hands. In my opinion, much more people were beaten by the riot police on that day (16 September 2005). However, not all of those beaten could be found to have their injuries registered. Right after this action the 16<sup>th</sup> day of each month was declared a Day of Solidarity with victims to political repressions'. Evidence provided by the action participant Natallia Ushko: 'I took part in the chain of concerned people on 16 September 2005 dedicated

to the anniversary of the disappearance of Viktor Hanchar and Anatol Krasouski. The riot police started to pull the people, using physical violence and foul language, threatened physical violence. As a result, hospital doctors registered an bruise of my right knee, the riot police also tore my jeans in several places, and also deliberately stamped on the legs and beat me in the chest'. Evidence by Mikita Shutsiankou: 'I, Mikita Shutsiankou, took part in a Kastychnitskaia Square action that was brutally dispersed by the riot police. The riot police used four letter words and brutal force against the action participants: they beat the people in the legs, kidneys and pushed them in the backs. One of them knocked the cap off my head and gave me a punch in the face, then I got a kick in the right leg, after which the bruised leg hurt for several days.' Evidence by Pavel Iukhnevich: 'On 16 September 2005 I took part in the action devoted to the people who disappeared in Belarus. At about 6 p.m. I, like all the other action participants, stood with a portrait in Kastychnitskaia Square. After several minutes, the riot police approached us and started to force off the square without explaining the reasons. Several other participants and I were forced to the Palace of the Republic, then the police ringed us and started to beat us in the head, kidneys and legs. During the beating they insulted us and used threats.'

**On 1 November** the leader of the public initiative *Partnership* Mikalai Astreika was moved from the detention center to hospital #2 in Minsk. After a few days in the cell Mr Astreika got a problem with kidneys. We shall remind that he was imprisoned for 15 days for the organization of an assembly of *Partnership*.

**On 11 November** Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court considered the suit of Sviatlana Zavadskaja, wife of the missing cameraman of the ORT Russian TV channel Dzmitry Zavadski against the refusal to bring a criminal case against the riot policeman Iury Davidovich, who beat her during the action that was held on 7 July 2005 in Kastychnitskaia Square in Minsk to remind people about the missing opposition activists. At the beginning of the trial the judge Valery Iesman didn't allow the human rights activist Aleh Hulak to defend Sviatlana Zavadskaja's interests. Then the court watched the videotape of the events. However, according to Sviatlana Zavadskaja, the tape was edited: 'The tape was partially erased. In the earlier version the policeman's face after he hit me could be clearly seen. There wasn't any blood, bruises and scratches on his face that could witness it was a fight between us. However, instead of this part of the tape there appeared the recording of another ORT program. The prosecutor said that this very tape was passed to the court by ORT. However, representatives of Belarusian ORT bureau were present at the trial. They confirmed the tape didn't contain the recording of another program when they passed it to the prosecutor's office. The tape was 35 minutes long, only two-



minute fragment was shown at the trial. That's why I think the materials of the prosecutor's check-up were falsified.' Having studied other documents the judge rejected Sviatlana Zavadskaja's suit against the prosecutor's office.

**On 15 November** the political prisoner Mikhail Marynich got invalidity of the second degree. A former minister and an ambassador Mikhail Marynich was recognized as an invalid of the second degree by the head of medical commission of the Ministry of Health Care who examined the prisoner.

**On 21 November** in Minsk the police detained the coordinator of the *BPF Youth* Ales Kalita in the subway passage of the tube station *Iakub Kolas Square* for distributing the independent newspaper *Narodnaia volia*, which is a publication officially registered by the Ministry of Information. While detaining Ales Kalita for the distribution of *Narodnaia volia*, the police sergeant Ivan Dulub twisted Kalita's arm. As a result Mr Kalita sustained an injury in the hand. After Ales Kalita was taken to the Minsk Savetski Borough Board of Internal Affairs, he felt bad and the police officers had to call an ambulance that took him to a hospital. Then Minsk Savetski BBIA made a report registering the alleged disorderly conduct on the part of the *BPF Youth* coordinator. 'With Ales Kalita, the detention is absolutely illegal, because *Narodnaia volia* is an officially registered newspaper and no one has taken a decision banning its distribution', commented the lawyer Valiantsin Stefanovich. 'And when the police officer (who was alone in this case) detained and damaged Kalita's hand, then his colleagues understood that he had committed an offence and so decided to make a report by terms of article #156 of the Code of Administrative Violations – disorderly conduct. This is a very widely used practice among the police. When they see that they have no reasons to make a detention or they have committed an illegal detention, they start to 'solve the problem' – drawing up a report by terms of article #156 (disorderly conduct). Contesting the police report drawn up by terms of this article in court is very difficult. Several police officers will write that they heard the 'offender' swearing at the police officers. And the man was alone and he has no witnesses. Correspondingly, the court passes a ruling based on the evidence given by the police officers.'

**On 28 November** the arrested entrepreneur Mikalai Autukhovich was examined by a medical commission. According to the medics, the state of the prisoner after 46 days of hunger-strike was quite dangerous. The doctors pointed that unless the hunger-strike agreed to finish the hunger-strike, it would be necessary to take him to a hospital. The commission passed its conclusions to the prison administration and the investigative department of the department of financial investigations and the prosecutor's office.

**On 15 December** the entrepreneur Mikalai Autukhovich was transferred

from Hrodna prison to the national prison hospital in Minsk. 63 days before he declared a hunger-strike of protest against his arrest. As a result of the hunger-strike the state of his health deteriorated – he could hardly get up and his sight got worse.

## 16. Human rights activity. Pressurization of human rights activists and organizations

**On 19 January** the Ministry of Justice gave a warning to the Council of Belarusian Helsinki Committee as a result of the check-up of the activity of its regional structures. The justice department of Homel Regional Executive Committee stated that some persons became members of the organization and were excluded from it with violations of the statute and that Homel branch of BHC directed persons who weren't its members to monitor the parliamentary election, which is a violation of article #13 of the Election Code. Besides, the Ministry of Justice stated that since 1 November 2003 Brest regional branch of BHC actually had no legal address, because the sub-rent agreement between the BHC branch and Brest regional organization of Belarusian Social-Democratic Party *Narodnaia Hramada* was allegedly invalid. 'The authorities go the paved way, issuing warnings for formal reasons. The regime turns us all into classic dissidents,' commented the BHC chair Tatsiana Protzka.

**On 21 January** the members of Belarusian Helsinki Committee Vasil Berasneu and Siarhei Trafimau demanded from the former chair of Orsha circuit election commission #26 5 million rubles for compensation of the moral harm done to them during the summarization of the results of the parliamentary election in autumn 2004. The activists were directed to the 26<sup>th</sup> circuit of Orsha for elucidation of the events. There the Central Election Commission appointed repeated election because the resulting protocol of the circuit election commission was signed by only two of its members. However, on the order of the chair of the circuit commission Aleh Kazlou the journalists weren't admitted to the counting. The local prosecutor's office took the side of the plaintiffs and warned Mr Kazlou. However, the BHC members still weren't satisfied. To their mind, their expulsion from the circuit election commission not only violated the electoral legislation, but also didn't let them execute their professional duty. As a result, they also sued the election commission.

