

Stockholm, 3 April, 2008

Open letter to Mr. Alyaksandr Lukashenka, President of the Republic of Belarus

Dear Mr. President,

We would like to express our serious concern regarding the trial against Ms Katsyaryna Salauyova, that is to be held on April 8 in Polatsk.

The criminal case brought against Ms Salauyova is based on Article 193-1 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus. Article 193-1 makes it a crime to take part in activities within the frames of a non-registered organisation.

Already when adopted, Article 193 was heavily criticized by human rights organisations within as well as outside of Belarus, as there were strong reasons to believe that it could be used as a tool to suppress legitimate political opposition. Experience shows that this fear was well-founded. Up till now 13 young persons have been charged under Article 193, all of them in processes that clearly must be regarded as politically motivated.

Article 193 undoubtedly contradicts the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, where freedom of association is guaranteed. Furthermore, it is incompatible with the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (article 22), which has been signed and ratified by the Republic of Belarus.

Therefore, we urge You to eliminate Article 193 from the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus immediately, and to make sure that neither Ms Salauyova, nor anybody else, risks being punished for using their constitutional right to freedom of association.

Yours sincerely,



Martin Ugglå
Chairperson
Swedish Initiative for
Democracy and Human Rights



Sofia Ugglå
Chairperson
Swedish Initiative for
Democracy and Human Rights