



H.E. Thorbjørn Jagland
Secretary General
Council of Europe
Avenue de l'Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
Sent via e-mail

Brussels, 30 March, 2017

Re: The alarming crackdown on press freedom in Belarus

Dear Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland,

We, partners of the Council of Europe Platform for the Promotion of Journalism and the Protection of Journalists, are seriously concerned by the worsening situation of journalists in Belarus and call on you to extend the platform to Belarus.

Since the beginning of March, the government has pursued a crackdown on independent media, detaining at least 90 journalists covering protests across the country.

Some of those detained were released shortly afterwards but others are waiting for court decisions. There have also been several cases of administrative warnings issued by the authorities as a method of intimidating freelance journalists. In some cases, there were acts of violence, with at least five journalists beaten by the police in Minsk over the weekend.

We believe that it is essential to raise awareness and bring attention to the significant deterioration of media freedom in Belarus and the constant intimidation of journalists. Extending the platform to Belarus would strengthen both the capacity for monitoring and awareness of the escalating situation and daily detention of journalists.

Indeed, on January 24, 2017, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted recommendations, including the proposal to include Belarus in the list of the countries addressed by Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists.

We sincerely hope you will give this recommendation due consideration.

Kind regards,

Association of European Journalists (AEJ)
Article 19 (A19)
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)
International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
Index On Censorship
International News Safety Institute (INSI)
International Press Institute (IPI)
Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF)