



IAPB CONGRATULATES ALES BIALIATSKI, FOUNDER OF VIASNA, FOR WINNING THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE FOR HIS RELENTLESS FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN BELARUS

7 October 2022 - The International Accountability Platform for Belarus (IAPB) warmly congratulates Belarusian human rights defender Ales Bialiatski, the founder of our co-lead organisation Human Rights Centre Viasna, for the much-deserved honour of being awarded this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

Today, Bialiatski, who remains jailed in Belarus on trumped-up charges, received the 2022 Nobel Prize along with Russian human rights organisation Memorial and Ukrainian human rights organisation Center for Civil Liberties.

"The Norwegian Nobel Committee wishes to honour three outstanding champions of human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence in the neighbour countries Belarus, Russia and Ukraine," said Committee Chair Berit Reiss-Andersen, who called on Belarus to release Bialiatski from prison.

In its citation, the Norwegian Nobel Committee noted:

"The Peace Prize laureates represent civil society in their home countries. They have for many years promoted the right to criticise power and protect the fundamental rights of citizens. They have made an outstanding effort to document war crimes, human right abuses and the abuse of power. Together they demonstrate the significance of civil society for peace and democracy."

"Amazing news on the Nobel Peace Prize for Ales and our colleagues from Memorial and the CCL! This is an international recognition of the achievements of Ales and the human rights organizations, a message of solidarity and support for human rights values for the entire world. This award celebrates Ales' decades-long selfless struggle for human rights, democratic values, and the revival of Belarus as a nation," said Pavel Sapelko, Viasna representative on the IAPB Steering Committee.

As a human rights defender, Bialiatski has led an almost 30-year campaign for democracy and freedom. He founded Viasna Human Rights Centre in 1996 during mass protests of the democratic opposition in Belarus, to assist the detained protestors and their families, and has been its chairperson since. Since 1996, the organisation has grown to become the leading human rights organisation in Belarus. It has played a leading role denouncing and documenting human rights abuses committed in the context of fraudulent presidential

elections in 2020. Bialiatski was jailed from 2011 and 2014 on a charge of tax evasion, which he always denied, and has been in prison since 2021 on the same charge.

Kate Vigneswaran, Head of the IAPB, said:

“Ales Bialiatski has devoted his life to promote democracy and human rights in Belarus, and for this work, he and other members of our co-lead organisation Viasna have paid a high price. We are honoured and deeply committed to continue to be working with Viasna in documenting crimes under international law in Belarus, so these crimes won’t remain unaccounted for. We also echo calls for Belarus to immediately release Ales Bialiatski and all the other Viasna members who remain unlawfully in prison.”

On 29 September, Viasna received the Justice for Democracy Defenders Award from the Clooney Foundation for Justice “for fearlessly and professionally documenting human rights abuses and defending freedom in Belarus.” Alina Stefanovic accepted the award on behalf of her husband Valiantsin, the Deputy Chairman of the group who is currently in prison in Belarus.

Six Viasna members have been detained on trumped-up charges, both of the organisation’s leaders are in jail, and many of their members have been forced to go into exile. The most recent sentences against members of Viasna were handed down on 6 September 2022, where two volunteers of Viasna received lengthy prison sentences in a closed trial.

For more information, contact:

English: Kate Vigneswaran, Head of the IAPB, on kavi@dignity.dk

Belarusian/Russian: Victoria Federova, Representative, International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus (IAPB co-lead) and Head, Legal Initiative: gomellawyer@gmail.com

Belarusian/Russian: Pavel Sapelko, Representative and Lawyer, Human Rights Centre “Viasna” (IAPB co-lead): p.sapelko@gmail.com

Danish: Therese Rytter, Legal Director, Dignity (IAPB lead): TR@dignity.dk