



**Aliaksandr (Ales) BIALIATSKI**

**Vice-president**

**President of the Viasna Centre for Human Rights**

**Profession:** Writer and activist

**Nationality:** Belarusian

**Date and place of birth:** 25 September 1962, Karelia (USSR)

**Languages:** Belarusian, Russian, English

**Areas of expertise:** *Eastern Europe, totalitarianism, prisoners of conscience*

Degree from the faculty of history and philology of the University of Gomel in 1984, he concluded his postgraduate studies at the Literary Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Belarusian SSR in 1989. From 1989 to 1998 he was director of the Maxim Bogdanovitch literary museum. He is a Member of the Belarus Union of Writers and was one of the founders of the Association of Young Writers *Touteichyia* (People from here), of which he was director from 1986 to 1989. Since the early 1980s he has been active in the democratic movement and organized the first public demonstrations against totalitarianism. He was arrested for the first time in 1988 and has been arrested more than 25 times since. He was one of the founders of the Belarusian Martyrologue history society (1988).

Since 1996 he has been chairman of the Viasna Centre for Human Rights. In 1998 he became editor of the Right to Freedom human rights bulletin. From 2000 to 2004 he led the working group of the Assembly of Non-Governmental Democratic Organizations, which includes more than 500 Belarusian NGOs.

On 4 August 2011 Ales was arrested for 'tax fraud', a pretext for the authorities to rid themselves of someone who had become too much of an embarrassment. Having been deprived of official registration since 2003 Viasna could no longer receive foreign funding through a Belarusian account. So in order to secure financing for the activities of the centre Ales decided to open accounts abroad in his name while keeping strict control over the sums paid out. He was sentenced to four and a half years' hard labour in a penal colony and his property, including some Viasna premises, were confiscated.

Ales is the author of several publications, including *Literatoura i natsia* (Literature and nation), Minsk, 1991, and *Probejki po beraze Geneuskaga vozera* (Jogging on the shore of Lake Geneva), Bialystok, 2006.

He has received several human rights awards : the Andrei Sakharov Freedom Award (Helsinki Committee of Norway, 2006), Homo nomini (Czech Republic, 2006), Per Anger Prize (Sweden, 2006) and Treno della memoria (Italy, 2007). In 2007 he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Aliaksandr Bialiatski has been vice chairman of the FIDH since 2007.