

ABC BELARUS INTRODUCTION

1. Who are we?

As a stable initiative, ABC-Belarus was started in August 2009 and has been pretty active since then. Before this there were just a few people who collected money from time to time only if it was needed; this was not very effective, as we were not able to get much money urgently, that's why the regular initiative was established.

Our group provides support for anarchist, anti-authoritarian, antifascist, FNB and other social activists under repression, when the problems are connected with their activity, though each case is taken into consideration individually.

We provide legal assistance, financial support for legal procedures and help with the information spread.

We raise money from the people concerned at the concerts, during general meetings or from organised solidarity tours.

2. Political surroundings in Belarus.



Belarus is a post-Soviet autocracy. The President is the head of the state and it is one and the same person from 1994 – Alexander Lukashenko. The Parliament and the National Assembly are controlled by the president. Party system is not developed. Only 15 parties are registered, half of them supports the politics of the president. The rest are nationalist or social-democratic. All the opposition parties are pro-European. The number of people who oppose the regime dropped from hundreds of thousands in 1994 to several thousands in 2010 as the dictatorship evolved. The opposition is not so

popular among the majority of the population, since it doesn't have the access to the mass media to spread alternative ideas, and fails to keep even its own members. People grow disappointed at the opposition and their methods, though they have never had enough support to overpower the president. There are 5-6 independent newspapers which were banned for several years some time ago. The elections are almost visibly falsified. More than 700 people were arrested after the presidential elections in 2010, about 50 – imprisoned for participation and organisation of mass riots. People get fired, expelled from universities for political activity. Mass events are illegal unless they are sanctioned by the authorities. Preventive arrests before mass actions are in practice. Common people don't take interest in politics and despite the fact that they don't like Lukashenko, they don't think anyone else could be better. Elderly part of the population like his rule as they think he is more similar to what they had in the USSR.

Laws:

- Membership and activity on behalf of an unregistered organisation – up to 3 years of prison
- Extremist law – the prohibition on ideas that call to the regime change (includes extremist literature, membership, founding and financing of extremist organizations)
- Defamation or humiliation of the president
- Desecration of national symbols
- Discredit of the motherland
- Press law – the ban on distributing the newspapers and magazines if they are not registered officially, most people are usually detained for spreading leaflets as well.
- The right to assemble – people must have the official permission to assemble, otherwise they are detained. It's almost impossible to get the permission for a political action.
- The Internet is controlled by the government – every Internet-cafe or a Wi-Fi network must be provide the IDs of the people who use the Internet..

Anarchists in the country emerged from the 90s and until the 2000s were active in social sphere and workers'/students' rights. At that time it was still possible to criticise the president. Later on these people somehow dropped out for personal reasons and the next wave emerged, mostly from punk scene. Western influence made it way – veganism, FNB, animal rights activists, squatters, black bloc appeared. In opposition to these practices was an anarchist organisation «Revolutionary action» which criticised lifestyle anarchism and stood up for social anarchism and direct action. Both groups developed and at some point outnumbered some opposition movements at common action against Chernobyl. It doesn't mean though that anarchists are really huge in numbers – the size is just comparable with other political groups.

3. What cases we support

Our first and the most difficult campaign is connected with the case of the attack on the Russian embassy, carried out in solidarity with the prisoners in Russia. The attack was followed by a huge wave of repression, that left about 50 people interrogated, 17 detained on suspicion and 8 people found guilty of several episodes. Now 3 of them are acknowledged political prisoners by Belarusian right-watch organisations, 3 more are awaiting the decision concerning them.

Everything started long before last September (2010). The years 2009-2010 were rich in radical actions claimed by Belarusian anarchists. Such as:

- an illegal anti-militarist march in September 2009 against a mutual Russian-Belarusian war exercise, when General Staff headquarters

were attacked with a smoke grenade.