**On 28 January** it became known that the Government of Belarus filed to Geneva a note *Concerning the information, submitted to the UN Committee on*

*Human Rights by A.V.Bialiatski.* The answer of the Government is connected to the continuation of the consideration of Ales Bialiatski's complaint to the UN Committee on Human Rights concerning the liquidation of the public association Human Rights Center *Viasna*. Keeping to the procedure, the committee made an inquiry to the Government of the Government of Belarus, which, in its turn, submitted to the Committee false information that actually conformed to the verdict of the Supreme Court which liquidated *Viasna* for political reasons. The lawyer of Human Rights Center *Viasna* Valiantsin Stefanovich said: 'They actually copied the verdict of the Supreme Court. In this answer it is stated that *Viasna* was liquidated for violations of the electoral legislation that were made in 2001. According to the officials, this violation is confirmed by the warning of the Ministry of Justice of 28 August 2001 and the ruling of the Central Election Committee of 8 September 2001. Being guided by the results of the check-up that was conducted by the Ministry of Justice and the prosecutor's office of the Republic of Belarus the ruling concludes that *Viasna* violated the norms of the electoral legislation during nomination of election observers to polling stations during the presidential election of 2001. The Government disproves the statements of A.Bialiatski that the principle of equality before court and the right to fair trial were violated. The Government insists that the court thoroughly studied the case and kept to the principles of equality of the sides and independence of the trial. We sent to Geneva our comments concerning the answer of the Government. We again disprove this all and state that the court wasn't independent and its decision was politically motivated. The only reason for the liquidation was so called violation of the electoral legislation. Besides, the Government neglects article #117 of the Election Code, to which we referred during the trial. In this article it is stated that activity of public organizations is regulated by the Law *On public associations*. This law enumerates all cases, in which an organization can be liquidated. Human Rights Center *Viasna* violated none of these points for the whole time of its existence. That's why we think that the court decision was lawless. The political nature of the liquidation was also confirmed by the conclusion of FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights with the headquarters in Paris), the experts of which conducted the monitoring of the trial and concluded that the decision was politically motivated.'

**On 1 February** Belarusian human rights activists met with Uta Zapf, chair of the special working group of the Parliamentary Assembly of OSCE on Belarus. Among the meeting participants there were representatives of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, the Independent Society of Legal Research, Human Rights Center *Viasna*, etc. They discussed the preparation of the new edition of the law *On public associations* and its impact on the freedom of associations; gross violations of the freedom of peaceful assemblies; more frequent torturing of participants of pro-

test actions; enforcement of the discriminatory law on mass media that presented real danger to independent mass media and criminal persecution of journalists for 'defamation' and 'insult' of the president of Belarus. The meeting participants also spoke about the imperfect electoral legislation and the necessity to insist on the execution of the four demands (which OSCE presented to the Belarusian authorities long ago) and to introduce changes to the electoral legislation on the basis of the recommendations, made during the previous electoral campaigns.

**On 1 February**, several months after the end of the parliamentary election, Hlusk District Prosecutor's Office issued an official warning for neglect of citizens' applications to the chair of one of the election commission of Babruisk village circuit. The matter is that on the first day of the early voting Hlusk district club of electors and the local representation of Belarusian Helsinki Committee nominated observers to the polling stations in the town of Hlusk and the rural area. However, the administration of the polling stations refused to admit the observers, referring to incorrect composition of the nomination minutes. Representatives of the organizations complained to chairs of different election commissions, some of which even didn't answer. Then they complained to the prosecutor's office. As a result the prosecutor's office warned the chair of one of the polling station commissions, Valiantsina Dashkevich, for violation of the law *On citizens' applications*.

**On 15 February** Dzmitry Salaiou, a human rights activist in Navapolatsk, was summonsed to the prosecutor's office of Navapolatsk, where he was requested to provide explanations regarding his human rights activity and the release of the bulletin *Nasha prava* (Our Right). A statement issued by Aliaksandr Kamarou, chair of Navapolatsk City Executive Committee, was the reason. The statement argues that the human rights bulletin *Nasha prava* widely distributed in Navapolatsk says that Salaiou will help people defend their violated rights free of charge. Navapolatsk CEC asked the Prosecutor's Office to look into it and give a legal evaluation of what Salaiou did. Dzmitry Salaiou refused to answer any questions, resorting to the protection provided by article #27 of the Constitution of Belarus. The interesting thing is that the issue of the *Nasha prava* which caused Navapolatsk CEC act in such a nervous way covered the events in Ukraine, giving a detailed account of falsification of the elections attempted by Yanukovich and of the decisive response of the Ukrainian people.

**On 15 February** the lawyer Liudmila Hraznova said that Pavel Radzionau, investigator of the department that supervised the media compliance with legal regulations, wanted to know where she had obtained information to prepare monitoring of human rights violations. The human rights activist said it

would make more sense to verify the information contained in the monitoring, and take the appropriate measures to punish those behind civil rights violations in Belarus.

**On 15 February** the human rights activist Uladzimir Malei was summonsed to Malaryta Town Prosecutor's Office, where the prosecutor Bilitski handed to him a statement of criminal action brought against him 'for disseminating knowingly libelous and deceitful information printed in the news bulletin *Nasha slova* about Kazimir Lapich, Chair of Malaryta District Executive Committee. The criminal case was initiated on the basis of article #188, part 2, of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus. The case concerned the deputy request prepared by U.Malei (also printed in the deputy's bulletin *Nasha slova*), in which he pointed out that A.Niakhaieu had illegally appropriated the officially provided apartment in Malaryta after being transferred to a new position (Chair of Ivatsevichy District Executive Committee). Malaryta District Executive Committee even did not require him to leave the officially provided apartment in view of the terminated employment agreement. Kazimir Lapich, the current Chair of Malaryta District Executive Committee, took no measures necessary to remedy the illegal situation but chose to accuse Uladzimir Malei of libel.

**On 17 February** the council of the national public association *Belarusian Helsinki Committee* considered the written warning that was issued to it in January 2005 by the Ministry of Justice. In this warning the ministry stated that Belarusian Helsinki Committee didn't have the legal right to direct to the polling stations the observers that weren't members of the organization and also expressed its pretensions to the legal address of Brest branch of BHC. The analysis of the Electoral Code confirms the precise division of the notions 'representative of association' and 'representative, belonging to the organization'. According to part 1 of article #35 of the EC, political parties and other associations can delegate to election commissions only its members. What concerns the right to direct there observers, there are no such limitations. According to article #13, part 3, of the EC representatives of public associations can be directed to polling stations as observers in accordance with the established order. That's why the public association had the right to direct to nominate observers that weren't its members. According to the Statute, the main aim of BHC is to defend in Belarus the human rights that are guaranteed by the Constitution, the present legislation and the Helsinki agreements and other international agreements on human rights, informing people about the situation of human rights in Belarus and abroad. In order to achieve this aim Belarusian Helsinki Committee has the right to present and defend in courts, state, economic and public organs and organizations the rights and the legal interests of the persons who think their rights were violated and applied to the BHC (paragraph 3.1 of the Statute). These statute regulations completely correspond to

the national legislation and the international standards. The regulations of paragraph 2 of article #22 of the law *On public associations* don't prohibit to the human rights association its work for achievement of its statute aims and guarantee the common right of public associations to defend their members irrespective of the statute aims. Accordingly, in this part the warning that was issued to the BHC contradicted to the law and groundlessly limited the rights of the organization. That's why the BHC council decided to complain against it to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus. The analysis of the pretensions of the Ministry of Justice to the legal address of the Brest BHC branch shows that the Belarusian legislation established extremely strict demands to the activity of public associations and the formal violation of these demands could be used for application of administrative sanctions and liquidation of the public associations. In order to liquidate the violations that were mentioned in the warning and having no possibility to provide the unconditioned implementation of all demands by its regional branches, the council of Belarusian Helsinki Committee decided to liquidate them according to the established order and introduced the appropriate changes to its statute and stated that human rights activity in the regions will be continued by its representatives.

