

20 January 2021

Belarus: Andrei Alexandrov arrested on suspicion of financing protests in Belarus for paying fines of the detained protesters

On 12 January 2021, human rights defender **Andrei Alexandrov** was detained on the 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”. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus, the human rights defender is being accused of financing the protests in Minsk by the paying fines and reimbursing the costs for detention in temporary detention facilities for those detained during protests in Minsk.

[Andrei Alexandrov](#) is human rights defender and a prominent media manager in Belarus. Between 2009 and 2012 Andrei Alexandrov worked as a deputy head of the Belarusian Association of Journalists and from 2014 to 2018, he was the deputy director of the BelaPAN news agency. He has also worked for the international organisations Index on Censorship and Article 19. Andrei Alexandrov is a founder and the editor in chief of the “Belarusian Journal”. As a qualified media expert, Andrei Alexandrov has been engaged in numerous trainings for journalists and editors in Belarus and abroad, and provided consultations for several media outlets.

On 15 January 2021, the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Gennady Kazakevich stated in a video message, published on the official YouTube channel of the Ministry, that Andrei Alexandrov has been involved in “financing persons who took part in riots and other protest actions in the territory of Minsk, including by paying fines, reimbursing detention in the detention facilities...” Kazakevich claimed that the human rights defender received money from abroad to perform these payments. According to this video message Andrei Alexandrov is suspected under part 2 of article 342 of the Criminal Code for “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”. The human rights defender could face up to two years in prison if charged. On January 15, the human rights defender was arrested for two months and he is currently being held in the detention centre No.1 on Volodarskaya street.

On 12 January 2021, Andrei Alexandrov was detained as a suspect under article 342 of the Belarusian Criminal Code for “organisation and preparation of actions, grossly violating public order, or active participation in them.” His partner **Irina Zlobina** was also detained with the same status. On 14 January more than ten officers from the Department for Combating Economic Crimes of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Minsk conducted a search at the office of BelaPAN on behalf of the Department of the Investigative Committee for Minsk. During the search a dozen computer hard drives, a hard drive of a local network server, two netbooks, handwritten notes, documents and business cards were seized. As well as citing the aforementioned article 342 of the Criminal Code, the search warrant also included article 293 of the Criminal Code, which is related to mass riots.

According to the Human Rights Centre “Viasna”, since 9 August 2020, the overall amount of fines imposed on detained protesters has exceeded €530,000. Due to the high amount of fees, many human rights defenders and activists have been involved in helping peaceful protesters to pay the fines and cover other costs connected to their detention.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the detention of and accusations made against human rights defender Andrei Alexandrov. Front Line Defenders condemns the judicial prosecution of human rights defenders providing help, including assistance in paying fines, to the detained peaceful protesters. Andrei Alexandrov’s detention follows a number of acts of reprisal against and

judicial harassment of human rights defenders and journalists by the law enforcement representatives in Belarus since the results of the 2020 Presidential election were announced on 9 August.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Belarus to:

1. Take all necessary measures to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of Andrei Alexandrov and guarantee his physical and psychological security and integrity;
2. Immediately stop the judicial prosecution of Andrei Alexandrov as it is believed that it is 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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