



## Mikalai Statkevich

### Belarus

Mikalai Statkevich is a politician and former presidential candidate, who has been wrongfully detained as a result of his peaceful struggle for free and fair elections in Belarus. Prior to his arrest, Mr. Statkevich played an active role in Belarus's pro-democracy political opposition.

In 1995, Mr. Statkevich became a member of the Central Rada and Executive Committee of The Belarusian Social Democratic Party and, after unification with the Social Democratic Party of Popular Accord, he became president of the newly created Belarusian Social Democratic Party. In 2003, he became the leader of the European Coalition Free Belarus, a political opposition coalition allied against Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenka.

Mr. Statkevich was previously detained in 2005 and sentenced to three years in prison for staging public demonstrations protesting the official results of the 2004 parliamentary elections and a referendum lifting the constitutional limit on presidential terms. He was released from prison in 2007.

In 2010, Mr. Statkevich ran as an opposition presidential candidate. Following the elections, on December 19, 2010, Mr. Statkevich 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 under Article 293.1 of the Criminal Code for "organizing mass disorder".

On May 26, 2011, the Leninski District Court of Minsk sentenced Mr. Statkevich to six years imprisonment in a high security penal colony. At trial, no proof of violent attacks during the demonstration was presented.

At various times during his detention, Mr. Statkevich's communication with his family has been restricted and he has been threatened with new sanctions for violating prison rules. On January 12, 2012, a court sentenced Mr. Statkevich to even stricter confinement conditions, and he was subsequently transferred from penal colony No. 17 in Shklou to prison No. 4 in Mahilou for being a "malicious offender of prison rules". In July 2012, he was also placed in a punishment cell for refusing to sign a confession. Mr. Statkevich's wife, Maryna Adamovich, attributes the tough measures against her husband to his refusal to apply for a pardon in protest of his innocence.

In December 2012, Mr. Statkevich was awarded the prestigious Willy Brandt Prize for his political courage. A number of organizations and governments including Amnesty International, the European Union, and the United States have called for Mr. Statkevich's release.

Mr. Statkevich received a pardon and was released from prison on August 22, 2015.

Freedom Now represented Mr. Statkevich as his international *pro bono* legal counsel.