



International Observation Mission  
of the Committee on International Control over  
the Situation with Human Rights in Belarus

Statement No.7

**“On disproportionate actions of the authorities  
of the Republic of Belarus in relation to the  
participants of the peaceful action on 22 June 2011  
and journalists covering this event”**

*Acting on behalf of the Committee on International Control over the Situation with Human Rights in Belarus (CIC), which unites representatives of national and international human rights organizations from the OSCE countries,*

*monitoring the overall situation with the observance of fundamental human rights in the Republic of Belarus, as well as the issues of realization of freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, journalists' protection and ensuring their professional activities;*

*emphasizing that human rights are subject to the direct and legitimate concern of the international civil society;*

*noting that the free and highly developed media are the keystone of a stable and peaceful society, and freedom of expression constitutes one of the most important foundations of a democratic society and one of the main conditions for its progress;*

*paying attention to the fact that the freedom of peaceful assembly as such is one of the forms of direct democracy and facilitates the development of dialogue both inside civil society and between the civil society, political leaders and the government;*

*urging the government of the Republic of Belarus to follow the international obligations undertaken in the field of human rights, in particular to guarantee the conditions under which journalists can work without legal or administrative restraints;*

**the International Observation Mission:**

- notes that neither in the official reports of the authorities, nor in observers' reports there is an indication that rally on June 22nd, 2011 in 40 cities in the Republic of Belarus did not have a peaceful nature;

- reminds that in accordance with international standards on freedom of peaceful assembly, police should protect all the peaceful assemblies in the same way (even if there are reasons to consider them illegal), instead of dispersing them or using force against them, as it is emphasized in the reports on the human rights situation in Belarus (including the interim assessment by the Special Rapporteur of the Committee on International Control over the Human Rights Situation in the Republic of Belarus, as well as in the report in the OSCE “Moscow Mechanism”);

- considers a situation in which during peaceful protest more than 400 people were detained (among whom there were at least 19 journalists and civil society activists, human rights activists and observers), in particular, given the evidence of the massacre of the persons detained by the security forces - a fact proving that Belarusian authorities fully ignore recommendations of international institutions to stabilize situation of human rights in Belarus;

- is particularly concerned about the reports that security forces deliberately singled out journalists among the assembly's participants for their immediate detention, as well as for damaging their photo and video equipment.

**International observation mission demands:**

- the compliance by the authorities of the Republic of Belarus with their international obligations in the sphere of freedom of peaceful assembly and guaranties on the freedom of expression through peaceful means for everyone, including by bringing current legislation of the Republic of Belarus, as well as law enforcement practices in line with international standards on freedom of assembly, in particular, embodied in the OSCE Guidelines on the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly;
- conducting an immediate investigation by prosecution authorities of the Republic of Belarus of the facts contained in the reports by Belarusian media, as well as in online resources:
  - of the detention of journalists and damage to equipment belonging to them in the context of Article 198 of the Criminal Code “Obstruction to carrying out journalist activities”;
  - of the disproportionate use of violence by the law enforcement officers against people who participated in peaceful rallies on June 22nd and those just present at that time on the square;
- bringing the law enforcement practices in the Republic of Belarus closer to the standards of the European Court of Human Rights, including those on the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, according to the position statement of the General Prosecutor of the country G.A. Vasilevich while being in the position of the head of the Constitutional Court of Belarus;
- compliance by the authorities of the Republic of Belarus with their international obligations in the sphere of freedom of the media, concerning, in particular, non-prevention of coverage of important issues and events by journalists;
- guaranties from the authorities of the Republic of Belarus to prevent similar situations in the future.

*June 23th, 2011*

**Head of the Mission  
Andrey Yurov**