**On 22 February** Human Rights Center *Viasna* together with the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the NGO that had a special consultative status at ECOSOC, prepared the appeal to the 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the UN Commission of Human Rights. The document reflected the main human rights violations that took place in 2004. The human rights activists pointed at strengthening of the repressions against the regime's opponents, adoption of new discriminative laws, violations of the right to association, peaceful assemblies and liberty of word. There it was also stated that the election of 2004 was far from the democratic standards and the situation of human rights was deteriorating with time. That's why *Viasna* and FIDH urged the Commission on Human Rights to adopt a resolution on human rights, prolong the mandate of the special reporter on Belarus for consideration of his report at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session and give the following recommendations to the authorities: to use the special mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights, guarantee the independence of the court, pay attention to the recommendations of the Working group of the UN, make the necessary steps for investigation of disappearance of the political opponents and put the persons guilty before independent trial, guarantee the liberty of speech, associations and peaceful assemblies in conformity with the international and regional standards of human rights. The human rights activists demanded to stop persecution of opposition-minded people, liquidation of NGOs and educational establishments, recognize the role of human rights activists on the democratic field in accordance to the Declaration on Human Rights Activists, put the national law *On public associations* in conformity with the international legislation and refuse from capital punishment.

The organizations also submitted similar proposals to the special reporter on Belarus.

**On 22 February** tax inspectors appeared in the office of the human rights activist Dzmitry Salaiou and told the people there: 'Certain agencies are interested in what you do'. Also, the officers wanted to know whether the human rights activists provide paid legal services. The check-up was conducted by Andrei Aliakseionak, Dzmitry Tsymbaliuk and Vital Ushakou.

**On 23 February** Aliaksei Pikarau, investigator of Minsk City Prosecutor's Office on especially important cases, prolonged the investigation of the criminal case against the vice-chair of Belarusian Helsinki Committee Hary Pahaniaila for a month. The case against Hary Pahaniaila was initiated in November 2004 as a result of his interview to the Swedish TV, the video record of which was confiscated by Belarusian custom officers. In this interview Mr Pahaniaila expressed his suspicions about the relation of the highest state officials, including Lukashenka, to the kidnaps and possible murders of the leaders of the Belarusian opposition. Hary Pahaniaila was suspected in defamation of the president, accompanied with accusations in felony (violation of part 2 of article #367 of the Criminal Code of Belarus). According to the investigator, the reason for prolongation of the investigation was that Pahaniaila 'loaded the investigation with very serious documents and materials'. Let us remind that in December 2004 Hary Pahaniaila solicited to the prosecutor general to stop the criminal case against him because of absence of the corpus delicti. He attached to the petition a number of documents that could prove he was right. The General Prosecutor's Office redirected this petition to Minsk City Prosecutor's Office and ordered the investigation to study these papers.

**On 24 February** in Moscow the Soviet for foreign and defense policy initiated the round-table *Human Rights in the Republic of Belarus*. The Russian side was represented by the head of the Soviet Sergey Karaganov, the commissioner on human rights Vladimir Lukin, the chair of the Commission on human rights of the president of the Russian Federation Ella Pamfilova, the director of the Institute on human rights Valentin Gefter and a number of other well-known public activists and political scientists. Belarus was represented by the chair of Belarusian Helsinki Committee Tatsiana Protzka, the BHC lawyer Aleh Hulak, the human rights activist Tatsiana Reviaka, the IISEPS vice-director Aliaksandr Sasnou, the head of the analytic center *Strategy* Leanid Zaika, the vice-chair of *Narodnaia volia* newspaper Sviatlana Kalinkina, etc. The round-table was focused on three issues: political disappearances in Belarus, absence of liberty of word and mass-media, deprival citizens of Belarus of the right to elect and be elected.

**On 25 February** three members of HRC *Viasna* went to Kyrgyzstan to monitor the parliamentary election there within the framework of the European Net of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO).

**On 28 February** the investigator of especially important cases of Minsk City Prosecutor's Office Aliksandr Pikarau stopped the criminal case against the vice-chair of Belarusian Helsinki Committee Hary Pahaniaila. The criminal case was brought under part 2 of article #367 of the Criminal Code, defamation of president. 'It is the result of my cooperative work with the investigator. I tried to fill the case with the information and the documents that would confirm my innocence. Having consulted the law and his own conscience, the investigator decided to stop the criminal prosecution, most probably because of the absence of the court perspective,' commented Hary Pahaniaila.

**On 1 March** the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Belarus Adrian Severin (Romania) stated the situation of human rights in Belarus deteriorated and presented not only an internal, but also an international problem. He said that one of the elements of his strategy as a UN rapporteur was to establish a common approach to the Belarusian problems among the different representatives of the international community who could really do something. Adrian Severin emphasized he was speaking not about the attempts of certain organizations to change something, but about uniting the world efforts in this direction. According to him, the official Minsk categorically rejected the possibility of any dialogue and the events that happened in Belarus had to be considered not only as a threat to human rights, but also a threat to the security of the country and the region.

**On 1 March** the US State Department stated the situation of human rights in Belarus deteriorated. In its official note there were mentioned the uninvestigated disappearances of well-known oppositional activists, police abuses, tortures, groundless detentions, violence in the army and overpopulation prisons, further limitations of the liberty of press, the right to assembly and association, etc.

**On 4 March** Ruslan Iesin, vice-head of the information department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated the report of the US State Department concerning the situation of human rights in Belarus was one-sided and politicized. According to him, the preliminary familiarization with the document showed the US continued to describe the situation of human rights in Belarus with prejudice and MIA would give a detailed commentary to the document after its thorough examination by ministries and other state organs of Belarus.



activist Mikola Lemianouski to 15 days of jail. According to the police report, composed after the detention, Lemianouski was charged with small disorderly conduct (article #156 of the Code of Administrative Violations) and disobedience to legal demands of the police (article #166).

**On 11 March** the Council of Human Rights Center *Viasna* adopted a statement in concerning with the deterioration of the state of health of the political prisoner Mikhail Marynich, who suffered a heart attack that was dangerous to his health and life. HRC *Viasna* demanded from the authorities to immediately release the prisoner and give to him qualified medical aid.

**On 25 March** Human Rights Center *Viasna* adopted a statement, in which it was noted the Belarusian authorities used more and more violent, ruthless and provocative methods of struggle against their opponents. Human Rights Center *Viasna* expressed its extreme concern with the enforcement of repression of democratic opposition during the previous months. Pointing at the considerable increase of political repression in the country, HRC *Viasna* urged the Belarusian and the international community to express solidarity with the persons who were persecuted in Belarus for political reasons, and demand from the Belarusian regime the urgent release of the persons, that were illegally punished for political reasons. HRC *Viasna* also upheld the adoption of the especial resolution of the 61<sup>st</sup> UN session concerning the situation of human rights in Belarus and prolongation of the mandate of the UN special reporter on human rights in Belarus.

**On 29 March** the briefing *Slipknot on the neck of civil society in Belarus* took place at the Palace of Nations in Geneva. It was organized with the assistance of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the International League of Human Rights. The briefing was attended by the wife of the missing journalist Dzmitry Zavadski Sviatlana Zavadskaia and such Belarusian human rights activists as Ales Bialiatski and Dzmitry Markusheuski. The speakers described the situation of human rights in Belarus speaking of such problems as disappearance of well-known public and political activists, increase of repressions against activists of the civil society and political opposition, violations of the NGOs' rights, violations of linguistic and cultural rights. All of them emphasized the importance of the international community in containment and condemnation of Lukashenka's regime. After the briefing they also met with the special reporter on Belarus of the UN Commission on Human Rights Adrian Severin.

