

FPS Chancellery of the Belgian Prime Minister
Rue Ducale 4
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Subject: EFJ affiliates letter to European Heads of State and Government about the situation in Belarus

25 March 2021

We, the leaders of journalists' unions and associations in Europe, write to you to express our deep concern about the intensification of repression in Belarus. We send you this appeal on this 25 March, which is Freedom Day in Belarus, when the opposition annually gathers in large numbers to honour the proclamation of the Belarusian People's Republic in 1918.

Today, there are over 250 political prisoners in the country, including 11 journalists. And this is just the tip of the iceberg. Since the fraudulent presidential elections of 9 August 2020, more than 30,000 people (including 480 journalists) have been detained, with many of them subjected to torture and ill-treatment, and over 1,000 people targeted by criminal prosecution.

We urge your government:

- to demand from the Belarusian authorities the immediate release of the 11 imprisoned journalists, the withdrawal of administrative and criminal proceedings against Belarusian journalists, and the reopening of the Minsk press club;
- to appeal to the United Nations, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the European Union, so that the international community intensifies pressure and takes action in the face of constant violations of human rights and press freedom in Belarus.

Yours sincerely,

Mogens Blicher Bjerregård, President of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)

Andrei Bastunets, President of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ)

Other signatories (to be completed)