



World
Communion
of Reformed
Churches

***“Think of the prisoners as if you were in prison with them.
Think of the mistreated, for you too live in vulnerable bodies”
(Hebrews 13: 3)***

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Shortly before Christmas, I received worrying news from the small Reformed Church in Minsk. Just like many Catholics and members of the Orthodox Church, members of the Reformed community also took part in the protests against the election fraud, against the arbitrariness and violence of the Lukashenko dictatorship. Several members of the community were arrested and fined. Now, a spokesman for the community, whom we met at our councils and who had to flee abroad, wrote to us: ***“We ask you to pray for freedom and legality in Belarus, for humanity and human rights in our country. (...) At the moment, more than 30,000 best people of Belarus of all professions and ages (from underage schoolchildren to even 89 years old!) have gone, through the courts and prisons (...)”***

We have also heard that most of those arrested were released after a few hours or a few days. Many, however, have been mistreated and tortured by the interior minister’s military police and by secret service agents. At least four people died. In the meantime, more than 200 people have been sentenced to several years’ imprisonment in politically motivated trials, for example due to “disrupting public order” or “resisting state authority”.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus himself points out the importance of acting in solidarity with prisoners (Mt. 25:36). The Book of Hebrews shows us that we are all affected when people are caught and suffer (Heb. 13: 3). I therefore warmly ask you to use all means possible to give our brothers and sisters in Belarus hope, to signal to them that we stand by their side and that we are aware of their suffering.

Even if our possibilities are limited, we can still do something about this by setting an example as a European region of the World Communion of Reformed Churches!

What you can do

- In your church services, pray for the peaceful protesters and the prisoners. (A suggestion for an intercessory prayer is enclosed to this letter.)
- Invite those in your community to join actions in support of the movement for democracy, and those in prison.
- Look for opportunities to make politicians in your country aware of the situation in Belarus.



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Write to prisoners

Opposition leader Svetlana Tichanowskaja said in Berlin, in December: *“The detainees are happy to receive a card. Receiving a letter from abroad is a gift. It shows that Europe stands by our side.”*

Each postcard also sends a signal to the regime that human rights violations in Belarus are also being observed abroad and will not be tolerated. The names of around 220 political prisoners and the addresses of the prisons can be found on the website: www.spring96.org of the human rights organization Vjasna (translated: Spring). The support platforms Libereco: www.lphr.org, and Razam: www.razam.de, provide helpful tips on how to write the letters.

Our prayer and what we can do practically will support and strengthen our sisters and brothers in Belarus. In the Steering Committee we will also consider other ways to express our solidarity.

Blessings,

Martina Wasserloos

Intercession for Belarus

Eternal and merciful God!

Before you, we think of the people of Belarus today.

More people than ever took to the streets last year
demonstrated peacefully and happily against the falsification of the election,
against the arbitrariness and violence of the regime.

They were forcibly dispersed and many thousands arrested.

But they didn't let themselves be intimidated and kept going.

Among them were many Christians, Catholics, Orthodox,
also members of the small evangelical minority,
young and old, men and women.

We ask you, God: give them your spirit:

Power, love and prudence.

Don't let them get tired of their hope for a free land
and strengthen them in their advocacy for the rights of all people.

Lord, have mercy!

You God of the afflicted and abandoned,

Before you we also think of the members of the small Reformed church in Minsk.

Its members have also shown signs of hope
and peacefully protest against injustice.

Together with others, they laughed and cried and sang.

We think of those who fled the country because of persecution
and are now separated from their loved ones and friends.

We think of those who are locked away in prison.

They were sentenced on fallacious grounds, and
should thus be separated from their families for years,
from, partners, children and parents.

(We especially think of ...

.... and of their relatives ...)

Oh God, the injustice they suffer cries out to heaven!

Comfort them, God! Protect them from abuse and dejection.

Build their confidence and stand by them.

We hope for you. Have mercy!

You, God of peace,

we pray for the people who have suffered injustice and violence.

Give them hope and heal them.

End the hatred, and instead show mutual respect.

Please comfort those who lost loved ones during the protests,
pay attention to those whose loved ones have disappeared,
and strengthen those who have been broken physically and spiritually.

Lord, have mercy!