

Präsident
Aleksandr Lukashenko
c/o. Botschaft der Republik Belarus
S. E. Herrn Denis Sidorenko
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Dear President,

Vladislav Sharkovsky and Emil Ostrovko are two of the many young people in Belarus who were arrested as children and have been imprisoned for minor, non-violent drug-related offences, and whose cases have been a growing matter of concern in the country and internationally. You will have received multiple calls for their and others' release, and for review of Belarus' highly punitive anti-drug policies.

With the rapid spread of COVID-19 virus, their health and potentially life, and those of numerous other prisoners are at risk, and this risk is growing daily. States have a duty to review the need for continued custodial detention and should consider if the current pandemic qualifies prisoners for early or conditional release or other alternative non-custodial measures. The authorities should take into account individual circumstances and the risks posed to groups at risk, such as those with serious medical conditions and those with a weakened immune system.

In light of the above, I urge you to:

- Consider without delay and approve an early or conditional release for Vladislav Sharkovsky and Emil Ostrovko, as they are at heightened risk of becoming severely ill due to COVID-19;
- Implement a process to promptly review the need for continued custodial detention of all prisoners in Belarus who are at heightened risk due to COVID-19, including people with pre-existing medical conditions;
- Review the country's anti-drug policy and end the practice of imprisoning children for minor, non-violent drug-related offences under Article 328, and take measures to release all children and young people who were children at the time of the offence.

Yours sincerely,