Mr. Alexander Lukashenko  
President of the Republic of Belarus  
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Paris  23 July, 2012  

Open Letter To The President of Republic of  Belarus Mr. Alexander Lukashenko  

Re : Demand to immediately and unconditionally release  Zmitser Dashkevich  

Excellency,  

We are writing to express our concern regarding a new investigation launched against the civil activist, head of the political organization “Youth Front” Mr. Zmitser Dashkevich who was sentenced on 24 March, 2011 to 2 years of imprisonment in a high-security colony No.13 in Hlybokaye and who is expected to be released on December 18, 2012. 

Reportedly the administration of penal colony No. 13 of Hlybokaye  has submitted to the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Belarus the case file to initiate an investigation and possible criminal prosecution under Par. 1 Art. 411 of the Criminal Code (malicious disobedience of the administration of a penal colony). As a result, Zmitser Dashkevich faces up to one year of imprisonment. 

Independent observers and analysts have concluded that the investigation, trial, and appeal of Mr. Dashkevich's case were marred by with fundamental violations of the laws of the Republic of Belarus and of international human rights standards. The charges had not been properly verified during the trial and the materials presented during the hearing suggested Dashkevich's guilt was not proven. Besides, was mentioned a number of procedural violations during the investigation, which deprived the defendants of crucial evidence, e.g. there were abuses in the record of seizure and the medical examination.
Moreover, his lawyer insisted that there were divergences in the testimonies provided by all the witnesses and the victims, therefore they should be treated critically. These flaws have had a profoundly negative effect on your country's standing in the international community.

During his imprisonment Mr. Dashkevich has been repeatedly subjected to pressure and torture by the administrations of the penal facilities where he was held. In particular, he was repeatedly placed in a punishment cell.

We urge you to put an end to any kind of harassment - including at the judicial level against Mr. Dashkevich as well as against all civil activists and to ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by the Republic of Belarus.

**FIDH and its organisations urge you to:**

- put an end to harassment and prosecution of Zmitser Dashkevich, including attempts to further isolate him through using Art. 411 of the Criminal Code;
- immediately and unconditionally release him and more generally other political prisoners in Belarus;
- respect and protect the rights, guaranteed by the Belarus Constitution, and international and regional standards binding upon Belarus.

I strongly hope that you will take these requests and considerations into account.

Yours sincerely,

Souhayr Belhassen
FIDH President