

Prosecutor General of the Republic of Belarus
Andrei Shved
Internatsiyanalnaya Str., 22
Minsk 220030
Republic of Belarus

Dear Prosecutor General,

we, the undersigned, are deeply concerned about the sentencing of Nasta (Anastasia) Loika, a Belarusian human rights defender and educator, to seven years in a penal colony on trumped-up charges. On 22 September 2022, the Frunzenski District Court of Minsk sentenced her to 15 days' detention on purported "petty hooliganism" charges, a violation under Article 19.1 of the Code of Administrative Offences.

Before that, on 7 September 2022, Nasta Loika was already sentenced to 15 days on the same charges. Nasta Loika is being denied access to her lawyer. The authorities are also refusing her request for a medical examination that she requires, and she is not allowed warm clothes and other basic necessities.

Nasta Loika is a well-known human rights defender, human rights educator and expert on refugee rights. Her persecution is yet another blow to freedom of expression and human rights in Belarus. She is being targeted for her legitimate activities as a human rights defender and has committed no crime.

We urge you to ensure Nasta Loika's immediate and unconditional release and end the misuse of the criminal justice system to target her and other human rights defenders in Belarus.

We urge you to instigate an immediate investigation into the allegations of Nasta Loika's torture and other ill-treatment, and into her arbitrary detention and prosecution, and suspend any officials who may be reasonably suspected of respective violations until the outcome of the investigation and ensure that all those responsible are held accountable in fair trial proceedings without recourse to the death penalty.

Yours sincerely,