



Extrait du FIDH - Worldwide Human Rights Movement

<http://fidh.org/Andrei-Pochobut-released>

Andrei Pochobut released, repression continues

- [english] - Eastern Europe & Central Asia - Belarus -

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Description :

2 July 2012 - Paris: FIDH notes with satisfaction the release from detention of Andrei Pochobut, Deputy Head of the Union of Poles of Belarus and prominent journalist with the Polish newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza. However, FIDH deplors the fact that arbitrary charges against him were not dropped, nor was his 5 July 2011 suspended sentence rescinded. FIDH is also seriously concerned by the intensification of repressive practices on the eve of Belarus's Independence Day on July 3.

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Andrei Pochobut was released on 30 June 2012 following a change in his custodial status, though he is not permitted to leave the city of Grodno until his trial. On 21 June, Pochobut was arrested and charged under Article 367.2 of the Criminal Code, reportedly for having libeled President Lukashenko in articles published on "Charter97" and "Belarusian Partisan" websites. Pochobut is already serving a three-year suspended sentence pursuant to a verdict by Grodno Leninski District Court on 5 July 2011 on the same charges, and for which he was detained for three months; he could thus receive a sentence of up to seven years imprisonment.

On 27 June 2012, the Union of Poles in Belarus's offices in Grodno were searched. These offices were officially rented in Pochobut's name. Officers, allegedly looking for anti-government documents and subversive literature, confiscated computers and documentation for examination by the authorities investigating Pochobut's case.

Whilst Pochobut's release is a positive step it must be followed by the dropping of the charges against him. The judicial harassment of activists on the eve of the Independence Day showed that the repressive trend in Belarus continues. In the last few days, several young activists have been arrested and detained on charges of "minor hooliganism". For instance, Vitaliy Vasilkov was arrested and charged on 30 June under Article 17.1 of the Administrative Code for having allegedly participated in a fight on 21 June, despite the fact that he was not present in the country that day as he was sitting an exam in Russia.

FIDH condemns the Belarusian authority's attempt to silence all dissenting voices in advance of the Independence Day celebrations, and urges Belarusia to:

- ▶ drop all the charges against Pochobut and cease all further harassment against him immediately;
- ▶ stop all forms of harassment and persecution against journalists, human rights defenders, and opposition activists immediately;
- ▶ immediately release all political prisoners; and
- ▶ respect freedom of expression and conscience as guaranteed by the Belarusian Constitution and international and regional standards binding upon Belarus.