

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus
vul. Lenina 19
Minsk, 220030
Belarus

Dear Minister,

I write to demand public information about prisoner of conscience Maryia Kalesnikava, who has been denied contact with the outside world for over a year and whose deteriorating health and safety are of grave concern. I am particularly alarmed that she has been kept incommunicado for over 500 days and that her imprisonment conditions amount to torture and other ill-treatment and are putting her life at risk.

As you will undoubtedly be aware, Maryia Kalesnikava was arrested on 7 September 2020 and later sentenced to 11 years in prison following an unfair trial on false charges of “extremism,” “trying to seize power,” and “calls for actions causing harm to national security.”

Since February 2023, she has been denied all contact with the outside world and has been regularly placed in punishment cells (SHIZO, PKT) for prolonged periods of time. For all this time, she has been confined to a tiny, enclosed space, not allowed communication with other prisoners, and only permitted 30 minutes a day in the prison patio.

Maryia Kalesnikava suffers from ulcer and other conditions which progress fast in these inhumane conditions and has been denied the medical care she requires.

Maryia Kalesnikava is a prisoner of conscience that must be immediately and unconditionally released as she has only used her right to assembly, association and peacefully expressing her views. She has been detained solely in reprisal for her prominent role in challenging the incumbent in disputed 2020 presidential election and in the subsequent peaceful protests.

I urge you to take immediate action to ensure that Maryia Kalesnikava is immediately and unconditionally released. In the meantime, I urge you to ensure that she is no longer held incommunicado or subjected to any form of torture or other ill-treatment, that she is granted access to adequate medical care she requires and contact with an independent lawyer and her family.

Yours sincerely,