**On 29 March**, during the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva the special reporter on human rights in Belarus Adrian Severin presented his report on the situation of human rights in Belarus. The re-

port contained critical observations about the situation of human rights in Belarus and a number of recommendations to the Belarusian authorities and the international community. The head of the state delegation of Belarus S.Aleinik denied that human rights were violated in Belarus and stated the report was very politicized and insulting for the Belarusian people and demanded apologies from Mr Severin. Aleinik's position was supported by representatives of Russia, Cuba and Kenya. The representative of China expressed his doubt in correctness of the facts that were mentioned in the report, stating Severin didn't visit Belarus in 2005. On the other hand, the report positions were supported by the USA, Canada and Luxemburg that spoke on behalf of all EU countries.

**On 29 March** the International League for Human Rights, the international organization that has advisory status at the UN Economic and Social Council, addressed the president of Belarus A.Lukashenka. In this letter the organization expressed its deep concern with the recent assault on the liberty of expression and assembly in Belarus after arrests of participants of the peaceful action of protest that took place in Minsk. 'The ruthless assault of Your government on the political opposition must be stopped. Belarus undertook to abide by the international standards of the liberty of expression and freedom of assembly. These legal standards are the fundament of the democratic civil society in Belarus and must be guaranteed by the Belarusian legal system. Belarusian citizens must have the right to act without the fear of threats or repressions from the side of the authorities. The League urges You and Your duty officials to respect the fundamental rights of Belarusian citizens and stop the offence on the civil society in Belarus', was stated in the letter.

**On 30 March** the UN special reporter on human rights in Belarus Adrian Severin took part in the UN democracy caucus. He stated that after the year he of work on human rights situation in Belarus he had negative impressions. 'Political elites of certain countries', pointed Severin, 'even don't try to establish democracy. The representatives of Belarus answer to the objective criticism from different sources respond that Belarus is a democratic country that further develops its democratic system. Such words are simple blasphemy... Human rights are closely bound to the political system of the country. Non-democratic state won't develop human rights and vice-versa. Political reforms are always necessary for the priority of human rights.'

**On 30 March** in Geneva within the limits of the free alternative tribune there was organized the conference *To See, To Condemn, To Protest: the UN Commission on Human Rights Must Implement Its Duties*. During the conference the effectiveness of the mechanisms of work of the Commission on Human Rights and other UN instruments that could be used for defense of hu-

man rights in the world. Among the speakers there were representatives of the International Federation of Human Rights, Amnesty International and national human rights organizations from China, Iran, Togo, Chili and Belarus. In his speech the representative of Belarus Ales Bialiatski thoroughly described the situation of human rights in Belarus and pointed at the importance of the Resolution on Belarus that was adopted by the UN Commission on human rights the previous year. He also said that the main task of the present Belarusian human rights activists was to get the Commission consider and adopt one more resolution on Belarus and preserve the seat of the special reporter on Belarus.

**On 1 April** representatives of the Belarusian NGOs were surprised to notice, that on the end of their meetings with national delegations that participated in the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the UN Committee on Human Rights representatives of the official Belarusian delegation followed their steps seemingly tried to disprove the information on human rights violations in Belarus that was distributed by the NGOs' representatives. Mr Aleinik, head of the official Belarusian delegation, personally participated in this action. For instance, after the planned meeting with representatives of Belarusian NGOs the head of Brazilian delegation was suddenly stopped by Mr Aleinik and had to listen to all his arguments.

**On 1 April** the American human rights organization *Freedom House* released its annual list of the world's most repressive nations before the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The report, titled *The Worst of the Worst: The World's Most Repressive Societies, 2004*, includes detailed summations of the dire human rights situations Burma, China, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Laos, Libya, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. Chechnya, Tibet, and Western Sahara are included as territories under Russian, Chinese, and Moroccan jurisdiction respectively. Belarus stands on the first place among the countries that turned the attention of Freedom House. According to its rating scale the situation with human rights violations in Belarus deteriorated compared to the last year. Freedom House considers the mass violations and falsifications during the parliamentary election and the referendum that took place in 2004 as one of the reasons that strengthened the status of Belarus as a repressive country.

**On 1 April** in Hrodna the member of Belarusian Helsinki Committee Raman Iurhel was fined for unauthorized picket near Hrodna regional drama theater. He stood at the stairs of the theater with the poster 'No – to Seizure of Belarus by Russia!'. The poster also contained the poem 'Damn on you, hangmen of freedom!'. The reason for the picket was that on 2 April Belarusian

authorities signed the alliance treaty with Russia. In 15 minutes the picketer was detained by the police with major Khilko at the head and driven to Hrodna Leninski Borough Board of Internal Affairs. The court fined Raman Iurhel about 500 US dollars for the picketing.

**On 1 April** the parliament of Georgia expressed its support to the political prisoners Mikhail Marynich, Valery Levaneuski and Aliaksandr Vasilieu and the persons who were arrested for participation in the Freedom Day action on 25 March. In its statement the Foreign Relations Committee of the Georgian Parliament urged the Belarusian authorities to respect the fundamental principles of human rights and release all the arrested persons as soon as possible.

**On 14 April** the Observatory for protection of human rights activists, joint project of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Universal Organization against Torture (OMCT) presented the yearly report on the situation of human rights activists all over the world. Human Rights Center *Viasna* that was deprived of official registration in Belarus in 2003 is an associated member of FIDH. The report is issued in English, French and Spanish. The press-conferences devoted to protection of human rights activists took place in Dakar, Geneva, Paris, Tunis, Zimbabwe, etc. The aim of the project is to draw attention to problems of human rights activists in different countries. The report for 2004 included facts of persecution and pressurization of human rights activists in 90 countries of the world. 'Pitifully enough', stated the project authors, 'the part that is dedicated to Belarus becomes larger. It contains facts of persecution, arrests, detentions and other forms of pressurization applied to human rights activists, liquidation of human rights organizations, prohibition to human rights activity and other facts that reflect the real situation of human rights activists in Belarus'.

**On 14 April** the UN Human Rights Commission adopted the resolution on the situation of human rights in Belarus. The commission rejected a motion by Russia to block the resolution on Belarus. It voted 23 to 13 with 17 abstentions in favor of the resolution, with mainly European and Latin American states supporting the measure. It urges Belarusian authorities to fully investigate cases of forced disappearances or summary executions involving opponents of the government. Among the co-authors of the resolution there are such countries as Bulgaria, Israel, Macedonia, Turkey and Croatia. The UN Commission demanded from the Belarusian authorities to admit to the country special representatives of the UN for investigation of the numerous accusations of violations of human rights and possible relation of high-level officials to disappearance of the opposition leaders and the journalist Dzmitry Zavadski. The resolution 'insistently urged' the parliament of Belarus to temporarily shelve the duty officials that are suspected in relation to the disappearances and conduct

independent and exhausting investigation of the disappearances. The UN Commission also expressed its concern with the process of organization and holding of elections in Belarus, arbitrary arrests and detentions, persecution and liquidation of NGOs, independent mass media and oppositional political parties. Reacting to the resolution, the regular representative of Belarus Siarhei Aleinik stated: 'It is one more attempt to form a distorted impression about the situation in our country in order to justify the wish of its authors to interfere with internal affairs of a sovereign state... Belarus is principally against the use of human rights topics with the aim of political pressurization of sovereign states... We can accept neither the form, nor the content of this resolution.' Aleinik was supported by the representative of the Russian Federation Leonid Skotnikov who, together with representatives of China and Cuba, called the present officials to abstain from voting this resolution.

