



FREEDOM NOW

Honorary Chair
The Most Reverend Desmond M. Tutu

August 24, 2015

Media Release

Belarusian Politician Mikalai Statkevich Released From Prison

Washington, DC: On August 22, 2015, the Belarusian government released opposition leader and former presidential candidate Mikalai Statkevich from prison almost two years before the end of his six year sentence. Five prisoners of conscience received pardons and were released from prison along with Mr. Statkevich. Their release came the day after the deadline for presidential candidates to file paperwork to run in the upcoming October election.

“We are relieved Mr. Statkevich is free, however Belarusian citizens still face restrictions on their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly,” said Freedom Now’s Executive Director Maran Turner. “We call on President Lukashenka to respect the fundamental rights of Belarusian citizens and allow them to participate in peaceful protests without fear of imprisonment.”

Mr. Statkevich is a politician and former leader of the European Coalition Free Belarus. He ran as an opposition candidate in the 2010 presidential election. On December 19, 2010, he joined thousands of protesters peacefully demonstrating against election fraud in downtown Minsk. Mr. Statkevich was one of hundreds of protesters arrested when police violently dispersed the protest. Following his arrest, he was placed in a KGB pre-trial prison, and later charged with “organizing mass disorder.” On May 26, 2011, Mr. Statkevich was sentenced to six years imprisonment in a high security penal colony. At various times during his detention, Mr. Statkevich’s communication with his family was restricted and he was threatened with new sanctions for violating prison rules. Most recently, he was transferred to a maximum security prison in May and placed in solitary confinement for allegedly refusing to participate in work duties.

Freedom Now served as Mr. Statkevich’s international pro bono counsel and worked with partner Hogan Lovells to file a petition with the UN Human Rights Committee on his behalf.