

Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV)

Belarus

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Council

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About ODVV

1. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-partisan organization in Special Consultative Status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). The ODVV was established in 1988 in Tehran and has been active in the field of human rights and humanitarian activities.

2. The ODVV is also associated to the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), a participatory of the NGOs Coalition for an International Court (based in New York), and national coordinator of the Global March Against Child Labour (based in New Delhi) which cooperated in a variety of issues with international organizations and has working relations with many NGOs in Iran and around the globe.

3. The ODVV is also a member of the International Organization against Small and Light Weapons, and the UN Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO), and the International Movement for a Just World (JUST), AMAN Network of Rehabilitation Centres in the Middle East and North Africa, International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT).

4. During the last 2 decades, we have done so many activities, mainly informative in regards with human rights and supportive in regards with the victims of violence. Various human rights education courses, workshops, seminars, conferences have been held or co-held by the ODVV for various sectors of society: civil society institutions and governmental organizations.

5. Other Activities:

- Participation in UN Commission on Human Rights annual sessions, and the new Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva. Written and oral statements on various items of the agenda are issued by the ODVV.
- Internship for foreign students
- Publication of different books and booklets on human rights such as Rights of the Child, Racism, Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia. Publication of Defenders Newsletter

(English), human rights news and developments bulletin (Farsi), Rights of the Child bulletin (Farsi

- Daily electronic human rights newsletter in English and Farsi

Background

6. Belarus is a former Eastern European Soviet Republic, with a population of over 10 million which gained its independence on 25 August 1991, and claims to be a republic. Since 1994 the country has been run by president Alexander Lukashenko (over 3 terms). The constitution of the country has over the years been revised to give the president almost unlimited powers and no terms in office restrictions, something that has caused concern for international human rights organizations and activists. The Belarusian government has so far joined the following international conventions and treaties:

- a) Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- b) International convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination
- c) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- d) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- e) Optional Protocol on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- f) Convention on the Non-applicability Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity
- g) International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid
- h) International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
- i) International Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- j) International Convention against Apartheid in Sport
- k) International Convention on the Rights of the Child 2 Optional Protocols.

Causes for Concern

7. Even though Belarusian government's actions in joining the aforementioned conventions is notable, but the violation and disregard of several of these instruments are some of the concerns that as a human rights NGO the ODVV has. During the rule of the present government in Belarus, there have been several instances of persecution, some which include the disappearance of a number of former government officials such as the Minister of Interior, the former director of the elections commission, a well-known businessman, a journalist and a presidential photographer, among several other not so well-known individuals. Although the government has on numerous occasions promised to conduct investigations, but to-date no serious action has been taken. Another cause for concern for human rights organizations is the way in which the Belarus government treats the press and journalists. Strict control and restrictions against the press and media are policies that the governments continues to use.

Recommendations

8. While expressing its deep concern over the forced disappearances in Belarus, the ODVV calls upon the government and authorities to investigate and rectify the situation. The ODVV also calls upon the Human Rights Council as an official human rights institution to follow up on Belarus' commitments.

9. The violation of freedom of expression and treatment of journalists and writers is another issue that must seriously be looked into. Although the past tradition and conditions of this country in treating journalists has played a key role, but as an independent country which claims to being a republic, Belarus must provide better conditions for the media.

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