



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Declaration CONF/PLE(2014)DEC1

adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 26 June 2014

Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Europe

The Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) of the Council of Europe:

Following with attention the evolution of the situation of human rights defenders in Europe;

Referring to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on Council of Europe action to improve the protection of human rights defenders and promote their activities (adopted on 6 February 2008) and the Resolutions of the Parliamentary Assembly 1660 (2009) and 1891 (2012) "Situation of human rights defenders in Council of Europe member states" (adopted on 28 April 2009 and 27 June 2012 respectively);

Recalling its own Recommendations CONF/PLE(2009)REC5 and CONF/PLE(2012)REC2 "Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Russian Federation" adopted on 28 January 2009 and 27 January 2012 respectively, as well as Resolutions concerning Civil Society in Belarus CONF/PLE(2011)RES4, CONF/PLE(2012)RES1 and CONF/PLE(2012)RES3 adopted on 4 October 2011, 27 January 2012 and 27 June 2012 respectively;

Underlining the invaluable importance of personal engagement in the defense of human rights and the rule of law and the threats under which numerous human rights defenders are working in many European states;

Welcomes the release on June 20 of the renowned Belarusian human rights defender Mr Ales Bialiatski, head of the Human Rights Center "Viasna", vice-president of International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), member organization of the Conference, and holder of the PACE Václav Havel Human Rights Prize of 2013, who spent almost three years in prison for his legitimate human rights activities;

At the same time stresses that the overall situation with human rights in Belarus has not significantly improved over the last years and needs to be a continued issue of attention and concern of all the international human rights institutions;

Views with extreme concern the other cases of human rights defenders being imprisoned for their human rights activities in different European states, including those who, like Ales Bialiatski, have cooperated with various Council of Europe institutions. In this respect

especially notes the case of Anar Mammadli, head of the prominent watchdog Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre, imprisoned for 5,5 years in Azerbaijan, who has closely cooperated with the PACE Rapporteur on the subject of "Follow-up to the Issue of Political Prisoners in Azerbaijan";

Considers such incidents of reprisals for cooperation with the Council of Europe bodies as posing threat not only to liberty and physical integrity of those individuals and their ability to continue their legitimate activities in defense of human rights and the rule of law, but also to credibility and efficiency of the organisation itself;

Decides to revisit these issues at the next session and to come up with specific proposals for action to be taken on the matter by the Council of Europe bodies.

This declaration was proposed by the Working Group on Human Rights Defenders from the Human Rights Committee