Mr Andrey Shved

Prosecutor General of the Republic of Belarus

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Dear Prosecutor General,

Having been alerted by ACAT-Luxembourg (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture), affiliated to FIACAT (an international NGO in consultative status with the United Nations), I am writing to express my deep concern at the widespread and serious human rights violations currently being committed in Belarus. I am particularly alarmed at the violations against thousands of opposition activists, journalists, bloggers and peaceful protesters, as well as simple by-standers, during the demonstrations that followed the widely contested results of the presidential election of 9 August 2020 and in their aftermath.

I am deeply concerned, in particular, at the imprisonment of taxi driver **Viachaslau Rahashchuk**, who is suffering from serious medical conditions that have resulted from torture and other ill-treatment in detention. On 10 August 2020 he was violently and arbitrarily arrested by at least five police officers while walking with his sister and her 12-year-old son in Pinsk. On 11 August, one of Rahashchuk’s cellmates told his mother that her son had been very badly beaten by prison officers, with bruises to his head and spine. His family’s repeated requests for him to be examined by an independent doctor have been declined, and he is not receiving the medical treatment he urgently requires. On 30 April 2021 Viachaslau Rahashchuk was sentenced to six years in a strict regime colony under Article 293 Part 2 of the Belarusian Criminal Code (participating in mass riots). In his appeal hearing on 6 July, his sentence was upheld.

I am also concerned about the repeated imprisonment of **Aliaksandr Kazlianka**, an activist and member of the Free Trade Union in Brest. On 2 March 2021, he was arrested again and his home was searched. Charges were brought against him under Article 342 (organising or participating in group actions grossly violating public order) and Article 285 (forming or participating in a criminal organisation). The first charge reportedly related to a 2018 road blockade against the construction of a battery factory. However, according to reliable sources, he did not even take part in that protest. He is currently detained in Pre-trial Detention Centre No 1, in particularly harsh conditions of detention.

In the light of the above, I urge you:

* in line with your country’s obligations under the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**, to order the release of Viachaslau Rahashchuk and Aliaksandr Kazlianka immediately and unconditionally as they have been detained in the exercise of their right to freely express their opinions, and to drop charges against them and ensure their right to a remedy for unfounded criminal prosecution;
* to comply with your country’s international obligations under the **UN Convention against Torture** and carry out prompt, independent and impartial investigations into the allegations of torture and other ill-treatment against Viachaslau Rahashchuk;
* to order the release of all other political prisoners and all individuals detained in connection with their exercise of freedom of peaceful assembly in the post-election period in Belarus.

Yours sincerely,

Name :

Address :

Signature