



Brussels, 5 February 2021

#freewordsBelarus #standwithBelarus #justice4Belarus

The European Writers Council (EWC) and the European Council of Literary Translators' Associations (CEATL) call upon the Ministers of Culture of the EU Member States to take urgent steps required to end the violence and repression against writers, translators, and the independent cultural scene in Belarus.

On the International Solidarity Day with Belarus, announced by opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya for 7 February 2021, 46 authors' and 35 translators' associations from 34 countries, with a total of 200,000 members, are calling on Europe's Cultural Ministers to take decisive action.

Belarus' dictator Aljaksand Lukašenka has declared war on writers, translators, bloggers and the entire independent cultural sector. 593 writers, translators, publishers, booksellers, and also musicians, bloggers, performers and other cultural workers have become victims of human rights violations and attacks on cultural rights since the rigged elections in August 2020, as the immersive Report by the Belarusian PEN Centre shows.

Censorship, torture, violation of freedom of expression, of freedom of assembly, of the right to a fair trial: every human, legal and cultural right is systematically suspended in Belarus. The terror against free words, literature and culture follows an inhuman structure.

The PEN report, and an additional list of names available to EWC, with details of the arbitrary arrests and violations of civil and human rights, gives a depressing overview of the individual fates, the cultural organisations involved and the dismaying violence against the independent book sector. The scale of the repressions against these voices for democracy and freedom of expression is unprecedented in the recent history of Belarus.

“Writers and translators are, together with performers and musicians, among the three main target groups of the violations. They are intercepted by the Lukašenka regime's militias, intimidated and imprisoned – because they are in the front row of defending freedom of speech and civil rights, by reading poems, by singing and performing at peaceful protests”, explains Nina George, President of the EWC. “Non-state-controlled publishers are falsely accused of tax evasion, such as Hienadź Viniarski (Knihazbor Publishing House) and Andrej Januškievič (Januskievic Publishing House); and independent booksellers like Alies Jaudacha have been detained. Viniarski's and Januškievič's equipment and their new publications have been confiscated, such as Viktor Martinowich's latest novel “Revolution”. We are deeply concerned also about the authors of our EWC member, the Union of Belarusian Writers.”

“Most recently, translator Volha Kalackaja, the translator of Margaret Atwood, Virginia Woolf and Tennessee Williams, was arrested on 15 January”, says Morten Visby, President of CEATL. “The state authorities accuse Kalackaja of organizing actions against public order, but she is clearly being targeted because, as a translator, she is part of an independent cultural sector in Belarus, which helped keep cultural horizons open by translating great literature – and which the regime wants to oppress. Along with EWC, CEATL demands her immediate release.”



Among all cases, there have been at least 131 writers and literary translators. Moreover, there is information on discharges and academic mobbing at the humanitarian universities, as the PEN Belarus delegates reported to CEATL. Several tutors of translation got fired in January.

The European Writers' Council (EWC) and the European Council of Literary Translators' Associations (CEATL) demand urgent diplomatic steps required to end the violence and repression against writers, translators, and the independent cultural scene in Belarus. The European Union can no longer stand by and watch these strategies to silence the free word: This calls for solidarity on the part of all Ministers of Culture.

We request from the Ministers of Culture of the EU Member States to intervene strongly and to protest in a common statement to the ongoing violence and repression in Belarus. We appeal to the Ministers of Culture of all EU Member States to press the illegitimate Lukashenka's regime to release the political prisoners immediately.

Nina George
President of the EWC

Morten Visby
President of CEATL

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The European Writers' Council (EWC) is the federation of 46 national organisations of writers and translators in 30 countries including the EU, as well as Belarus, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, and Montenegro, representing 160,000 authors, altogether writing in 31 languages.

The European Council of Literary Translators' Associations (CEATL) is the federation of 35 member associations from 29 countries, representing 10,000 individual translators.

#freewordsbelarus-campaign 36 Presidents, Chairs and board members of 33 writers' and translators' organisations from 22 countries representing 120,000 authors, joined voices to support the democracy movement in Belarus. On 26 November, the 90th birthday of the Belarusian writer Uladzimir Karatkievich, the video reading campaign #freewordsbelarus was launched on the EWC Daily-Motion-channel.

- **Read more:** europeanwriterscouncil.com/freewordsbelarus/ and <https://www.ceatl.eu/total-crackdown-of-belarusian-culture-in-january-2021>
- **EWC on Daily Motion:** [dailymotion.com/europeanwriterscouncil](https://www.dailymotion.com/europeanwriterscouncil)
- **Read the full monitoring:** PEN BELARUS Report "With No Right To The Culture"
- **Read the documentation Voices from Belarus**, provided in August 2020 by the Union of Belarusian Writers: <https://europeanwriterscouncil.eu/voices-from-belarus/> (*content note: violence, torture*).
- **Share this document by link:** <https://europeanwriterscouncil.eu/standwithbelarus>