



POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS ILLINOIS DIVISION

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Bureau of Global Public Affairs
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW, Room 2206
Washington, DC 20520-2204

March 29, 2021

The Honorable Anthony J. Blinken
Secretary of State

Dear Mr. Secretary,

Polish American Congress, Illinois Division protests the escalation of repression against ethnic Poles by the Lukashenko regime in Belarus. We seek diplomatic action from U.S. Department of State, on behalf of ethnic Poles living in Belarus. For many years the Lukashenko regime targeted ethnic Poles for cultural obliteration, essentially cultural genocide, attempting to stamp out any signs of the existence of Poles in Belarus, a region that has, for centuries, been home to both Belarus and Polish people.

Regime actions include forbidding the teaching and use of Polish language, forbidding the creation of independent Polish organizations, which teach and promote Polish language, culture and Catholic religion, harassment of activists, blocking contact with foreign press, access to news in the Polish language, as well as forbidding membership in any foreign NGO's.

Recently these actions were escalated, culminating in the arrest of Andzelika Orechwo, (Borys), on March 23rd, recently re-elected as the President of Alliance of Poles in Belarus. She was arrested, together with some other members of the Alliance; namely Mr. Andrzej Poczobut, a publicist, reporter and noted author, and two regional Directors of the Alliance. Mrs. Borys was immediately sentenced to 15 days in jail, time the regime needs to prepare charges against her. Since her first election as the President of the Alliance, Ms. Borys was detained over 90 times by the Security Police, subjected to psychological torture, had her home searched dozens of times and personal property destroyed. Now, the regime plans to put her on trial on trumped up charges, with high probability she may be convicted and jailed for up to 12 years. Mr. Poczobut, likewise was arrested several times for his activities and may face similar fate.

The actions of the Lukashenko regime not only violate the June 23, 1992 Copenhagen Agreement between Poland and Belarus regarding protection of ethnic minorities, but also violates universal human decency standards.

We implore US Department of State to take a stand and request the Lukashenko regime to immediately release Ms. Borys and Mr. Poczobut as well as others arrested or detained in this reprehensible and vile action, Lukashenko's continuing attempts to obliterate any traces of ethnic Poles in Belarus.

Sincerely yours,

Michael M. Niedzinski,
President,
Polish American Congress, Illinois Division