**At the 18 April** press briefing, Foreign Minister of Belarus Siarhei Martynau said the Belarusian authorities didn't want to see Adrian Severin in Minsk. According to Martynau, what Mr Severin presented at the session of the Human Rights Committee was a compilation from the US State Department report rather than his own review. Before he talked with the journalists, he attended a joint meeting of the members of the international committee of the Chamber of Representatives and Foreign Ministry. The meeting largely centered around the speech by Mr Severin, said one of the deputies. The Foreign Minister of Belarus was highly critical of Adrian Severin's report: 'We cooperate with quite a few procedural commissions in the field of human rights, and quite successfully by the way, which was noted at this session of this committee. As regards the so-called special rapporteur for Belarus (Adrian Severin), we have earlier regarded as undesirable his stay in Belarus in this capacity, and we continue to keep to the same opinion. The report he produced in Geneva was absolutely unprecedented. Given the biases occasionally dominating the human rights committee, this report does not comply with procedures used for preparing such reports. Strictly speaking, this was a compilation of the human rights in Belarus report prepared by the US State Department,' he said.

**On 22 April** the vice-chair of Belarusian Helsinki Committee Hary Pahaniaila, the chair of *Women's Independent Democratic Movement* organization Liudmila Petsina and the vice-editor of *Narodnaia volia* newspaper Sviatlana Kalinkina were thoroughly searched by the Belarusian customs officers on the way back from Vilnius, where they met with the US State Secretary Condoleezza Rice and the high-level representative of the EU Javier Solana. Despite all their efforts, the officers found nothing.

**On 16 May** Human Rights Center *Viasna* adopted the statement, pointing at the increasing repression against representatives of the democratic opposi-

tion in Belarus. HRC *Viasna* called the arrest of Siarhei Skrabets politically motivated and related to his public, political and deputy activity and also demanded all political prisoners in Belarus be released and the informational hysteria against the Belarusian democratic opposition and the neighbor countries be stopped.

**On 19 May** the cassation board of the Supreme Economic Court accepted for consideration the cassation complaint of Minsk Maskouski borough tax inspection. The tax inspectors insisted that the Belarusian Helsinki Committee had to pay taxes from the financial means that was given to the organization within the limits of the TACIS program of the European Union.

**On 20 May** Minsk City Prosecutor's Office resumed criminal proceedings against the vice-head of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee Hary Pahaniaila. The human rights activist is suspected of libeling Aliaksandr Lukashenka. According to the investigators, the interview given by Hary Pahaniaila to the Swedish television in 2004 contained a libelous statement. In February the criminal charges against Hary Pahaniaila were dropped, the corresponding ruling said that the actions of the human rights activist did not constitute a crime though were libelous with respect to Lukashenka. Hary Pahaniaila did not agree to the wording and took the case to court requiring complete acquittal. 'This is what the prosecutor's office does not want to acknowledge as the truth and so resumed criminal proceedings against me', commented Hary Pahaniaila.

**On 25 May** the human rights organization *Amnesty International* published an annual report on the human rights in the world. The section that covers Belarus notes that 'no progress has been made in the investigation into the disappearance of four people, capital punishment continues to be exercises, freedom of expression and right of assembly continue to be suppressed, opposition activists are arbitrarily detained and harshly treated by the police, non-governmental organizations continue to be pressurized and liquidated.' The Belarusian section of the *Amnesty International* report first says that in December the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) refused to Belarus the status of the special guest to the Council of Europe. In April 2004 the UN Human Rights Commission established the position of a special UN reporter on Belarus. In January this international representative was refused an entry visa by the Belarusian authorities. *Amnesty International* also reminds that according to OSCE observers, the last year's parliamentary elections and referendum in Belarus fell short of the organization's standards.

**On 28 May** Mikola Kavalchuk, the chair of Vaukavysk-based public association *Aslona* that deals with protection of the rights of tax-payers and consumers, complained to the justice department of Hrodna Regional Executive Com-

mittee against the warning that was issued to the organization. *Aslona* was warned for 'the activity, that doesn't meet the statute aims', first of all, for giving legal aid to the population. Mr Kavalchuk stated this activity was one of the organization's priorities. By the way, according to the law free legal advice can be given by any person who has enough knowledge.

**On 30 May** the member of the liquidated human rights organization *Legal Assistance to Population* Raisa Mikhailouskaia asked for political asylum in Canada. She went there on invitation of a partner organization. During the last months of her stay in Belarus she frequently received anonymous telephone calls with threats. During the election to the parliament she was a member of the headquarters of the candidate Aleh Volchak. At that time she was assaulted by unknown persons for the first time. The second attack took place after the 6 May action in the memory of the former Minister of Interior Iury Zakharan-ka. In both cases the authorities refused to bring criminal cases. Raisa Mikhailouskaia is a professional lawyer. She gave legal aid to low-income families and participated in preparation of the editions that were dedicated to the disappearances of well-known public and political activists in Belarus and the tragedy that took place in the pedestrian subway in Niamiha.

**On 31 May** Human Rights Center *Viasna* adopted the protest note against the sentence to Pavel Seviarynets and Mikola Statkevich. HRC *Viasna* decisively condemned the continuation of the political repressions in the country and called the verdict lawless and politically motivated. 'The accusative verdict against Mr Seviarynets confirmed the absence of the independent judiciary in the Republic of Belarus, where courts don't serve justice and defense of civil rights, but execute the repressive function of the authoritarian regime of A.Lukashenka', reads the note. Human Rights Center *Viasna* urged the authorities of the EU, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament to prohibit entrance for gross violations of human rights in Belarus and personal participation in repressive actions against political opponents of the regime to the judges of Minsk Tsentralny Borough Court Aliaksei Bychko, Leanid Iasinovich and the prosecutor Vadzim Pazniak.

**On 1 June** the Supreme Economic Court of Belarus confirmed the victory of Belarusian Helsinki Committee in the argument with the tax inspection. The inspection pretensions for payment of 70 000 US dollars' tax by the organization were found groundless. At the trial BHC was represented by Aleh Hulak, who said he was very glad at such decision: 'It is very good for us that this decision is left in force. It means that at least in this sense we can continue working without disturbances. It is also quite important as a rare example of the decision in which international agreement is considered superior to the national legislation.'

**On 2 June** the former deputy of the Czech Parliament, human rights ac-

tivists, former dissident and signer of *Charter'77* Svatopulk Korasak wasn't given visa to Belarus. The Belarusian Embassy in Prague didn't explain why. Korasak is a member of the Union of Freedom fraction and was in Belarus during the referendum of 2004 concerning the permission to Lukashenka to run for the third presidential term. The day after the referendum he came to the meeting in Minsk and read to the present persons the letter of the former Czech president Vaclav Gavel where he expressed his support to Belarusian democrats.

**On 7 June** Human Rights Center *Viasna* held the presentation of its yearly *Chronicle-Review of Human Rights Violation in Belarus*, issued in three languages. 'The book contradicts the deceitful quietness of Minsk streets', said Ales Bialiatski. 'Actually, the volume of the *Review-Chronicle* for 2004 is 375 pages. It witnesses that human rights are violated and the situation is getting worse everyday'.

**On 7 June** Human Rights Center *Viasna* submitted an open letter to the Ministry of Education and administrations of educational establishments to protest against the political harassment of students of higher educational establishments. 'Recently human rights organizations of Belarus have registered numerous cases of political persecution of students of educational establishments at places of study', was said in the letter. 'We consider such actions incompatible with the principles of academic liberties and disgraceful for the persons who are at the positions of deans and researchers. This practice witnesses the return of the totalitarianism of the USSR times to Belarus. We warn the administration of these educational establishments about inadmissibility of such actions and urge them to stop persecution of students for their public and political activity. Otherwise we can use our right to initiate the public campaign aimed at suspension of the contracts that were concluded by educational and scientific organizations of Europe with the administration of these educational establishments and the Ministry of Education of Belarus', stated the human rights activists.

**On 9 June** the investigation of the criminal case against Uladzimir Malei, deputy of Malaryta District Deputy Soviet, was resumed. The criminal case under part 2 of article #188 of the Criminal Code of for 'distribution of knowingly false information in *Nasha slova* informational bulletin' was brought on 2 February and closed on 2 May because of absence of corpus delicti.

