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The **European Writers' Council** condemns the criminal case opened by Alexander Lukashenko against the Nobel Prize winner for literature, Svetlana Alexievich, and the Coordination Council in Belarus

The European Writers' Council demands a peaceful development in Belarus, which will allow its citizens freedom and democratic participation. The EWC supports its member the Union of Belarusian Writers in its efforts for democracy, free speech and new fair elections.

Brussels, 24 August 2020

The European Writers' Council calls on Alexander Lukashenko, the President of Belarus, to stop the prosecution against the **Coordination Council of the Opposition** and instead to accept the invitation of the democracy movement in order to enable a peaceful transition of power via dialogue, and with new, fair and democratic presidential elections with international supervision.

The Coordination Council was founded by the opposition candidate Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, and is composed of about 70 members – authors, artists, civil society figures, journalists and business people, **including the Nobel Prize-winning author Svetlana Alexievich, Member of the Union of Belarusian Writers**. On August 20, the Prosecutor General in Belarus announced a criminal case against the Coordinating Council because the body “was a threat to national security”; its members are accused of an “illegal power grab”. Such accusations are punishable by five years in prison in Belarus. Maxim Znak, a member of the Coordination Council presidium, said in a BBC interview, that several council members had announced to leave the new body. Svetlana Alexievich, a vocal critic of Mr. Lukashenko, is remaining in the presidium. In an interview with Deutschlandfunk, Ms. Alexievich said: “In my opinion, the state power has declared war on its own nation.”

“Open dialogue is the basis of democracy and social participation”, says the writer and EWC President Nina George. “We condemn Lukashenko's threatening gesture against the will for freedom and justice of the opposition willing to engage in dialog, and call on him to drop the case against the Coordination Council and to release the arrested two members of the new body, Sergei Dilevsky and Olga Kovalkova. We support our EWC member, the Union of Belarusian Writers (UBW), in its efforts for democratic and free elections, and in its commitment to freedom of speech.”

On behalf of the Board of the European Writers' Council:

Myriam Diocaretz, Secretary-General