

Statement of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Steering Committee, 30 July 2012

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Brussels, 30 July 2012

**Statement demanding the immediate release of Ales Bialiatski**

The 4th of August marks the first anniversary of the imprisonment of Ales Bialiatski, the leader of Belarusian human rights organization Viasna and vice president of the International Federation for Human Rights. This date will be marked by demonstrations throughout Europe. Prisoners in Belarusian prisons are often subject to inhuman treatment and heavy pressure to make them plead for a pardon or even confess. This is unacceptable.

We demand that Ales Bialiatski be released so that he can continue his important work for human rights in his own country, Belarus, and elsewhere. The free and unimpeded work of human rights activists such as Ales is a precondition for the progress and development of Belarusian society.

We call on the EU member states, the EU institutions and the governments of the Eastern Partnership countries to raise the question with the Belarusian government on all possible occasions and demand the immediate release of Ales Bialiatski and revocation of his sentence.

**Steering Committee, Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum**