

Norsk Joumalistlag

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Thank you for the letter in which you address the very difficult situation for journalists and the media in Belarus. Developments in Belarus in the run-up to and after the presidential election give cause for great concern. The violence from the security forces and the mass arrests we have seen since the election have also affected journalists. It is important that the international community responds clearly to the Belarusian authorities' breach of their international obligations and the fundamental freedoms of their citizens.

Norway has condemned the use of violence and mass arrests. We have demanded that the Belarusian authorities release all apprehended protesters, activists and journalists, refrain from further violence and initiate a dialogue with the opposition and civil society. We stand by these demands and have presented our views directly to the Belarussian authorities.

Together with our foreign partners, we try to contribute to a positive development along several tracks. We will continue to help put the development in Belarus on the agenda of international organizations. As you mention in yourthe letter, the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe are relevant forums in this respect. In particular, the OSCE can play an important role in facilitating political dialogue between the political forces in Belarus, and between European countries and the Belarusian authorities. Unfortunately, the authorities in Minsk have so far rejected a role for the OSCE, other organizations and third countries. Dialogue and negotiations are nevertheless a precondition for a peaceful solution to the political crisis in Belarus, and something we will work for.

At the same time, we are considering other measures to influence the situation in the desired direction. To achieve the greatest possible effect, we will continue to coordinate our measures with related countries and the EU.

Journalists and the media play a very important role in society, not least in the crisis situations in which Belarus now finds itself. They deserve our support.

With best regards