- an attack on a Minsk casino using paint bulbs and flares as a protest against the relocation of most Russian casinos to Belarus after the law banning casinos in Russia had been passed.
- an attack on a police station in Soligorsk during the days of common action against the police (windows were broken and a flare was thrown inside)
- an attack on the Headquarters of the Trade Unions Federation on the 1st May with the statement that the state and this formal organisation use workers in their interests, and don't defend their rights, often preventing workers from cooperation with each other and organizing strikes.

and finally:

- an attack on a branch of Belarusbank as a protest against the financial system of the world (molotov-cocktails)
- an attack on the Russian embassy in Minsk as a solidarity action with Khimki arrestees on August 30, 2010, where a car belonging to the embassy was burnt.

Later, while several people were arrested on suspicion of launching the above-mentioned actions, 2 more direct solidarity actions happened:

- an attack on the detention center with the statement to set free all the detainees. The attackers set fire to a door of the detention centre.
- the KGB quarters in Bobruisk are attacked with Molotov-cocktails.

8 people were tried for these actions, 2 of them collaborated with the police and gave evidence about other guy, we do not support them. 1 person is still wanted (see 'List of prisoners').

Our main tasks for this case was to spread information, support the relatives financially and to make right-watch organisations acknowledge our guys political prisoners. We have achieved all the aims.

We also help other people who are in trouble because of their activity right now. We organise legal seminars for groups who often face the police – mostly FNB activists for now.

4. Solidarity actions

We welcome absolutely any kind of solidarity actions, this is also the opinion of the prisoners. Anything, from info-evening to burning a police car in solidarity is equally important, especially for the prisoners.

We don't have the illusion that any solidarity action may help our guys get out earlier because of the political situation. Nevertheless, we issued a Call for solidarity actions again, because the situation has slightly changed – Lukashenko is forced to

let all the political prisoners out under the EU pressure. Moreover, the actions are important for the imprisoned and for the people who are left here and cannot act, because they are being under the constant pressure of the KGB and the police (see 'Call for solidarity').

What concerns solidarity from our side – by now we can only help distributing information about foreign prisoners. The fact that we cannot organise an action without being detained and arrested (or fined) makes it almost impossible to express solidarity or support. It's not about the fear of being punished for the activity, but about the understanding of the political situation of the dictatorship we live in; the authorities can just prevent us from doing something we have to do, if they know who we are. The Belarussian anarchist movement is so weak and small now, that we have to evaluate every step for sensibility.

5. Modes of action

Here we have certain limitations of activism:

- we have to function underground: not having the spokesperson for the press, not positioning ourselves as being a part of the group, even among other anarchists, to prevent cheating. We can't organise seminars on behalf of ABC, thus losing the opportunity to spread information about the initiative and receive help from others openly.
- we can't have a bank account, as it can be arrested or frozen. The tax for the account is 12%. The account can be claimed a financing organ for the extremist group. Of course it complicates the fund-raising.

Our accomplishments:

- in spite of common hatred for anarchists among liberal opposition and dislike of the direct actions by the right-watch organisations, we were able to make them acknowledge our comrades political prisoners and demand their liberation from the EU Council. It led to the fact that 2 of them were offered to sign a petition for pardon, but they refused. Now out of more than 40 political prisoners in Belarus, about 30 are acquitted after they signed the petition.

There is a big possibility that the right-watch organisations and the EU will forget about anarchists when Lukashenko sets free all opposition leaders. That is why it is so important to make a roll of actions from Europe, so that they are not left aside.

6. Incarceration conditions

The 6 people we support are all distributed among different penal facilities. In our country it depends on how grave the offense is. The offense can be 'of no particular risk for society' – up to 2 years of imprisonment, 'misdemeanor' – up to 6 years, 'felony' – up to 12 years, 'especially grave crime' – more than 12 years of

prison. Among penal facilities the most spread are penal colonies and prisons. Penal colonies have different regimes – common, reinforced, strict and maximum security. Those who committed a misdemeanor for the 1st time go to a common regime colony, those who committed a felony of misdemeanor for the 2nd time go to a reinforced regime colony, recidivists go to strict and maximum security colonies. The difference in regime is only in the amount of benefits and rights prisoners have – that is the number of dates, the amount of food and cloths supply from the outside per year, the sum of money which prisoners can spend per month and so on. Mikalai Dziadok is in a common regime penal colony and he has the right for 3 long-term (up to 3 days) dates and 3 short-term (up to 4 hours) dates a year, 120 kilos of additional food per year and about 20 euros of expenses per month. For the violations of the rules he has already been deprived of 60 kilos of food, one short-term date and his expenses are cut to 3 euros per month for half a year; his long-term dates are cut to 1 day only.

Alexandr Frantskevich, Ihar Alinevich, Pavel Syramolatau, Artsiom Prakapenka are in a penal colony with reinforced regime and have the same conditions minus 1 long-term date and only 17 euros of expenditures. For the violations of the rules inside the colony Alexandr Frantskevich was deprived of 1 short-term and 1 long-term date. Ihar Alinevich is obliged to pay off the damage inflicted by the crime, that's why he has only 3 euros of monthly expenditures and his long dates are all cut to 1 day for the rest of his sentence.

Jauhen Vas'kovich was in a reinforced colony before, but after different rule violations he was moved to a prison.

Colonies are guarded places with different buildings – canteen, sleeping barracks, sports ground, etc., where prisoners can go outside (still inside the colony territory), meet other prisoners, work, play sports and so on. In colonies prisoners have to work, but there are some colonies where there's no production and they just hang around. A prison is a guarded building where prisoners sit in cells for 6-10 people each and have the right to walk for 1 hour a day. They don't work and can't meet other prisoners apart from their cell. Long-term dates are forbidden, 1-2 (depending on the regime) short-term dates are allowed.

Dates are allowed only for relatives. Books are allowed only from the prison library or from 2 book parcels a year (2 kg each). Radical literature and print-outs are censored.

7. The communication between prisoners and the outside world.

We usually communicate via letters and through parents who go to dates + phone calls. Prisoners seem to really lack information about the situation in the world and the movement because the letters are censored and sent back or just thrown away if they don't pass through. Nevertheless, guys seem to receive a huge amount of support from the country and abroad.

We also established a special service on our web-page that helps to send letters on-line and have them translated into Russian. We print them, and post them

with an envelope and stamps for a certain country inside. It's a pity though that we can't have our own post box for security reasons, that's why we put the address of ABC-Moscow in stead, who then e-mail the scanned answers from the prisoners to us.

8. Activity evaluation

Since 2009 we were able to manage a consolidated self-sufficient group. We were able to establish and foster links with relatives, right-watch organisations, journalists and the prisoners themselves. We are ready to organise self-study, legal support and publish own booklets. What makes us a little slow and closed is the necessity to be underground that prevents us from doing more against the repression.

SUMMARY

There are 6 political prisoners in Belarus supported by the local ABC group. All of them were arrested at the end of 2010 before the presidential elections. In the years of 2009-2010 Belarussian anarchists have become one of the most active political groups in the country. Anarchists were organizing some small illegal demonstrations, rallies and other actions. Several symbolic direct actions were held against state and capitalist institutions.

At the end of summer 2010 an attack on the Russian embassy was launched when one of the diplomats' cars was burned with Molotov cocktail. In a few days a communique appeared stating that it had been a solidarity action with those repressed in Russia in connection with the Khimki case. The day after the communique was published, the KGB and the police started arresting people, who they considered somehow connected with the anarchist movement.

Eventually **Mikalai Dziadok** and **Aliaksandr Frantskievich** faced charges, that are not connected with the Russian embassy attack, but with previous direct actions carried out by anarchists. In may 2011 Mikalai and Aliaksandar were found guilty of most of the episodes. Mikalai was sentenced to 4.5 years in a common regime penal colony and Aliaksandr – to 3 years in a colony with the reinforced regime.

Some people were forced to flee the country because of possible problems with the police and KGB. One of them, **Ihar Alinievich**, was arrested by the KGB agents in Moscow and then illegally transferred to KGB prison in Belarus. He was charged with the attack on the Russian Embassy and several more cases. In may 2011 he was found guilty and got 8 years of colony with the reinforced regime.

