

London, 24 March 2011

Mr. Viktor Grigorevich Golovanov
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
10 Kollektornaya str.
220004 MINSK - BELARUS

By email to kanc@minjust.by

Your Excellency,

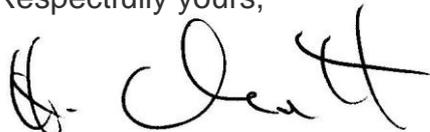
The European Criminal Bar Association (ECBA) was informed by the Human Right Committee of the Polish Bar and other sources of attempts by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus to initiate and endorse restrictions and disbarment against several lawyers who have undertaken the defence of persons suspected or accused of participating in the events that took place in Minsk on 19–20 December 2010.

Since its foundation in 1997 the ECBA (European Criminal Bar Association) has become the pre-eminent independent organisation of specialist defence lawyers in all Council of Europe countries. The ECBA aims to promote the fundamental rights of persons under investigation, suspects, accused and convicted persons. The independence of lawyers is one of the preconditions of the right to a fair trial in Art. 6 ECHR most particularly in terms of the right to legal advice at any stage of a criminal proceeding.

We are deeply concerned about attempts to prevent lawyers in Belarus from carrying out their professional duties and that the individuals arrested after the 19 December protest, including four former presidential candidates, have been unable to access their legal counsels.

We request that your Ministry confirms to us in writing that it will cease taking such actions against the legal profession in Belarus and will ensure that the individuals arrested are permitted access to their lawyers.

Respectfully yours,



Prof. dr. Holger Matt,
Chairman