**On 12 June** the office of Babruisk branch of HRC *Viasna* was robbed. Among the stolen things there are ten chairs, telephone, teapot, heater, shutters and white-red-white flag. The head of the branch Ihar Khodzka was away on a mission at that time and was informed about it by telephone. On their



arrival to the office the police asked to give them a list of the people who visited the office. A criminal case was brought on the fact of robbery.

**On 15 June** the department of humanitarian aid of the presidential administration prohibited the use of foreign aid given to Belarusian Helsinki Committee. Let us remind that in April BHC asked the department to register and exempt from taxes (in accordance to the legislation) 1 000 US dollars that was given by the International Helsinki Federation, which BHC is a member of. It was intended to spend this money on the status aims of the organization – office rent, telephone communications and purchase of stationery. The department refused to do it, because the specified aims for the use of the aid didn't match the ones that were specified in the appropriate presidential decree. According to BHC experts, such actions of the Belarusian authorities were a violation of the constitutional principle of the liberty of association and the international undertakings of Belarus.

**On 16 June** Minsk City Prosecutor's Office prolonged by one month the criminal investigation into the case of the chair of Belarusian Helsinki Committee Hary Pahaniaila. Hary Pahaniaila was suspected of libeling the president and other top-level officials. Such suspicions arose after Hary Pahaniaila gave an interview to the Swedish television company, where he did not rule out that Aliaksandr Lukashenka and other top-level officials might be behind the disappearance of political opponents. This case had been investigated by the prosecutor's office since November 2004.

**On 21 June** the public Belarusian-Russian human rights committee of the Russian President's Soviet created in early June to promote civil society institutions and human rights published its first document – an official statement. It said that over the past few years the Belarusian law enforcement agencies weren't able to say what had happened to the disappeared politicians. At the same time, political 'cleansing' in Belarus continued. In penal facilities there were kept famous public statesmen and politicians, some were convicted, while others were tried in criminal courts. The joint committee promised to focus its activity on five areas. One of them was the election law in Belarus. Belarus avoided signing the CIS election convention, that's why the minimal legal standards that would allow recognizing as democratic the Belarusian elections and referenda do not exist. Russia and CIS countries have never organized long-term observation of Belarusian elections and referenda. Another important line of the committee's activity was said to be defending the freedom of the media. The statement claimed that Belarus virtually did not have a functioning institute of non-governmental civil and political media. The committee also stated it would monitor the freedom of association, because the Belarusian government has been working toward gradual elimination of the normally operating

independent civil and human rights groups. The committee also undertook to protect the rights of Russians in Belarus and the rights of Belarusians in Russia. For example, Russians in Belarus cannot use the services of Russian lawyers, which substantially limits their right to legal defense. So far not a single organization has monitored the violation of the rights of Russians in Belarus and the rights of Belarusians in Russia, or protected these rights. In its activity the committee plans to orient on the cooperation with broad sections of the Belarusian and Russian community. Sergey Karaganov and General Valeriy Pavlov, the coordinator of the relations between Belarusian democratic movements and Russia were elected co-chairs of the committee.

**On 27 June** the International Helsinki Federation (IHF) for human rights based in Vienna published an annual report on the human rights in 38 OSCE countries from Europe, the Caucasus and Northern America. The report covers 24 former communist countries, including 13 countries with established democratic systems. 14 pages of the report are dedicated to Belarus. As regards the rule of law, democracy and human rights, Belarus remains one of the worst countries in Europe. The authorities do not respect a number of basic rights. They imposed stringent restrictions on the freedom of speech, assembly and media. The conditions in prisons and detention centers remain poor, the police make ungrounded arrests. The document reminds that the 2004 referendum and parliamentary elections did not meet international standards. The authors of the report make the conclusion that the situation with human rights in Belarus tends to get worse and worse.

**At about 8 p.m. on 29 June** in Kalinkavichy the police detained Uladzimir Tseliapun, a human rights activist from Mazyr. He was detained soon after the vice-chair of the regional organization of UCP Uladzimir Katsora had handed his computer over to him. According to the police, this computer was allegedly stolen from some undisclosed organization. After they detained the human rights activity, the police investigator Surma and the police expert Valiak, however, did not try to identify the computer of Uladzimir Tseliapun but examined the contents of his private files. In the same evening in Kalinkavichy five police officers headed by Major Taran broke into a private apartment at 9 Kniazeva St. The apartment housed a gathering staged to elected delegates to the Congress of Democratic Forces. The police attempted to cancel the election gathering.

**On 12 July** the Russian-Belarusian committee of the Presidential Soviet of Russia for promoting civil community institutions and human rights called on the government of the Russian Federation to include the issue of civil rights and freedoms protection into the permanent agenda of dialog with the authorities of Belarus. This is what the media statement released by the committee

said. In the statement the heads of the committee expressed their indignation because of the brutal dispersal by the Belarusian law enforcement agencies of the action held on 7 July in Minsk and devoted to the fifth anniversary after the disappearance of the ORT cameraman Dzmitry Zavadzki. They view it as unreasonable and disgraceful the beating of the widow Sviatlana Zavadzkaia.

**On 12 July** the deputy of Malaryta District Deputy Soviet, the human rights activist Uladzimir Malei received another notification from the investigation board of internal affairs of Brest Regional Executive Committee, which said that the term of investigation into the criminal case initiated by terms of part 2 of article #188 of the Criminal Code of Belarus was prolonged by Hrodna Regional the Prosecutor's Office by six months.

**On 27 July** Uladzimir Tseliapun, a human rights activist from Mazyr, received a warning. Uladzimir Tseliapun said: 'I came to the prosecutor's office in Kalinkavichy, where, without getting questioned I was served an *Official warning about the inadmissibility of violating the law* signed by the senior justice councilor S.Iarmolenka, which concerns the articles 367, 368 of the Criminal Code of Belarus, insult of the president of the Republic of Belarus'. The warning was issued on the basis of a report made by the lieutenant Damanchuk of Kalinkavichy District Board of Internal Affairs, which said that the PC taken away from the human rights activist contained files with 'images and caricatures of the president of Belarus'.

**On 17 August** the authorities continued investigation into the criminal case against the famous human rights activist Hary Pahaniaila. Hary Pahaniaila was accused of libeling the president of Belarus, which may result in 4 years in prison. The case continued since October 2004 when Pahaniaila in an interview with a Swedish TV company suspected involvement of top rank officials, including Aliaksandr Lukashenka, with the disappearance of the opposition activists. According to Hary Pahaniaila, he voiced obvious things in the interview. In confirmation of his words, the lawyer handed over to the investigative bodies a file of documents that confirm the suspected involvement of Aliaksandr Lukashenka and his inner circle. These documents could have been used to close the case long ago, but it was continued for political reasons, said the human rights activist.

