



(Shutterstock/MarinaNy)

#### PRESS RELEASE

## Televised “confessions” further example of widespread rights violations in Belarus, OSCE human rights head says

WARSAW, 4 June 2021 — The televised “confessions” of independent journalist Raman Pratasevich and Sofia Sapega, his partner, raise further concerns regarding the Belarus authorities’ failure to meet obligations to respect the right to a fair trial and the absolute prohibition of torture in the wave of arrests since last August’s presidential election, says the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

“The recently broadcast footage with Raman Pratasevich and Sofia Sapega is deeply disturbing, violates their right to fair trial and may be a sign that they were coerced or tortured, which is prohibited under international law. As the actions to date make it impossible for Pratasevich and Sapega to receive a fair trial, I call for their release as an immediate remedy,” said Matteo Mecacci, ODIHR Director.

OSCE participating States have explicitly and unequivocally pledged to uphold the right to a fair trial and the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment and committed to strive for its elimination. At the 27th OSCE Ministerial Council in Tirana in 2020, OSCE participating States committed to abandon and refrain from the use of interrogation techniques that constitute torture and other ill-treatment, including to obtain a confession.

The Belarusian authorities should investigate credible allegations that Raman Pratasevich and Sofia Sapega have been subjected to torture or other prohibited treatment. Any attempt to include the “confessions” as evidence in court proceedings against them, would further erode the legality of a trial.

The video-recorded confessions themselves as well as broadcasts shortly after their arrest following the diversion of a civilian plane to Minsk by the Belarusian authorities, seriously affect their right to presumption of innocence and to effective legal assistance, both essential components of the right to fair trial.

Thousands of Belarusian citizens have been detained, sentenced, imprisoned and subjected to other forms of harassment while exercising their rights, as the authorities clamped down on peaceful protests following Presidential elections in August 2020. Among them are numerous journalists and human rights defenders, targeted for their reporting of human rights violations.

For PDF attachments or links to sources of further information, please visit: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/488725>

### **Contacts:**

#### **Public Affairs Unit, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

Office: +48 22 520 06 00

Fax: +48 22 520 06 05

[PublicAffairs@odihr.pl](mailto:PublicAffairs@odihr.pl)

#### **Katya Andrusz**

Ul. Miodowa 10

00-251 Warsaw

Poland

Office: +48 22 520 0640

Mobile: +48 609 522 266

[Katya.Andrusz@odihr.pl](mailto:Katya.Andrusz@odihr.pl)