**Mr. Oleg Slizhevsky**

Minister of Justice of the Republic of Belarus

10 Kollektornaya St.

Minsk 220004

Republic of Belarus

E-mail : kanc@minjust.by

Dear Mr. Slizhevsky,

As a member/supporter of ACAT-Italia, the Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture and the Death Penalty, affiliated to FIACAT (International Federation of ACATs), an NGO in Participative status with the Council of Europe and Consultative Status with the United Nations, I am writing to you regarding the situation of

**Leanid Sudalenka, Tatsiana Lasitsa and Maria Rabkova,**

all working or volunteering for the *Human Rights Center Viasna*. These three human rights defenders are currently detained in pre-trial centres in Homiel, respectively in Minsk and are being investigated, apparently in relation with the demonstrations that take place in Belarus. Lawyer Leanid Sudalenka is charged under art. 342 and volunteer coordinator Maria Rabkova under article 293.3 of the Belarus Criminal Code. They could face up to three years in prison, solely for having peacefully exercised their work as human rights defenders or supporters, and their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

Belarus is a Party to the UN Convention against torture and to the International Covenant on civil and political rights (ICCPR) and, as such, is bound to respect the provisions of those treaties, in particular the rights to liberty and security of a person, the right to hold opinions without interference and the right of assembly, as well as the right to be protected from any act of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

I therefore urge you to:

* guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Leanid Sudalenka, Tatsiana Lasitsa and Maria Rabkova as well as all human rights defenders in Belarus;
* immediately and unconditionally release Leanid Sudalenka, Tatsiana Lasitsa, Maria Rabkova and all other human rights defenders arbitrarily detained because of legitimate human rights activities;
* put an end to all acts of harassment - including at the judicial level - against Leanid Sudalenka, Tatsiana Lasitsa, Maria Rabkova and all other human rights defenders in Belarus, as well as all organisations engaged in legitimate human rights activities in Belarus, and ensure under any circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate activities without any hindrance and fear of reprisals.

I thank you for the attention you will give to this concern.

Yours respectfully,

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