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Belarus: Human rights defender Dzmitry Salauyou sentenced to 12 days administrative detention

On 18 February 2021, human rights defender **Dzmitry Salauyou** was sentenced to 12 days of administrative detention for ‘violation of the established procedure for holding a meeting, rally, street procession, demonstration, picketing, other mass event, committed by a participant in such events.’ Two days earlier, the human rights defender was beaten and detained at his house in Kasyn village, close to Minsk.

[Dzmitry Salauyou](#) is a human rights defender and member of the Board of the Human Rights Centre Viasna (HRC Viasna). Dzmitry Salauyou has been engaged in human rights activities for more than 20 years, previously he headed the Novopolotsk branch of the HRC Viasna. Dzmitry Salauyou is one of the organizers of independent election observation in Belarus within the framework of the campaign "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections", including the elections in 2020, as well as a participant in many international independent election observation missions. The human rights defender also engages in the work of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.

On 16 February 2021 at about 7 a.m., the officers of the Interior Ministry's Main Directorate for Combating Organised Crime and Corruption (GUBOPiK) and the Special Purpose Police Detachment searched the private house of Dzmitry Salauyou as part of the investigation of a criminal case opened under Article 342 of the Criminal Code (organisation and preparation of actions that grossly violate public order, or active participation in them). The law enforcement officers broke down the front door and stormed Dzmitry Salauyou's house without prior warning and beat the human rights defender. During the raid laptops, mobile phones, documents and cash were confiscated. Dzmitry Salauyou was detained and placed in a pre-trial detention centre in Minsk district.

On 18 February 2021, the Minsk District Court found Dzmitry Salauyou guilty of ‘violation of the established procedure for holding a meeting, rally, street procession, demonstration, picketing, other mass event, committed by a participant in such events’ under Part 1 of Art. 23.34 of the Administrative Code and sentenced him to 12 days of administrative detention. According to the judge, Anzhalika Kazlova, a sculpture of the Pahonia emblem on the wall of Dzmitry Salauyou's house is considered to be a symbol of protest and could be evidence of “staging a one-person picket”. The human rights defender told the court that the sculpture was installed during the construction of the house about eight years ago. Furthermore, the historical emblem of the Pahonia was acknowledged for its historical and cultural value in Belarus in the state register .

The detention of Dzmitry Salauyou and the search of his house were part of the countrywide action carried out by the Investigative Committee on 16 February 2021. In one day, law enforcement officers in Minsk and other cities of Belarus conducted dozens of raids of offices and homes of human rights defenders and journalists, including members of the HRC Viasna, the Belarusian Association of Journalists, the Independent Trade Union REP and other NGOs. According to the data of the Investigative Committee, the searches targeted groups “positioning themselves as human rights organisations,” with the stated purpose of “establishing the circumstances of the financing of the protests”.

Since early May 2020, members of HRC Viasna have been under pressure. Eighteen members of the organisation, including many local representatives, have been arbitrarily detained and subjected to judicial harassment and arrests for their active human rights work. Five members of

the organisation and volunteers are currently in jail: Dzmitry Salauyou, [Maria Rabkova](#), **Andrey Chapyuk**, [Leanid Sudalenka](#) and **Taciana Lasica**.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the arrest of Dzmitry Salauyou and the judicial prosecution and ongoing harassment of human rights defenders and members of HRC Viasna, as it believes that they are being targeted solely as a result of their work in promoting and protecting human rights in Belarus. Front Line Defenders expresses concern that acts of reprisal against and judicial harassment of human rights defenders may have a chilling effect on the promotion and protection of human rights in the Belarus, and may threaten the creation of a safe and enabling environment in which defenders can carry out their work.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Belarus to:

1. Take all necessary measures to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of human rights defender Dzmitry Salauyou, as it is believed that the charges are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Immediately stop the judicial prosecution of Dzmitry Salauyou and harassment of him and other members of the HRC Viasna;
3. Stop the practice of detentions and judicial prosecution against human rights defenders in Belarus;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Belarus are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

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