

**Mission Permanente de la Republique du Belarus aupres de
L'Office des Nations Unies et des autres
Organisations Internationales a Geneve**

No. 02-05/645

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and with reference to the joint communication AL BLR 4/2020 of 14 April 2020 by the Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression has the honour to transmit to their attention the information of the Belarusian competent authorities regarding Mr. Sergey Satsuk, including on legal grounds for his detention.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Encl.: 2 pages, in Russian

Geneva, 27 May 2020

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Geneva

HRC/NONE/2020/SP/45
GE.20-07436 (E) 100720 100720

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(Translated from Russian)

Information in response to the enquiry by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression of the Human Rights Council

On 25 March 2020, the Financial Investigations Department of the State Audit Committee of Belarus brought criminal proceedings against Siarhei Viktorovich Satsuk, director of Inter-Smit, the unlimited liability company that owns the Ezhednevnik news website, for an offence covered under article 430 (Accepting bribes) of the Criminal Code.

According to the criminal case file, Mr. Satsuk, as an executive officer, accepted US\$ 5,000 in cash from ██████████, a representative of the ██████████ (limited liability company), in exchange for a favorable decision on matters within his authority. Mr. Satsuk, using his official powers, organized the posting of an article entitled “Corruption in the Ministry of Health: How People Profit from Blood in Belarus” on the Ezhednevnik news website, which contained information that undermined ██████████ competitors.

Mr. Satsuk was detained and placed in custody on 25 March 2020.

The criminal case was referred to the Investigative Committee of Belarus on 1 April 2020 for further investigation.

On 4 April 2020, with the Procurator General’s consent, a decision was taken to overturn the decision to remand the suspect in custody as a preventive measure and Mr. Satsuk was released on the same day with the obligation to appear when summoned by the body conducting the criminal proceedings and to report any change of place of residence.

The preliminary investigation and criminal prosecution of Mr. Satsuk is driven by the need to assess whether the actions described above constitute wrongdoing and is not connected with his critical publications on socially significant topics, including the status of the spread of COVID-19.

The pretrial investigation body, in accordance with the requirements of article 18 (1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, is taking all appropriate measures to conduct a comprehensive, complete and objective examination of the circumstances of the criminal case and to collect evidence that will lead to a final legal assessment of Mr. Satsuk’s actions.

At present, the preliminary investigation into the criminal case is ongoing, and no charges have been brought against Mr. Satsuk.

Mr. Satsuk’s detention and remand in custody in this case of corruption (bribery) and his release were carried out in strict compliance with the country’s criminal procedure legislation and did not contravene the State’s international obligations; they were conducted solely as part of the criminal prosecution against him.

No evidence was found to support the allegation that Mr. Satsuk’s publications on corruption in the system of the Ministry of Health had resulted in the prosecution of more than 100 people.

There is also no information regarding the complaints (applications) sent by Mr. Satsuk to the competent authorities about threats against him or violations of his civil rights and freedoms, including those related to journalistic activities.
