

Canadian Delegation to the  
Organization for Security & Cooperation  
in Europe



Délégation du Canada auprès de  
l'Organisation pour la sécurité et la coopération  
en Europe

**DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE  
STATEMENT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BELARUS  
712<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
8 MAY 2008**

The situation of human rights in Belarus continues to be the source of deep concern.

The long sentences recently imposed on Andrey Kim and Syarhey Parsyukevich for allegedly using violence against policemen are the latest examples of the repression meted out by the authorities in Belarus against political opponents.

Other young activists recently were sentenced to 2 years of “corrective labour” for participating in an “illegal” demonstration. Pavel Sevyarynets was fined for collecting signatures in support of changes to legislation restricting the exercise of the freedom of religion. On May Day, demonstrators again were arrested for staging a counter-demonstration to the officially sanctioned rally.

Mr. Chairman, these recent events, as well as the continued detention of Aliaksandr Kazulin, epitomize Belarus’ disregard of its OSCE commitments and its obligations to respect the human rights of its citizens. They demonstrate again that there is no real space in Belarus for people to exercise meaningfully their right to voice objections to government policies.

President Lukashenka recently said that Belarus is on the right path. We beg to disagree.

We again urge the Belarusian authorities to free political prisoners, and respect the rights of the citizens of Belarus, including the right to peaceful assembly, the freedom of association, the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right not to be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention.

And to conclude, we wish to join our voice to others in expressing our profound regret over the unjustified expulsion of US diplomats from Belarus.