

Email from Iryna Koval

Greetings, Dear Friends

Thank God they already have released our Larissa. She spent 2½ days in detention. On Monday, March 27, 2006, they convicted her. She was able to call from her cell-phone and say that she was being taken away – but she did not know where. Many were taken to the prison in the city of Zhodino, about 50 kilometres from Minsk. They were taken to several prisons, probably in order to make it difficult to trace them. Larissa was in Minsk.... All her belongings were confiscated. She asked if she could keep a handkerchief and the toilet paper she had in her pockets. This was refused. Their shoelaces were removed. It was cold in the cell – about 10 degrees Celsius. The bench was half-made of metal, so no one could sleep at night – it was impossible. Larissa managed to lie down a bit on the bench – her body now has many small blue spots. They ate virtually nothing, paced in their cells. Larissa went hungry. Because to eat and drink there is very dangerous; many of the homeless people who also are kept there are infected with tuberculosis.... And this is how they arrested her: a man from OMON (OMON is a special military unit) hit an older man – about 60 years old – with a rubber truncheon three times over the head. The man fell on the pavement and bled heavily. Larissa wanted to help him and called the emergency medical services. The doctor told her over the telephone that no ambulance could come. Then the OMON people jumped in and dragged Larissa into a special van...Larissa was fined \$300. She got off lightly. Almost all were sentenced to between 10 and 15 days in jail. I picked her up. When she came out of the prison she looked harried, pale and dirty. Now she is doing somewhat better. She is recovering at home and trying to overcome the stress. She asked me to write this letter for you, because it is still hard for her to think about what happened to her.

[Email from Iryna Koval, 5 April, 2006.]

[Larissa Androsik is Director of Dyjaryush, an organisation of History teachers, journalists and writers, interested in the "unofficial" history of Belarus, the history of the struggle for independence and civil rights. It is affiliated to the Europe-wide organisation, [Eustory](#).]