

Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders and the Appalling State of Fundamental Freedoms in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Presented by the Centre for Human Rights « Viasna », Belarus

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), meeting at its XXXVIIIth Congress in Yerevan, Armenia,

Considering the violent attack sustained in February 2010 by a human rights defender in the *Russian Federation*, adding to the dramatic series of assaults against Russian human rights defenders in 2009, which led to the deaths of five of them: Natalia Estemirova, Stanislav Markelov, Anastacia Baburova, Zarema Sadulayeva and Alik Umar Dzhabrailov;

Considering the violent attack sustained in February 2010 by a human rights defender in *Uzbekistan*;

Considering the arbitrary detention of three human rights defenders in late March 2010 for holding a peaceful protest in *Belarus*, as well as the extension in early March 2010 of the arbitrary detention of a human rights defender in the *Russian Federation*, echoing that of nine members of FIDH member organisation Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU), who have been in detention for years suffering from critical health conditions;

Considering that these events take place amid flagrant human rights violations in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region;

Considering that such violations generally occur in a context of general impunity, in which no effective investigations are carried out and in which those responsible for abuses remain unsanctioned;

Considering that the methods used by the authorities of the region to curb freedom of expression and the enjoyment of other fundamental rights are increasingly pernicious: obstacles to freedom of assembly and association, such as the arrests on 31 March following peaceful gatherings in the *Russian Federation*; judicial harassment; arbitrary detention; stigmatisation of defenders, critical voices and opponents;

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), meeting at its XXXVIIIth Congress in Yerevan, Armenia, recommends

To the authorities of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, in particular Belarus, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan:

- to carry out immediate, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into the attacks against and obstacles facing human rights defenders, the result of which must be made public, in order to bring all those responsible before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal and apply penal, civil and/or administrative sanctions as provided by law;

- to put an end to any act of harassment, including at the judicial level, against human rights defenders, and ensure in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without hindrance or fear of reprisals;

- to release immediately and unconditionally human rights defenders currently arbitrarily detained considering that their detention is arbitrary as it aims at sanctioning their human rights activities;

- to comply more generally with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1998, as well as with other international and regional human rights instruments;

To the Commissioner of Human Rights of the Council of Europe, the OSCE Focal Point on Human Rights Defenders, the EU and the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders

- to call for the opening of effective investigations into the attacks against human rights defenders and for the sanctioning of all those responsible in Eastern European and Central Asian States;

- to call for the end of any form of harassment, including at the judicial level, against human rights defenders in Eastern European and Central Asian States;
- to call for the release of human rights defenders currently arbitrarily detained in Eastern European and Central Asian States;
- to act in close coordination in order to achieve tangible results