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Warsaw, 27 October 2017.

Human Rights Commission
of the Polish Bar Council
ul. Świętojerska 16,
00-202 Warsaw

His Excellency

Mr Aleksandr Averyanov

**Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of the Republic of Belarus in Poland**

ul. Wiertnicza 58

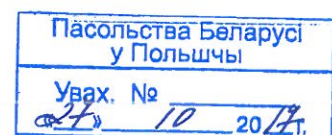
02-952 Warsaw

NRA.015-2.46.2017

Your Excellency,

The Human Rights Commission of the Polish Bar Council would like to express its deep concern regarding the activities of the Bar Qualifications Commission of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus, aimed against advocates fighting for human rights from the Bar Chambers in Minsk and Mahiliou.

Recently in the course of extraordinary certification of lawyers the Bar Qualifications Commission of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus arbitrarily deprived advocate Hanna Bakhtsina of the ability to practice the profession and issued a conditional permission to practice to over a dozen other advocates. The part of the reasoning of the decision depriving advocate Hanna Bakhtsina of the advocate's license on account of „*lack of professional skills*” although she has nearly 40 years of experience as a lawyer raises particular objection. It also seems an unlikely coincidence that the repressions affect defenders of human rights who have been involved in defending opposition activists for many years. Repressions against advocates already occurred in the past, when they affected advocate Pavel Sapelko, who received the Human Rights Award of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe in 2012.

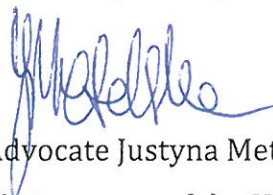


The Human Rights Commission of the Polish Bar Council would like to emphasize that every country which is a member of the United Nations is obliged to guarantee the right to a fair trial to its citizens. Limiting access to legal assistance provided by advocates independent of the public authorities results in violation of the standards of a proper trial. The consequences of this give rise to a serious threat to the protection of human rights and freedoms.

The Human Rights Commission of the Polish Bar Council underlined on many occasions that the purpose of advocates' activities in the area of human rights and freedoms is to protect the individual and help victims of inappropriate treatment by public authorities as well as all persons deprived of their fundamental rights and freedoms. Such activities are not aimed against public authorities. A situation where the government resorts to retribution against advocates in connection with their professional and social activities is unacceptable.

In these circumstances the Human Rights Commission of the Polish Bar Council expresses its solidarity with the members of Bar Chambers in the Republic of Belarus and calls upon the public authorities of Belarus to cease interfering in the activities of lawyers, to ensure their independence and stop putting pressure on the profession. The Human Rights Commission of the Polish Bar Council also requests that the right to practice the profession be restored to advocates deprived of the ability to continue their practice as a result of the arbitrary decisions of the Bar Qualifications Commission of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus.

Yours respectfully,



Advocate Justyna Metelska

Chairwoman of the Human Rights Commission
of the Polish Bar Council

Attention of:

1. Mr Oleg Slizhevsky

Minister of Justice of the Republic of Belarus

Kollektornaya 10

220004, Minsk

Republic of Belarus

2. Belarusian National Bar Association

Kollektornaya 10

220004, Minsk

Republic of Belarus