



ALES BIALIATSKI: BELARUS

Writer, human rights defender, Nobel Peace Prize winner and PEN Belarus member Ales Bialiatski is the founder of the Human Rights Centre Viasna, a leading human rights organisation whose work and members have been repeatedly targeted by the Belarusian authorities. In July 2021, Bialiatski was detained alongside several Viasna colleagues following raids by Belarusian law enforcement officers on more than a dozen civil society and human rights organisations. He was transferred to pre-trial detention on trumped-up charges of tax evasion, and subsequently charged with smuggling and organising and financing actions that grossly violate public order. His trial opened in Minsk in January 2023. Bialiatski repeatedly asked that the prosecutor and the court conduct the trial in the Belarusian language, to no avail. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison on 3 March 2023. Six members of Viasna are currently behind bars. PEN International calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Bialiatski and Viasna colleagues, and for the verdicts to be overturned on appeal.