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The Observatory  
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## **RISK OF EXPULSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST YELENA TONKACHEVA FROM BELARUS IS LEGAL LYNCHING REMINISCENT OF SOVIET TIMES**

the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

the Human Rights Center "Viasna"

the national human rights public association "Belarusian Helsinki Committee"

the public association "Belarusian Association of Journalists"

Minsk-Paris-Geneva  
November 3, 2014

### **STATEMENT**

On October 30, 2014, our organisations were informed that the Pershamaiski District Department of Internal Affairs in Minsk decided to cancel the Belarusian residence permit of a prominent human rights activist, Head of the Center for Legal Transformation "Lawtrend", Ms. Yelena Tonkacheva, and to consider the question of her expulsion from the country.

The procedure of deprivation of residence against Russian Federation citizen Yelena Tonkacheva, who has permanently resided in Belarus since 1985, was launched in September this year. The decision formally relies on four cases of insignificant excess of speed limitations by Ms. Yelena Tonkacheva while driving her car, which were registered by video cameras of the traffic police.

The Center for Legal Transformation “Lawtrend”, headed by Ms. Yelena Tonkacheva, is one of the leading human rights organisations in Belarus and has carried out legitimate human rights activities in the interests of the Belarusian society for many years already. Ms. Yelena Tonkacheva herself is an example of professionalism in the field of jurisprudence. She has dedicated many years to work in the field of human rights at both national and international levels.

We, representatives of Belarusian and international human rights organisations, consider that the actions of the Belarusian authorities aimed at the cancellation of the residence permit and subsequent expulsion of one of the country's leading human rights activists are politically motivated, and constitute an attempt to forcibly put an end to Ms. Yelena Tonkacheva's legitimate human rights activities or to create significant obstacles in the conduct of such activities.

The pretext outlined by the Belarusian authorities to deprive Ms. Tonkacheva of her residence permit in the country once again emphasises the true motivation of the authorities, and is discriminatory since such measures are not used in respect to other foreign nationals under the same or similar circumstances.

Accordingly, we call upon the Belarusian authorities to:

- Cancel the decisions issued by state bodies to deprive Ms. Yelena Tonkacheva of her residence permit, and exposing her to possible expulsion;
- Stop creating obstacles to human rights activities on the territory of the Republic of Belarus, and abide by the provisions of the United Nations Declaration "On the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms".