



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on recent sentencing of journalists in Belarus

The European Union is concerned about some restrictions to media freedom applied recently in Belarus. Last week 5 journalists and freelance reporters - Aliaksander Burakou Sr, Ales Asiptsow, Dzmitry Lupach, Mikhail Arshynski and Alyaksandr Burakou Jr - were detained and imprisoned for "participating in unauthorized events" in Belarus. The EU calls for their immediate release.

The EU considers free, diverse and independent media as one of the cornerstones of a democratic society. As Belarus approaches the campaign for the Presidential elections, ensuring media freedom is of particular importance.

As the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media underlined, journalists must be able to report on events of public interest such as public protests, and these decisions impede on media freedom. We echo the Representative on Freedom of the Media and call on the authorities to guarantee the right of journalists to do their jobs without fear or interference. The EU recalls that all participating States committed in 1999 in Istanbul to ensuring the freedom of the media as a basic condition for pluralistic and democratic societies and calls on Belarus to live up to its commitments. We will continue to closely follow issues related to freedom of expression and freedom of the media in Belarus.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as CANADA align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.