



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **On the Political Prisoners in Belarus**

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Courtney Austrian  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 9, 2023

The United States condemns the unjust verdict announced on March 3 by a Minsk court in the cases of the Vyasna human rights organization's ChairNobel Laureate Ales Bialiatski, Vice Chair Valiantsin Stefanovich, and its attorney Uladzimir Labkovicz, and calls on Belarusian authorities for their immediate and unconditional release, as well as the release of the more than 1,400 other political prisoners held in Belarusian jails. Mr. Bialiatski and his colleagues have demonstrated their decades-long commitment to protecting human rights and promoting democracy in Belarus. The United States commends the remarkable work of Belarusian human rights defenders like Vyasna – which was awarded the Democracy Defender Initiative award in 2020 for its efforts to defend and promote democracy and human rights in the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act - and stands by the Belarusian people in their pursuit of democracy and respect for human rights in Belarus.

The United States also condemns the March 6 verdicts following politically-motivated trials in absentia of Belarusian democratic opposition leader Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya and four other opposition figures -- Pavel Latushka, Maria Maroz, Volha Kavalkova, and Siarhei Dyleuski. They were given sentences ranging from 12 to 18 years of imprisonment in response to their peacefully exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to advance democracy in Belarus.

The United States calls on Belarusian authorities to cease all politically-motivated prosecutions and to end the repression of all Belarusians. The United States remains committed to supporting the will of the Belarusian people that Belarus retain its political independence as well as their aspirations for a democratic, and peaceful future for their country.

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