



Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE NON GOUVERNEMENTALE AYANT STATUT CONSULTATIF AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES, DE L'UNESCO,
DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE ET D'OBSERVATEUR AUPRES DE LA COMMISSION AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DES PEUPLES

International Federation
for Human Rights

Federación Internacional
de los Derechos Humanos

الغدرالية الدولية لحقوق الانسان

OPEN LETTER

**Open Letter to
Mrs. N. Pyatkevich, Deputy Head Secretary to the President of Belarus,
Mr. S. Martynov, Minister of Foreign Affairs,
and Mr. V. Golovanov, Minister of Justice**

Paris, January 28, 2009.

FIDH wishes to express its very serious concern regarding the recent drafting of political and civil organisations' activists into the Belarus army, following the reversal of earlier decisions declaring them medically unfit for military service. FIDH believes that these recent drafts into the army are directly linked to their militant activities, and recalls that these activists have faced other forms of harassment in the past.

According to information received from Viasna Human Rights Center, members of the Belarus Popular Front party Zmitser Zhaleznichienka, Vital Karatysh, Ales Kalita have been 'drafted into army on the initiative of the secret services'. Also, there were attempts to call up activists of "Young Front" Zmitser Khvedaruk, Paval Kuryianovich, youth activists Fiodar Charankou, Paval Batuyeu, Artsiom Zabaryn, Ales Krutkin, activist Uladzimir Siarheyeu, as well as students of Kastus Kalinouski education program and European Humanities University studying abroad.

FIDH is particularly concerned for the fate of **Franak Viachorka**, leader of the unregistered organisation « BPF Youth », the youth wing of the Belarus Popular Front political party, and of **Ivan Shyla**, deputy head of the Solihorsk branch of the youth opposition movement « Young Front ». In both cases, the young men have been first compelled to give up their studies. Belarus legislation provides that young people are entitled to complete their studies before beginning their mandatory military service. And in both cases, they were originally declared unfit to serve in the army on medical grounds, but their cases were reviewed through a partial medical examination by the army which concluded that they are apt to do their compulsory military service.

On 16 January 2009, **Franak Viachorka** was forcibly taken to the military recruitment office by people in civilian clothes who failed to decline their identity, beat him up and handcuffed him. There, the recruitment committee had concluded that he was fit for military service. He was handed his conscription to join the army on 26 January. Mr. Viachorka has lodged a claim that is presently waiting to be heard in the court of appeal.

On February 18, 2008, Mr. Viachorka was expelled from university (he was a third-year student in the faculty of journalism and he had so far obtained excellent grades) on the grounds that he had failed to attend two exams a month earlier. At the time of these exams, he was serving an administrative sentence of 15-days arrest. Officially charged of using offensive words in the vicinity

of a police station, he had been arrested on January 16, 2008 during the trial of a fellow young activist in Minsk. On June 28, he has been placed on a list of persons not entitled to leave the country. Mr. Viachorka had been declared unfit for military service in July and early September 2008 in accordance with two distinct diagnosis. Towards the end of September 2008, the regional medical commission of the army sent him to the military hospital N 432 for a new medical assessment. During his stay at the hospital, he was repeatedly denied access to his medical records.

Ivan Shyla was arrested near his home on 12 January 2009 and conducted to the military recruitment office to appear before a medical commission that concluded he was fit for military service. Mr. Shyla had been declared unfit for the army in November 2008.

In 2007, Mr. Shyla was charged with participation in an illegal organisation. In June 2008, he was expelled from secondary school the day before his last final exam because of his 'active public work'. In a declaration he wrote on 19 January 2009, he reiterated his previous calls upon the authorities to respect his right to education, and to give him the possibility to finish secondary school by allowing him to present his last exam this year.

FIDH considers that, in both cases, the right to education of the young activists have been violated.

FIDH calls upon the authorities of Belarus :

- to respect the right to education of all its citizens, regardless of their political and civil activities;
- to provide an impartial and independent medical evaluation of all persons to be drafted into compulsory military service;
- to put an immediate end to all forms of harassment of activists from youth organisations

Yours respectfully,



Souhayr BELHASSEN, President