

13 April 2021

### **Belarus: Detention of woman human rights defender Tanya Hatsura-Yavorska**

On 8 April 2021, the detention of woman human rights defender **Tanya Hatsura-Yavorska** was extended for a further 10 days, while the charges pending against her remain unknown. On 5 April 2021, the woman human rights defender was detained following a search of her office and home, carried out by law enforcement officers on suspicion of “education or other preparation of persons for participation in group actions that grossly violate public order, as well as financing or other material support of such activities” under Part 3, Article 293 of the Criminal Code.

[Tanya Hatsura-Yavorska](#) is a woman human rights defender and the director of the public association “Zvyano” (Link in the chain). The organization assists people in difficult life situations through fundraising and public campaigns, is involved in human rights education and advocacy. Tania Hatsura-Yavorska organises an annual human rights documentary film festival, Watch Doc Belarus, which aims to bring public attention to human rights issues in Belarus and the wider region, as well as numerous other cultural projects.

On 30 March 2021, the exhibition “The machine is breathing, and I am not”, dedicated to challenges faced by medical workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, opened in the space “Mesca” (Place) in Minsk, which Tanya Hatsura-Yavorska was involved in the organisation of. The exhibition and the “Mesca” space were forced to close on 2 April 2021 however, due to alleged violations found by the Ministry of Emergency Situations and the sanitary service. The management of the pandemic remains a politically divisive issue in Belarus, as in response to government inaction and disregard for the severity of the pandemic and its implications, civic initiatives were more efficient than state institutions in lobbying and organizing local businesses and volunteers to provide hospitals with personal protective equipment and necessary medical supplies.

On 5 April 2021, Tanya Hatsura-Yavorska was detained and placed in the Akrestina Detention center. Her house was searched as part of a criminal investigation on charges of “education or other preparation of persons for participation in group actions that grossly violate public order, as well as financing or other material support of such activities” (Part 3, Article 293 of the Criminal Code). During the search, all Tanya Hatsura-Yavorska’s electronic equipment was seized, as well as documents and money. On the same day, the office of “Zvyano”, as well as the homes of staff of the association were searched by officials from the Department of Financial Investigations. On 8 April 2021, Tanya Hatsura-Yavorska’s detention was extended for an additional 10 days. On 11 April 2021, the woman human rights defender was placed in the detention centre No.1 on Volodarskaya street, Minsk and has access to her lawyer. At the time of writing, the charges against Tanya Hatsura-Yavorska are not yet known.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the detention of Tanya Hatsura-Yavorska, as it believes that she is being targeted solely as a result of her work, promoting and protecting human rights in Belarus. Since the results of the 2020 Presidential elections were announced on 9 August 2020, there has been a significant increase in the incidents of judicial harassment and acts of reprisal against human rights defenders, their organisations and journalists from law enforcement officials in the country. Front Line Defenders expresses concern that these actions may have a chilling effect on the promotion and protection of human rights in Belarus, and may be uncondusive to 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 Tanya Hatsura-Yavorska and guarantee her physical and psychological security and integrity;
2. Immediately drop all charges against Tanya Hatsura-Yavorska as it is believed that they are solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
3. Stop the practise of judicial prosecution of human rights defenders providing help to the detained peaceful protesters;
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.

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