**On 19 August** a number of well-known public and political activists of different countries directed an open letter plea to help free Belarus from totalitarianism. Here's the full text: Belarus, a country of more than 10 million inhabitants has been for more than 11 years ruled by President Alexander Lukashenka, for whom governance means extensive abuse of basic human and citizens' rights on a daily basis, removal and imprisonment of his opponents and

journalists, and deception of the populace by the mass media under his control. Last autumn, a bogus referendum that Lukashenka held removed a two-consecutive-terms limit on the presidency and thus he took the first step to prolong his rule beyond next year, when his current term expires. Since then, for a number of months — largely unnoticed by most media and politicians of the democratic world — the last remains of non-governmental organizations, an independent press and political parties that could thwart the plans of the Belarus autocrat on prolonging his rule ad infinitum have systematically been liquidated. The information blockade of the country is growing, opportunities for young people to study abroad are being limited, and the last independent daily *Narodnaia volia* about to be closed down. Lukashenka can get away with all of this not only due to the unsavory legacy of totally decimated post-soviet social and societal structures, but also due to lack of interest in the fate of Belarus on the part of democratic countries worldwide. We are, therefore, convinced that it is necessary to make use of every opportunity to break through this wall of lack of interest and inability on the part of the global democratic community in order to take a stand against this post-soviet autocrat and his efforts to totally suppress the remains of independent initiatives in Belarus. At the same time it is necessary to continue developing contacts and cooperation with Belarus' independent initiatives. The EU that so far has not been able to support efforts aiming at building Belarus based on democratic values should speedily seek instruments that would enable this process. At the same time the EU should fully open its exchange and educational programs for democratically oriented young people of Belarus. The EU should, together with Ukraine, quickly react to the proposal by EU parliamentarians Janusz Onyszkiewicz and Bogdan Klich to enable the people of Belarus an access to non-censored, non-manipulated information through radio and TV broadcasts from neighboring countries. We call for creating a common strategy for the EU, US and all other democratic countries that ought to be interested in the democratization of Belarus. This open letter was signed by Vaclav Gavel, former president of the Czech Republic; Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland; French philosopher Andre Glucksmann; Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa; former German president Richard von Weizsacker, H.R.H. El Hassan bin Talal of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; former New Zealand prime minister and former WTO director general Mike Moore; Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corp of New York, Nippon Foundation chairman Yohei Sasakawa, former South African president F.W. de Klerk; US theologian Michael Novak and Senator Karel Schwarzenberg of the Czech Republic and by philanthropist George Soros.

**On 8 September** Belarusian Helsinki Committee complained to the Supreme Economic Court against the refusal of the presidential administration to register the humanitarian aid that was given to BHC by International Helsinki

Federation. The organization intended to use this money for covering the telephone expenditures, the office rent and the upcoming conference. However, the aid wasn't registered. 'The most outrageous thing is that we were haven't been informed about the motives for the refusal. The result of the trial will show whether it is the officials' self-will or the order to smother our organization completely', said Aleh Hulak, executive director of BHC.

**On 8 September** the human rights organizations *Amnesty International*, *Human Rights Watch* and *Oxfam International* called on a small number of 'spoiler' countries to stop holding the UN World Summit hostage over crucial measures on human rights, security, genocide and poverty reduction that was to take place within the limits of the 60<sup>th</sup> UN session in New-York. The proposal to create a new Human Rights Council with more authority and that could sit throughout the year, review human rights in all countries and address all human rights situations was intended to be a key achievement of the World Summit. It won the endorsement of an overwhelming majority of states from all regions of the world. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch expressed grave concern, however, that some 15 countries, led by Cuba and including Venezuela, Myanmar, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Belarus, Vietnam, and Syria, were blocking any movement on this important reform.

**On 9 September**, during a seminar on international protection of human rights in Baku, Belarusian human rights activists A.Bialiatski and B.Zvozkau met with the special UN representative on defense of human rights activists Hina Jilani. The parties considered the situation with human rights in Belarus. Hina Jilani said that in June 2005 she asked the UN Belarusian ambassador Mr Aleinik to allow her to visit Belarus. Moreover, she had addressed him with the same request for several times before. Her demands were not satisfied, but Mr Aleinik said that 'maybe next year' she would be allowed to come to Belarus. She also expressed concern about the facts of persecution of human rights activists in Belarus, including criminal cases, administrative arrests and fines, as well as police and taxation departments' attacks on human rights watch organizations' offices within the last year.

**On 15 September** during his speech at the UN session in New-York Aliaksandr Lukashenka said the UN allowed for its use as an instrument of the policy that is oriented on the construction of unipolar world. He also expressed his disagreement with the UN Commission on Human Rights concerning human rights violations in Belarus.

**On 26 September** Adrian Severin, the special UN reporter on the situation of human rights in Belarus, finished his working visit to the neighbor countries of Belarus. He used it for obtaining information about the situation in the coun-

try. The Belarusian authorities still don't admit him to Belarus and don't answer his inquiries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus expressed its dissatisfaction with his report for 2005 that became the ground for the critical resolution on Belarus, adopted by the UN Commission on Human Rights. The commission also empowered Mr Severin with preparation of the report about the progress of human rights in Belarus by the 62<sup>nd</sup> session due to take place in Geneva in spring 2006. The Belarusian authorities refused to cooperate in the preparation of this report and didn't admit Mr Severin to Belarus despite his active attempts to establish a dialogue. Nevertheless, Adrian Severin expressed his intention to submit the draft report to all the persons who are interested in the situation of human rights in Belarus, including the Belarusian authorities. He also said he would welcome commentaries and corrections: 'In the case I receive no commentaries from the Belarusian government, the only possible interpretation for me will be that they agree with the information that I have received from other sources'. Giving a general outline of the HR situation in Belarus Mr Severin confessed there were no changes for the better.

**On 29 September** in Strasbourg European Parliament approved a resolution on Belarus that in particular says that 'instead of improving, the situation in Belarus has further deteriorated, which has led to a situation where human rights are blatantly violated' and urges the member states to introduce free visas for Belarusian citizens. European Parliament strongly condemned 'the massive attacks on the media, minority and human rights activists, members of the opposition, religious leaders, and any person who attempts freely to voice criticism of the president and the regime'. 'Should the Belarusian authorities fail to improve the situation regarding freedom of speech, assembly and religion, the Commission, the Council and Parliament should initiate the procedure to expand the visa-ban list to include representatives of Belarusian authorities. The sanctions against president Lukashenka's regime should also include the freezing of assets of Belarusian authorities abroad', says the resolution. At the same time the deputies called on all EU member states to introduce free visas for the Belarusian citizens.

**On 30 September** members of the Human Rights Center *Viasna* visited the political prisoner Mikalai Statkevich in the open penitentiary institution in Baranavichy. They passed to him books and oscillograph that was necessary for repairing of TV sets (Mr. Statkevich repaired TV-sets, vacuum cleaners, etc.).

**On 14 October** the vice-chair of the Supreme Economic Court lauhen Smirnou appealed against the court ruling that cancelled the claims by the taxation agencies against the Belarusian Helsinki Committee. Thus, the court could again review the validity of Minsk Maskouski borough tax inspection's

decision, according to which the human rights organization was to pay taxes worth about 200 thousand US dollars from the international technical assistance received on TACIS program. The executive director of BHC Aleh Hulak didn't hide his concern about this decision: 'In the previous process documents the Supreme Economic Court confirmed the legality of our position. We can't understand why it has changed its position. The only thing left to us is to hope for the court presidium, but the hope is quite vague.' BHC also declared, that the decision to exact 200 000 US dollars of taxes will mean the liquidation of the organization.

**On 18 October** Homel regional branch of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee finished its activity, because the BHC Council decided to liquidate all regional branches because of problems with juridical addresses. According to the chair of the branch Aliaksandr lauseienka, it didn't mean that BHC stopped its activity in Homel region. He stated that a regional representative would work in the region instead of the liquidated branch.

**On 25 October** the police registered the case of firing on a window of the flat of the human rights activists Aliaksei and Sviatlana Lapitskis was registered. Four policemen came to inspect the holes, question the neighbors, make a report and record evidence from those who suffered. The experts believe that the desk-level of the window came under fire of 6 charges from a German-made pneumatic pistol. This is yet another case of intimidation of human rights activists. On 18 October the window was stained with red and brown paint. The day after the firing the window was again stained, this time with black paint.

