



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP
Civil Society Forum

To all participants of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

*To EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy,
H.E. Štefan Füle*

29th of August 2011

We, the participants of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, many of whom personally know Mr. Ales Bialacki during many years of joint work as honest, dedicated human rights activist serving the ideals of human rights and democracy, would like to state:

1. Ales Bialacki is innocent and therefore he must be immediately and unconditionally released.
2. Ales Bialacki, due to well known restrictions on human rights activities in Belarus, was forced to receive grants from official human-rights foundations on private accounts. All these money were justified by grant agreements, accounted and reported back to donors. It was not possible to receive these grants officially in Belarus, as Human Rights Center "Viasna" was closed due to their human rights activities. The closure was assessed as illegal by the UN Human Rights Committee. After the closure 3 attempts to re-register organization were prevented by official structures. Without official organizational account on Belarus, Viasna was able to continue its activity thanks to support of human rights defenders organizations from the whole world. Accusation on violation of law on taxation by possession and usage of personal accounts in EU countries for domestic HR activities is used to complicate human rights organizations' activities in Belarus. Taking into account strong cynical propaganda campaign against Bialacki carried out by official Belarus structures and anticipating the consequences of sending confidential information about bank account statements to non-democratic regime, where this information was used against human rights defenders, we warn European governments that such situation can be repeatedly used against other HR activists.
3. We turn the attention of EU countries' governments to the possibility of repeating similar actions against human rights and civil activists as well as independent journalists not only in Belarus, but also in other countries where democratic institutions and rule of law failed to become irreversible.

4. We remind that Eastern Partnership was launched for the sake of values such as democracy, human rights, transparency and accountability of governments. It was supposed that EaP programs would enhance spreading of humanistic values throughout Europe. The establishment of Civil Society Forum would serve increased cooperation among EU democratic governments and those countries that are on the way to build democracy. We feel that it is necessary to involve civil society structures in the shaping of ways of communication between governmental officials of EU / EU countries and Belarus. The proposals on obligatory participation of CSOs in all the four platforms of EaP were expressed by CSOs at the beginning of EaP.

5. The civil society organizations demand immediate release of Mr. Bialacki from the prison and cancellation of case against him. This case has clearly political dimension. EU member states should share responsibility for Ales Bialacki's destiny. In our opinion, this precedent should be also taken into account for correction of EU policy towards Belarus as a part of EaP program. We feel that it is necessary simultaneously put all efforts through actions to free Mr. Bialacki and other political prisoners, which should not be present in countries which signed Joint Declaration on establishing of Eastern Partnership.

Signatures:

1. *Tevan Poghosyan, International Center for Human Development*
2. *Iulia Kharashvili, Chairperson, IDP Women Association "Consent"*
3. *Vache Kalashyan, UAGE president, "Union of Armenian government employees" NGO*
4. *Viktoriiia Gnatenko, All-Ukrainian Liberal Youth Organization 'European Youth of Ukraine'*
5. *Artak Kirakosyan, General Secretary FIDH, Chairman of the Board, Civil Society Institute*
6. *Vytis Jurkonis, Eastern Europe Studies Centre (Vilnius, Lithuania)*
7. *Oksana Voloshenuk, Academu of Ukrainian press Director*
8. *Andriy Kohut, Civic Assembly of Ukraine*
9. *Tamara Mackievic, National Public Association "Belarusian School Society"*
10. *Sergey Varankevich, Youth NGO 'Civil Forum', Belarus*
11. *Tatiana Poshevalova, Centre for Social Innovations, Belarus*
12. *Dzianis Melyantsou, Tatiana Kuzina, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies*
13. *Dmitrij Karpievich, Education Centre "POST", Belarus*
14. *Olga Dzhuzha, Integration and Development Center Simferopol, Ukraine*
15. *Nouneh Sarkissian, Internews Armenia*
16. *Armine Tukhikyan, Urban Foundation*
17. *Ion Manole, Promo-LEX Association*
18. *Mr. Ucha Vakhania, MD Executive Director, Coalition Homecare in Georgia*
19. *Antonita Fonari, Executive Director of Resources Centre "Young and Free"*
20. *Ilgar Ibrahimoglu, DEVAMM*
21. *Wojciech Przybylski, Res Publica Nowa, Poland*
22. *Leonid Litra, IDIS, Moldova*
23. *Philipp Dietachmair, European Cultural Foundation, The Netherlands*
24. *Viktor Yengibaryan, European Movement, Armenia*

25. *Petru Botnaru, President NGO "Terra-1530", Editor publication "Adevarul" (Truth)*
26. *Ivan Gerevich, ADVANCE Transcarpathian Advocacy and Development Centre*
27. *Boris Navasardyan, President, Yerevan Press Club*
28. *Vera Rihackova, Senior Research Fellow, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy*
29. *Dr. Iris Kempe, Director, Heinrich Boell Foundation – South Caucasus*
30. *Antonella Valmorbida, Director, ALDA*
31. *Jeff Lovitt, Executive Director, PASOS (Policy Association for an Open Society)*
32. *Avetik Ishkhanyan, Chairman, Helsinki Committee of Armenia*
33. *Nino Lapiashvili, Director, Institute for European Studies, Tbilisi State University*
34. *Ivan Voleš, The European Economic and Social Committee*
35. *Ulad Vialichka, International Consortium EUROBELARUS*
36. *Elena Tonkacheva, Olga Smolianko, Galina Cherepok, Aleksei Kozliuk, Mikhail Matskevich, Elena Kovaleva, Olga Domorad, Mikhail Pashkevich, Oleg Fedotov, Legal Transformation Centre, Belarus*
37. *Olga Karatch, Centre of Civil Initiatives "Our House"*
38. *Aleksander Adamiants, Centre of European Studies, Belarus*
39. *Dina Shavtsova, Civil Initiative "For Religious Freedom"*
40. *Siarhei Drazdouski, Enira Bronitskaya, Office on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Belarus*
41. *Andrei Yahorau, Centre for European Transformation, Belarus*
42. *Uladzimir Matskevich, Humanitarian Technologies Agency*
43. *Irina Sukhy, Public Association "Ecohome"*
44. *Antonina Yelistratova, Youth association "Next Stop — New Life"*
45. *Miraslau Kobasa, Enlightening Public Association "Leu Sapieha Foundation"*
46. *Vlad Kobets, European Belarus Civil campaign*
47. *Olga Stuzhinskaya, Office for a Democratic Belarus (Brussels)*
48. *Iryna Vidanova, 34 Multimedia Magazine*
49. *Iryna Zhykhar, National Public Association "Belarusian Organization of Working Women"*
50. *Aliaksandr Milinkevich, Alaksandr Łahviniec, Yuras Hubarevich, Movement for Freedom, Belarus*
51. *Ihar Lalkou, Belarusian Popular Front "Adradzhenne"*
52. *Yaroslav Bekish, Nastasia Haliak, Green Alliance-Belarus*
53. *Maryna Adamovich, wife of political prisoner, ex-candidate for presidency Mikalai Statkevich*
54. *Oleksandr Sushko, IEAC Research Director, Ukraine*