



LIETUVOS STUDENTŲ SĄJUNGA

LITHUANIAN NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS



STATEMENT REGARDING THE SITUATION IN BELARUS

2021-05-24

The entire European student community is astonished by the news from Belarus. A fifth-year student at the European Humanities University (EHU) Sofia Sapega and journalist Roman Protasevich, were detained by the Administration of the Investigative Committee for the city of Minsk on groundless and made-up conditions after a special operation to force a civilian aircraft to land at the Minsk airport¹.

Flight FR 4978 of the international airline “Ryanair” was en route from Athens to Vilnius, when it was forced to make an emergency landing at the Minsk airport due to potential security threat. The Belarusian air traffic control service informed the aircraft crew of the threat of an explosion and instructed them to divert to the nearest airport. For precaution, the aircrew implemented the recommendation, and the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Belarus, under direct order from Mr. Lukashenko², sent a military fighter MiG-29 to escort the jet. Immediately after landing, Sofia and journalist Roman Protasevich were arrested. Subsequently, the message about the aforementioned bomb was not confirmed.

The arrest of Sofia Sapega, a 23-year-old student at European Humanities University (EHU), who is detained on groundless and made-up conditions, only emphasizes the ongoing violations of Human Rights among students in Belarus. She is only one of many students that are currently facing charges because of the authoritarian regime. The Belarusian Students' Association already

¹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/belarus-ryanair-news-alexander-lukashenko-b1852651.html>

² https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/belarus-ryanair-roman-protasevich-journalist/2021/05/23/01b2e28a-bbc2-11eb-922a-c40c9774bc48_story.html



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expanded on the ongoing Human Rights Crisis³ amongst students which shows that they are in dire need of our support. Considering the severity of the situation, the Lithuanian National Union of Students (LSS) and the European Students' Union (ESU) condemn the authoritarian regime in Belarus and solidarizes with the student activists in their fight for Freedom and calls for immediate liberation of Belarusian students. Also, we would like to emphasize the need to guarantee the safety of Belarusian students here in Lithuania. The situation at hand when a plane directed to Vilnius was hijacked shows that currently students are not safe and precautionary actions are needed to be taken into consideration. We need to create an environment in which they could feel safe from the authoritarian regime.

The Lithuanian National Union of Students, the EHU Students' Union, the Belarusian Students' Association and the European Students' Union call on the international and local authorities to take decisive measures to counter the aggression of the Belarusian regime, which has become a threat for regional security in Europe.

We ask you for solidarity and active dissemination of information about the legal default, which has been faced not only by our students, but also by the entire international aviation community.

All our thoughts and feelings are with Sofia, Roman and everyone else who has suffered because of the authoritarian Belarusian regime.

Lithuanian National Union of Students

European Humanities University Students' Union

Belarusian Students' Association

European Students' Union

³ https://zbsunion.by/en/news/pressure_on_students?fbclid=IwAR02rNKI4HPYhqe8-AUfrA0lwCXuFvQkghiLiJ1M-aUwi7QO0dQi36OJDrE