The initiative of comrades and friends of the arrested and detained issued a call for solidarity actions around the world with Belarussian anarchists. One of the solidarity actions was the attack on the KGB headquarters in Bobruisk city in Belarus. Unknown people attacked the building with Molotov cocktails in solidarity with the anarchists arrested in Minsk. In a few months three people were arrested and faced charges in connection with this case: **Pavel Syramolatau**, **Artsiom Prakapenka**, **Jauhen Vas'kovich**. Pavel and Artsiom called themselves

anarchists and antifascists, but it is known that Jauhen was a member of a Belarusian Christian Democracy party and a local Bobruisk cell of the Youth Front (nationalist orthodox organisation). All of them admitted the guilt. During the hearing the state prosecutor asked the judge to take into account not the actual damage that was inflicted (~40 euros) but the possible damage (~40 000 euros). The judge did so, and all of them were found guilty and sentenced to 7 years of prison in a colony with the reinforced regime. ABC-Belarus still think that it is important to support all of them as they made a solidarity action with Belarusian anarchists although not all of them are anarchists.

Ihar Alinievich experiences serious problems with communication: some of his letters can't pass the censorship, by far he only called once from the colony. The administration of the colony reduces the time of dates with relatives to 1 day and cuts on the possible amount of money that can be spent for food in the colony's shop.

Jauhen Vas'kovich was transferred from the colony to a prison because of his struggle with the prison system. He will spend 3 years of his term in a cell of prison.

Pavel Syramolatau was also punished for violations of the prison rules.

Artsiom Prakapenka was transferred to another colony and there he experienced some problems with delivering the press.

Mikalai Dziadok is having constant problems with colony authority because of breaking the rules of the colony. Currently visits are shortened, his possibility to buy some stuff in the colony shop were limited and he was deprived of getting food from the relatives.

Aliaksandr

Frantskievich is in trouble with the prison authority, as he is still considered as the person who is not on the way to correction (one of the main condition to leave a prison before the end of the term).



*Although it is not against the law to send letters in other languages than Russian or Belarusian, the prisoners seem not to receive them. You can send your letter in English, German, French to ABC-Belarus and we will be able to translate it to Russian and send it.

CALL FOR SOLIDARITY

It has been a long time since the last call for solidarity with the Belarusian anarchists appeared. Today we have to admit that the new wave of solidarity is needed urgently to help them out from the prison. That's why we call you to participate in days of action in solidarity with belarusian political prisoners from 30 june to 2 july.

The activists Ihar Alinevich, Mikalai Dziadok, Artsiom Prakapenka, Pavel Syramolatau, Aliaksandr Frantskievich, Jauhen Vas'kovich that were detained in autumn 2010 and then sentenced to 3 to 8 years of prison in May 2011 for a series of attacks on state and capital symbols are finishing their second year in jail. During this time their comrades and relatives did their best to help them feel comfortable in custody and set them free. In October 2011 they were acknowledged political prisoners by right-watch organizations. This fact gave them bigger chances to be freed as soon as possible, because at the moment the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, faces pressure from the European Union with the demands to set free all the political prisoners and decriminalize them. From August 2011 he has already pardoned more than 30 of them, but none of our comrades was granted freedom. Lukashenko said publicly, that he will pardon only those, who will write the petition for pardon, thus admitting their guilt and asking him personally for mercy. All the rest will remain in prison, he stated. In fact two comrades, Mikalai Dziadok and Alexandr Frantskevich were already asked if they want to sign the petition in August 2011, both refuses to do it. Now there are 13 political prisoners left in Belarus, among them are 5 our comrades and 1



more, imprisoned for the action of solidarity with them. We are sure that none of them will ask for mercy, because it would be a shame for an anarchist or any honest person to do so. All the prisoners are experiencing different kinds of pressure from the administration of the prisons they are held in*, because Lukashenko wants to be a winner in this situation and make it as if it is not the EU that forces him to set free the political prisoners in fear of more political and economic sanctions, but as if it is his good will to pardon them, again only if they ask for it. We strongly oppose the fact that our comrades are now traded for benefits from the EU and condemn the pressure that they experience*. We call everybody to protest against this

tortures and demand the immediate liberation of the political prisoners of Belarus, including anarchists.

