

Call for Justice and Freedom for Maria Kalesnikava by Charlemagne Prize Laureates

We, the undersigned recipients of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, are deeply concerned about the continued detention of Maria Kalesnikava, a courageous advocate for democracy in Belarus and the recipient of the 2022 Charlemagne Prize, by Belarusian authorities. Ms. Kalesnikava has been unjustly held captive for over three years, and her current situation is becoming increasingly dire. We even fear whether she is still alive.

Since February 2023, all communication with Ms. Kalesnikava has been abruptly terminated, and she is likely being held in solitary confinement. There are serious apprehensions about her health, particularly following a surgery she underwent in November 2022. Her legal representatives have been prevented from defending her, with at least three of them being unlawfully disbarred.

Given the urgency and severity of Maria Kalesnikava's predicament, which directly contravenes the values and ideals upheld by the European Union and the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, we urgently demand for Ms. Kalesnikava's family to be informed about her whereabouts and condition as well as immediate access to legal representation. Additionally, we implore for an immediate end to her solitary confinement to ensure she receives the requisite medical attention and for an unconditional release from prison.

We demand Lukashenka's regime to respect the fundamental human rights, and to ensure justice and freedom for Ms. Kalesnikava and all unjustly detained political prisoners in Belarus. We call on international organisations to ensure Belarusian political prisoners are freed and take measures to ensure perpetrators are held accountable for their crimes.

Signatories:

Timothy Garton Ash, Charlemagne Prize laureate 2017
Pat Cox, Charlemagne Prize laureate 2004
Gro Harlem Brundtland, Charlemagne Prize laureate 1994
Herman Van Rompuy, Charlemagne Prize laureate 2014
Jean-Claude Juncker, Charlemagne Prize laureate 2006
Martin Schulz, Charlemagne Prize laureate 2015
Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Charlemagne Prize laureate 2022
Veronica Tsepikalo, Charlemagne Prize laureate 2022
Tatsiana Khomich, Sister of Charlemagne Prize laureate 2022, Maria Kalesnikava
Felipe González Márquez, Charlemagne Prize laureate 1993
Dalia Grybauskaitė, Charlemagne Prize laureate 2013
Dr. Javier Solana Madariaga, Charlemagne Prize laureate 2007
Pinchas Goldschmidt, Charlemagne Prize laureate 2024

Initiator and Supporter:

Dr. Jürgen Linden, Chairman of the Charlemagne Prize Board of Directors, Aachen, Germany