



**Subject: Submission of Views on the Human Rights 75 Youth Declaration -
Contribution from Belarusian National Youth Council RADA
www.rada.fm**

Dear Representatives of the OHCHR Office,

Warm greetings from the Belarusian National Youth Council RADA, we are a voluntary union of 38 youth associations, being created with the purpose of consolidating youth organizations and initiatives of Belarus. RADA operates in the areas of representation, promotion and defending common interests and freedoms of youth organizations and young people of Belarus.

Unfortunately, because of the political situation in the country and restrictions imposed by the state on the freedom of association, the Belarusian National Youth Council was liquidated in 2006 by the decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus. Since then RADA has been operating underground as many other youth organizations and activists have been repressed by the authorities.

We are honored to participate in the call for input to develop the Human Rights 75 Youth Declaration, an initiative led by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). As a youth-led organization, we are deeply committed to promoting the rights and well-being of young individuals, and we welcome this opportunity to share our perspectives on the future of human rights.

Background:

In the context of Belarus, the struggle for human rights has taken on a critical and turbulent character in recent times. Our nation faces the challenge of an illegitimate regime that has openly displayed disregarded democratic principles and fundamental human rights. This has created an atmosphere of oppression, where the rule of law is disobeyed, and civil society is stifled. Amidst this backdrop, young people have emerged as the vanguard of change, bravely standing up for democracy, freedom, and equality. Sadly, these acts of courage have not gone unnoticed by the authorities, leading to increased intimidation, unlawful detention, and violence against young activists and their supporters.

Challenges and Future of Human Rights:

The circumstances in Belarus further exacerbate the current global challenges.

The human rights landscape in Belarus is marred by serious violations, including:

- Freedom of Expression: Independent media outlets have been dismantled, journalists targeted, and online content censored, curbing freedom of expression.
- Freedom of Assembly: Peaceful gatherings are met with violent crackdowns, excessive force, and unjust arrests.
- Political Repression: Opposition leaders, activists, and defenders are subjected to arbitrary arrests, unfair trials, and imprisonment.
- Torture and Ill-Treatment: Detainees have reported torture and abuse, revealing systemic violations.
- Erosion of Rule of Law: The rule of law is undermined, with authorities exploiting legal channels to target political opponents.
- Erosion of Civil Society: Independent civil society organizations, including those advocating human rights, face harassment and closure.

The impact of these violations on young people in Belarus has been profound. The stifling of free expression has limited opportunities for young individuals to voice their concerns and engage in meaningful dialogue. The suppression of civil society has shrunk opportunities for youth-led initiatives that promote human rights and civic engagement. The crackdown on peaceful protests and activism has deterred young individuals from participating in public discourse and advocating for change. The psychological toll of living under constant surveillance, fear of retribution, and the threat of violence has also taken a toll on the mental well-being of Belarusian youth.

Amidst these challenges, we hold onto a vision of the future where human rights are protected and celebrated. We envisage a society where every young individual can flourish in an environment characterized by justice, respect, and equality. Key to this vision is the imperative to address civic participation, media freedom, and inclusive education issues.

Recommendations for Policymakers:

Our recommendations to policymakers take into account the unique challenges faced by young people in Belarus:

- To organize public discussions on the work on the UN Convention on the Rights of Young People
- Strengthen youth rights mainstreaming across all UN human rights mechanisms (create new one)
- Establishing an annual youth forum as a permanent and structured mechanism to the Human Rights Council

- Investigate the possibility of establishing a Special Procedure on the human rights of young people
- Strengthen Legal Protections: Establish robust legal frameworks that protect young individuals' rights and hold accountable those responsible for violating these rights, regardless of their position within the state apparatus.
- Amplify Youth Participation: Empower young people with opportunities for meaningful participation in decision-making processes at all levels. Their perspectives must be integrated into policies and actions directly impacting their lives.
- Preserve and Enhance Education: Ensure access to unbiased, comprehensive education that nurtures critical thinking, human rights awareness, and a sense of responsibility toward societal progress.
- Global Collaborations for Change: Collaborate with international partners and organizations to address cross-border challenges and elevate the human rights discourse worldwide.
- Uphold Digital Freedoms: Protect digital rights, promoting an open and secure digital space that allows young people to communicate, organize, and express their opinions safely.

Young People's Commitments:

The youth of Belarus remain unwavering in our commitment to advancing human rights, even in the face of adversities. We pledge to:

- Advocate Diligently: Employ our energy and determination to advocate for the recognition and respect of human rights through local and international awareness campaigns, workshops, and innovative initiatives.
- Drive Peaceful Activism: Engage in peaceful activism and constructively engage in dialogues to bring about societal change, amplify our voices, and demand justice for human rights violations.
- Leverage Digital Platforms: Utilize digital platforms to amplify the voices of marginalized youth, raise awareness about human rights violations in Belarus, and build connections with like-minded individuals globally.
- Forge International Ties: Establish collaborations with international youth networks to exchange experiences, garner support, and jointly address human rights challenges, not only in Belarus but across the globe.
- Promote Inclusivity: Contribute to community-based projects that promote social cohesion, equality, and solidarity, aiming to create an inclusive society that is founded upon the principles of human rights.

We hereby permit OHCHR to feature our submission on its website, thereby fostering a global dialogue that embraces diverse perspectives and solutions. Collaborating across borders and generations can collectively shape a future where human rights are protected, celebrated, and upheld.

Thank you for providing a platform that amplifies the voices of young individuals, recognizing the vital role we play in shaping the trajectory of human rights. We eagerly anticipate the opportunity to contribute to developing the Human Rights 75 Youth Declaration.

Sincerely,

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