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BELARUS
JAILED ACTIVIST SUBJECTED TO ILL-TREATMENT

Prisoner of conscience Sergey Tihanovski (Syarhei Tsikhanouski) is a popular blogger and prominent government critic, and the husband of Belarus' exiled opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. He was arbitrarily detained in May 2020 and given 18 years' sentence under trumped-up charges. The prison administration is continuously subjecting him to punishments for false "offences" and to conditions that amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Sergey Tihanovski is being targeted for his peaceful political activism and he must be immediately and unconditionally released.

Since his transfer to Prison No.8 on 19 August 2022, he has been subjected to severe and constant punishments, such as being placed in punishment isolation cell ("Shizo") and being transferred to a prison facility with a stricter regime, purportedly for "malicious violation" of internal regulations. Moreover, according to information obtained by Amnesty International, the prison administration has purposefully exposed Sergey Tihanovski to serious risks to his safety and refused to address them by denying him protection measures he has requested. The conditions Sergey Tihanovski faces amount to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment and must urgently stop.

Write to the Head of the Department for the Execution of Punishments urging him to:

- ensure that the ill-treatment of Sergey Tihanovski stops immediately, and that he is held in conditions meeting international standards for the treatment of prisoners.
- immediately and unconditionally release Sergey Tihanovski

Write to:

Oleg Matkin

Head of the Department for the Execution of Punishments

Department for the Execution of Punishments

of the Ministry of Internal Affairs

Email: pismo_din@mia.byCC: mi.udin.oto@din.gov.by

Salutation: Dear Head for the Department for the Execution of Punishments:

And Copy:

Shidlovsky Pavel Adamovich

Chargé d'Affaires of the Republic of Belarus

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Washington, DC 20009

Fax: 1 202 986 1805

Email: usa@mfa.gov.by

Additional information

Sergey Tihanovski is a popular blogger and prominent political activist. In Spring 2020, after he announced his intention to stand in the forthcoming presidential election, he was arbitrarily arrested and given “administrative detention” which prevented him from filing his candidacy before the deadline. His wife Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya filed her candidacy instead.

On 29 May 2020, at an election picket in support of Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya as a presidential candidate, Sergey Tihanovski [was arbitrarily arrested once again, alongside seven fellow activists](#). An unfounded prosecution was launched against them. Meanwhile Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya emerged as a leading opposition candidate in the election. The incumbent Alyaksandr Lukashenka claimed victory, despite numerous well-documented and compelling reports of electoral fraud. Independent [media reported testimonies](#) by members of several local electoral who alleged that Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya received several times more votes than Alyaksandr Lukashenka. Mass protests against the disputed election outcome were crushed by police, with tens of thousands peaceful protesters arrested, and countless detainees suffering torture and other ill-treatment. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya went into exile, for fear of prosecution. Many of her close associates, including her closest companion during the election campaign [Maryia Kalesnikava were jailed](#). Hundreds of people have since been prosecuted and imprisoned following unfair trials, for their role in these protests and other peaceful dissent. Among them is Sergey Tihanovski who, on 14 December 2021, was [given 18-year prison sentence under trumped up charges](#), one of the harshest sentences against peaceful dissenters. He has since been targeted with particularly harsh treatment in prison, including penalties for purported violations. As part of the penalties imposed on him by the penitentiary administration, Sergey Tihanovski is not allowed family visits and telephone calls. He is not allowed to meet with his lawyer confidentially, read, send letters as well as receive letters and parcels. He is also not allowed to be receive warm clothes, while the cell is very cold, which put his health at further risk. As of 30 September, he had continuously spent 40 days in a punishment isolation cell (“Shizo”) in these conditions, and the term of his placement there had been repeatedly prolonged.

Amnesty International calls for Sergey Tihanovski ‘s immediate and unconditional release.