

Defending the defenders 2021

MoP7 of the Aarhus Convention Side Event

**Dismantling of environmental
CSOs
and persecution of the defenders**

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before September 1st, 2021 – NGO Ecohome Legal advisor

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Republic of Belarus as a Party of Aarhus
Convention is famous because it's
persecution practice to environmental
activists and defenders

(MoP decision VI/8c,
Communication ACCC/C/2014/102)

Previously a subject of persecution were generally anti-nuclear campaign activists, but since 2019 also applied to journalists, bloggers and human right defenders exercising their right under Convention – usually right to decision making participation

Brest battery plant

- The longest environmental related protest activity in country – 26.01.2018 – 18.05.2020
- Totally:
 - 130 days in jail (all activists together)
 - 44821 BYN (15678 EUR) fines
 - 67 detentions.
- Also, up to 6 criminal cases are rised to persons envolved in this activity (for diffamation and other related grounds)

Legal grounds of persecution

The main legal framework for activists persecution was „administrative offence for unlawful mass event conducting” (standing with a poster, manifestation, march etc) – the same was in Bresr, Mogilev, Berezovka, Svetlogorsk.

It is not easy to get a permission for mass event in Belarus.

For example, Brest battery plant: 359 applications for mass events were submitted and only 1 event was permitted.

The New Age of persecution

Since August 2020 a new age of persecution was started applied to people who present any kind of political or social activity.

Some new persecution were applied to Brest activists – as a *Prosecutor's Caution* or administrative detention of Greens Party Chairman for *Chernobyl March* participating.

CSOs liquidation

If previous repressions were applied to persons (activists, defenders, journalists etc), this summer a CSOs became a subject of persecution.

On the 7th of October 2021:

- 251 CSOs (36 - environmental) are liquidated by courts and/or registering authorities (or still proceeding)
- + 128 CSOs (8 environmental) are pushed to self-dissolving

Thank you for cooperation

Among liquidated this summer NGOs were some well-known organizations, like Center for environmental solutions or Ecohome, which are always active in cooperation with Ministry of environment and working active for better environmental situation in country and promotion of environmental rights.

Concerning Ecohome, it was started a kind of revision by Ministry of Justice, which asked to provide some documents, after applied a *Caution* as a kind of punishment for providing in *notexpected* form (not specified by legislation), sent this Caution in a way that Ecohome has no opportunity to answer (received on July 22, but the deadline for answer was July 20) and submitted a lawsuit against Ecohome to the Supreme Court, and since August 31, 2021 Ecohome no more exist as a legal entity in Belarus

Thank you for attention ! :)



Aarhus Convention
2001 - 2021