We welcome solidarity actions of ANY kind starting from now on to accumulate amount of it on days of solidarity, we also ask you to make solidarity actions at least once a month if you find it possible even after the days of solidarity. We need constant pressure on the regime and the EU politicians in this situation. Let it be a non-stopping roll of action all over the world, until our comrades are free!

To know more about the attacks, visit:

<https://abc-belarus.org/?p=6&lang=en>

To know more about the sentences, visit:

<https://abc-belarus.org/?p=326&lang=en>

*The cases of pressure on the prisoners include: transfers to another penal institutions, deprivation of food supply from the outside, deprivation and cuts on the dates with relatives, deprivation of phone calls, delays and gaps in letters' supply, placing to the solitary cell, transfers to a penal facility with special regime, etc.

LIST OF PRISONERS

Anarchist prisoners of Belarus

Ihar Alinevich (28) is a Belarusian anarchist. On May 27, 2011 is found guilty of participating in the attack on the Russian embassy in Minsk, the arson of the Belarusbank, the attack on the casino "Shangri La" and the anti-militarist manifestation near the General Staff headquarters and was sentenced to 8 years of colony with the reinforced regime for group hooliganism and intentional destruction of property. Vegetarian.

IK-10, 211440, Vitebskaya obl., Novopolotsk, ul. Tekhnicheskaya, 8, otr. 12 BELARUS

Olinevich Igor Vladimirovich

Mikalai Dziadok (23) is a Belarusian anarchist. On May 27, 2011 was found guilty of the attack on the casino "Shangri La", the attack on the Trade Union Federation building and the participation in the anti-militarist manifestation near the General Staff and sentenced to 4.5 years of standard regime penal colony for group hooliganism.

IK-17, 213004, Shklov, Mogilevskaja obl., otr. 17 BELARUS

Dedok Nikolai Aleksandrovich

Artsiom Prakapenka (21) was detained on January 17, 2011 on suspicion of the attack on the KGB headquarters in Bobruisk launched on October 14, 2010 in solidarity with the anarchists arrested in September 2010. On May 18, 2011 was found guilty of intentional destruction of property and sentenced to 7 years of colony with reinforced regime.

IK-15, 212013, Mogilev, Slavgorodskoe shosse, 183 BELARUS
Artsiom Prakaapenka

Pavel Syramolatau (21) was detained on January 17, 2011 on suspicion of the attack on the KGB headquarters in Bobruisk launched on October 14, 2010 in solidarity with the anarchists arrested in September 2010. On May 18, 2011 was found guilty of intentional destruction of property and sentenced to 7 years of colony with reinforced regime.

212030, Slavgorodskoe shosse, 3 km Mogilev, IK-19 BELARUS
Pavel Syramolatau

Aliaksandr Frantskievich (23) is a Belarusian anarchist. On May 27, 2011 was found guilty of participation in the attack on the police station in Soligorsk; the attack on the Trade Union Federation building; hacking the web-page of Novopolotsk municipality and sentenced to 3 years in a colony with the reinforced regime for group hooliganism and computer sabotage.

IK-22 "Volchi nory", 225295 , Brestskaya obl., Ivatsevichski r-n, st. Domanovo, otr. 2 BELARUS
Frantskevich Aleksandr Vladimirovich

Other prisoners:

Jauhen Vas'kovich (22) was detained on January 17, 2011 on suspicion of the attack on the KGB headquarters in Bobruisk launched on October 14, 2010 in solidarity with the anarchists arrested in September 2010. On May 18, 2011 was found guilty of intentional destruction of property and sentenced to 7 years of colony with reinforced regime. Later transferred to hard regime prison for numerous rules violations.

NB! Jauhen was a member of a Belarusian Christian Democracy party and a local (Bobruisk) cell of the Youth Front (nationalist orthodox organisation).

Tyurma №4, 212011, ul.Krupskoj 99A, Mogilev BELARUS
Vaskovich Evgeni Sergeevich

*Attention! Sometimes letters aren't delivered to arrestees. And they are read by censors, so think what you write!
In some cases, only letters in Russian or Belarusian can pass through censors. ABC-Belarus can help you with translation <https://abcbelarus.org/>*