



## The European Writers' Council condemns the detaining of three poets and translators in Minsk and the action against Nobel Laureate Svetlana Alexievich

*Yesterday evening the poets and translators, Hanna Komar, Uladz Liankevich and Siarzh Miadzvedzeu of the Belarusian PEN Centre, were arrested and taken to Akrestina Prison. Today, 9 September, police teams are searching the house where Svetlana Alexievich lives.*

Brussels, 9 September 2020 | Outrageous acts against authors and culture are carrying out in Belarus. Yesterday evening (8 September) three PEN BELARUS members, Hanna Komar, Uladz Liankevich and Siarzh Miadzvedzeu, were arrested while demonstrating peacefully, and taken to Akrestina Prison. Today police teams are searching the house where Svetlana Alexievich lives. From there she writes this Open Letter: (Source: [The Union of Belarusian Writers](#).)

*"None of my like-minded friends are left in the presidium of the Coordinating Council. All are either in prison or thrown abroad. Today Maxim Znak was taken last. First, our country was stolen, the best of us are kidnapped. But hundreds of others will come to replace those who have been taken away from our ranks. It wasn't the Coordination Council that rebelled, it was the entire country that raised. I want to repeat what I always say. We were not preparing a coup. We wanted to prevent a split in our country. We wanted a dialogue to start in the society. Lukashenka says he will not talk to the street, but it is not the street – it's hundreds of thousands of people who go out every Sunday and every day. This is not a street. This is the people. People take to the streets with their young children because they believe they will win. I also want to appeal to the Russian intelligentsia, let's call it the old custom. Why are you silent? We hear only rare voices in support. Why are you silent when you see a small, proud people trampling? We are still your brothers. And I want to tell my people that I love them. I am proud of them. Here again someone unknown rings the doorbell ..."*

EWC President Nina George says: **"Dictators have always threatened authors, artists and cultural patrons first, because that is where the most intrepid resistance can be expected.** We demand the immediate release of the imprisoned poets, writers and translators of PEN Belarus, Hanna Komar, Uladz Liankevich and Siarzh Miadzvedzeu, and the release of the UBW Members, the blogger Paviel Sieviaryniec and Siarhieï Cichanoŭski. With the daily increase in repression against authors, against culture and against demonstrators, the leadership in Belarus is clearly against democracy and dialogue. It is unacceptable that members of the Coordination Council are arrested, interrogated and intimidated, that people are kidnapped in the streets, and that writers and translators are harassed for their right of assembly and for free new elections, as Svetlana Alexievich up to date has to suffer. Europe and the United Nations, must now come to the immediate and decisive aid of the people of Belarus and the democracy movement."

**"It is important for us to make Europe understand what monster we have to fight with and to see what an aggressor country it neighbors"**, points out the Chair of the Union of Belarusian Writers, Barys Piatrovich. "The Belarusian people have consolidated and clearly expressed their desire to be with a free Europe and must understand that Europe is also with them."

The European Writers' Council