

13 August 2020

Belarus: Detention of Yevhenii Vasyliiev and Konstantin Reutski and search at home of Taciana Reviaka

On 12 August 2020, Ukrainian human rights defenders **Yevhenii Vasyliiev** and **Konstantin Reutski** were detained in Minsk by traffic police officers. Their whereabouts are currently unknown. Later that same day, a search was conducted at the home of Belarusian human rights defender **Taciana Reviaka**, where the two human rights defenders had been staying.

[Konstantin Reutski](#) is the Executive Director and [Yevhenii Vasyliiev](#) the coordinator of programs monitoring human rights violations for the civic movement Vostok SOS. Vostok SOS is an initiative which focuses on providing aid to people who have been exposed to violence in Ukraine, including political violence. It also monitors human rights violations in the east of Ukraine. The movement was established in 2014 as a result of the merging of human rights centre 'Postup' (Path) and human rights centre 'Diya' (Action). [Taciana Reviaka](#) is a coordinator with Belarusian Human Rights House, an initiative that unites Belarusian and Norwegian human rights organisations. Its work is focused on human rights advocacy, the protection of human rights defenders, providing support to victims of repression and education on human rights issues. It also works specifically on capacity building and empowering human rights defenders and their organisations.

On 12 August 2020, at approximately 5 pm, Yevhenii Vasyliiev and Konstantin Reutski were detained by traffic police near Victory Square in Minsk. They were detained whilst filming the brutal detention of a person for no obvious or apparent reason. The two Ukrainian human rights defenders arrived in Belarus on the morning of 12 August on a monitoring mission, and their presence there was in accordance with the law. The detention of Yevhenii Vasyliiev and Konstantin Reutski was carried out using excessive force, and since being detained, their whereabouts have been unknown.

Later the same day, investigative officers conducted a search at the home of Belarusian human rights defender Taciana Reviaka, where Yevhenii Vasyliiev and Konstantin Reutski were staying whilst on the monitoring mission. A search warrant had been issued by the prosecutor of Sovietsky district of Minsk as part of a criminal investigation opened under Article 293 of the Criminal Code, on the charges of “organisation or participation in mass riot”. The police seized the computers of Taciana Reviaka and Konstantin Reutski, and the passport of Yevhenii Vasyliiev during the search of the house.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned about the safety and security of Yevhenii Vasyliiev and Konstantin Reutski, as it has received numerous testimonies regarding the use of torture and ill-treatment of those who have been detained since the protests began in Belarus in response to the presidential election results on 9 August 2020. It also expresses its concern regarding the current situation in Belarus, where over 6000 people have reportedly been detained since Sunday. Front Line Defenders believes that Yevhenii Vasyliiev and Konstantin Reutski were detained solely in reprisal for their peaceful and legitimate human rights monitoring.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Belarus to:

1. Take all necessary measures to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of Yevhenii Vasyliiev and Konstantin Reutski and guarantee their physical and psychological security and integrity;
2. Inform the family and lawyer of Yevhenii Vasyliiev and Konstantin Reutski of the place of their detention, and allow them immediate and unfettered access to them;
3. Immediately cease all further harassment of Taciana Reviaka, as Front Line believes that the raid carried out at her home was solely as a result of his legitimate work in defence of human rights;
4. Return the documents confiscated during the raid, as they are manifestly not linked to any criminal activity;
5. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Belarus and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw attention to Article 6 (b and c): “Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: (b) As provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms; (c) To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters”, and to Article 12 (1 and 2): “(1) Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. (2) The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.”

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson

Executive Director

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