**On 25 October** Zhodzina City Board of Internal Affairs brought a criminal case on the firing of the window at Lapitskis' apartment under part 1 339 of the Criminal Code. The Lapitskis were recognized as victims.

**On 26 October** Aliaksei and Sviatlana Lapitskis were visited by the head of the OSCE mission in Minsk, Ambassador ?ke Peterson. He paid interest to the recent assault of their flat and the opinions of the victims about it. Besides, he asked about the fate of lanka Lapitski, who hadn't been able to receive education in Belarusian for more than a year, but was finally given such a right. Mr Peterson also discussed with the Lapitskis the fate of the youth activist Siarhei Murashka, who was expelled from Zhodzina Polytechnics for participation in *Chernobyl Way* rally. He expressed his great concern with the recent events in Zhodzina and support to the persecuted people. When he came out of the house, he was met by a police group with the chair of the interrogation department of Zhodzina City Board of Internal Affairs Zmitser Udovin. Mr Peterson wished them to fine the criminal who fired the window of the flat as soon as possible.

**On 27 October** the Great Britain, the presiding country of the European Union, issued the statement on behalf of the member nations regarding the situation around the Belarusian Helsinki Committee. The statement sharply criticized Belarusian government's policies in the civil society sector. 'We remain alarmed by the persecution against members of the civil society. The events of 2005 show that Belarus has gone far from the democratic values shared by the nations of Europe,' the statement noted. It also urged the Belarusian government to 'stop persecution and abide by its international obligations'.

**In the evening of 13 November** the vice-chair of the Belarusian branch of *Amnesty International* Viachaslau Bortnik was detained near Vitsebsk railway station. The reports and materials of *Amnesty International* were confiscated from him; after a 40-minute conversation he was released. The policemen were interested about the purpose of V.Bortnik's visit to Vitsebsk and the kind of his activities.

**On 16 November** in Copenhagen the 51<sup>st</sup> session of PA NATO adopted a resolution on Belarus. In this document they presented a critical outline of the political situation in Belarus and urged the Belarusian authorities to urgently dismiss all political prisoners, intensify the investigation of politically motivated disappearances and stop the growth of the police units in Belarus. The Northern Alliance also expressed their deep regret with the fact that the policy of the official Minsk became a serious obstacle to joining of Belarus to the European community of democratic states. The session was attended by the leader of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada Stanislau Shushkevich and Sviatlana Zavadskaia, wife of the missing cameraman of the ORT Russian TV channel Dzmitry Zavadski.

**On 26 November** in Homel the police detained Viachaslau Andreieuf from Vitsebsk initiative group of *Amnesty International* (AI) and Siarhei Razumau from its Homel group. They took part in the work of the Coordinative committee of the public initiative *Belarusian organization of Amnesty International*. The detainees were taken to a police station and kept there for more than 5 hours.

**On 28 November** Minsk City Prosecutor's Office stopped the criminal case against the well-known human rights activist, vice-chair of Belarusian Helsinki Committee Hary Pahaniaila, who was suspected in defamation of the president and high-level officials of the Republic of Belarus. The case was brought on Pahaniaila's interview to the Swedish TV that was given in November 2004. In this interview he mentioned the protraction of the investigation of the political disappearances in Belarus under the influence of the top-level officials. Then Mr Pahaniaila was accused of defamation. However, Minsk City Prose-



ctor's Office finally closed the criminal case because of the absence of *corpus delicti* in his actions.

**In the morning of 1 December** Uladzimir Malei, deputy of Malaryta District Deputy Soviet, vice-chair of Brest regional organization of Belarusian People's Front, received from the board of internal affairs of Brest Regional Executive Committee the note informing that the criminal case against him was resumed. Mr Malei was charged with libeling Kazimir Lapich, the chair of Malaryta District Executive Committee. In his suit Lapich stated that in Malei's deputy inquiry (that was later printed in *Nasha slova* informational bulletin) contained libelous insinuations against him. The deputy inquiry concerned the duty accommodation for the former chair of Malaryta DEC that remained his private property after the retirement. According to Malei, the present DEC administration made nothing to return this property to the state. Mr Malei said the case against him might have been resumed in connection with the upcoming presidential election.

**On 10 December**, the International Day of Human Rights, near the main office of KGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Nezalezhnasti Av in Minsk well-known Belarusian human rights activists Ales Bialiatki, Aleh Hulak, Hary Pahaniaila, Valiantsin Stefanovich and Aleh Zhlutka handed out the report of Adrian Severin, the special reporter on Belarus of the UN Committee on Human Rights. One of the copies was handed to the duty officer of the KGB for passing to the KGB chair Stsiapan Sukharenka. All in all, human rights activists handed out about 1 400 copies of the brochure so that people could familiarize with the problem of disappearances of well-known people in Belarus and the views of the European structures regarding this question. Workers or the law machinery watched the action, but didn't interfere with the action. Several copies of the report were handed to them as well.

**On 12 December** the organizational committee of the public initiative *Charter'97* declared to the holders of the National prize on human rights for 2005 – Mikalai Autukhovich, Andrei Klimau, Pavel Seviarynets, Siarhei Skrabets, Mikalai Statkevich and also the Union of Poles in Belarus and Iakub Kolas National Humanities Lyceum, the organizations that continued their activities despite the state pressurization. None of the mentioned persons could attend the event – all of them were either kept under arrest or served different terms of imprisonment or personal restraint.

**On 20 December** Uladzimir Vialichkin, a human rights activist from Brest, received a response (dated 22 November 2005) to his individual application, where he requested legal evaluation of the court ruling, according to which he was fined about 460 US dollars. On the International Day of Human Rights (10

December 2000) Mr Vialichkin handed out to Brest residents an official document – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which resulted in him being detained by the police and him spending 24 hours in the police station. The report was made by terms of article #167 of the Code of Administrative Violations and the following day Brest Leninski Borough Court ruled that the human rights activist be fined. Uladzimir Vialichkin did not agree to the verdict passed and filed protests with higher courts of Belarus, which, however, did not reverse the court ruling. Then he applied to the Committee of Human Rights, requesting that evaluation of this case be provided. The Committee of Human Rights in Geneva examined the materials of the case of the Belarusian human rights activist and came to the conclusion that the official authorities had violated the human rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (paragraphs 19.2 and 21 – the right to opinion and distribution of information, the freedom of peaceful assembly). The Committee sent an official letter to the governmental authorities, requesting that the authorities take efficient measures to right the wrong, including reimbursement of the fine and also other payments incurred by Uladzimir Vialichkin, and report on the progress within 90 days. Also, the Committee called on the Belarusian authorities not to violate human and civil rights in the future.

**On 20 December** the Presidium of the Supreme Economic Court of Belarus with the judge Viktor Kamiankou at the head abolished all previous decisions of the inferior economic courts on the case of Belarusian Helsinki Committee and found legal the pretensions of Minsk Maskouski borough tax inspections, according to which the human rights organization had to pay about 75 000 US dollars of taxes and fines. We should demand the tax inspection attempted to impose taxes on the money that was received by the BHC from the European structures within the limits of the TACIS program and was exempt from taxes in accordance with the agreements Belarus had signed with the European structures. Th economic courts of different levels thrice took the side of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, but the forth time the tax inspection won the case. The vice-chair of the BHC Hary Pahaniaiila pointed in his speech to members of the presidium of the Supreme Court: ‘The decision of the court is unlawfull and politically motivated. That’s what I have to say, letting you punish me for discrediting if you want. This decision would lead to the liquidation of the organization, because in this case we become law-offenders.’ It’s worth mentioning that in the end of 2003 a criminal case for the alleged non-payment of the taxes was brought against the chair of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee Tatsiana Protska and the chief accountant Tatsiana Rudkevich. Later this case was stopped, but now it can be resumed.

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