The Rt. Hon. Dominic Raab MP

Secretary of State

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH

[**By email only**](mailto:fcocorrespondence@fco.gov.uk)

21 July 2021

Dear Foreign Secretary,

**Re: further diplomatic steps required to end violence and repression in Belarus**

Founded in 1884, the Society of Authors (‘SoA’) is an independent trade union, which exists to protect the rights and further the interests of authors across the UK. We have 11,800 members, who are professional writers spanning all areas of the profession, including novelists, broadcasters and journalists to scriptwriters, illustrators and translators.

Since my letters to you of 28 August 2020 and 5 February 2021, the violence and repression against authors, artists and journalists in Belarus has not abated. Last week, the office of the Union of Belarusian Writers (‘UBW’) was raided with documents and computers confiscated. Chair of the Union of Belarusian Writers, Barys Piatrovich, is now prohibited from leaving the country and we understand through the European Writers’ Council (‘EWC’), of which both the SoA and the UBW are members, that Mr Piatrovich has since been forced to sign a non-disclosure agreement preventing him publicising the important work of the UBW.

The UBW was among 21 trade unions and civil society organisations to face such action by the Belarussian Government, including Belarus PEN, the Association of Belarusian Journalists, the independent academic research centre BEROC, and human rights organisation Viasna. According to PEN International, 590 authors, artists and cultural workers were attacked and subjected to forms of psychological and physical violence in Belarusian prisons last year. Regrettably, we are now seeing the extension of that violence and repression across civil society in Belarus.

I would ask you again to publicly condemn the most recent steps taken against the UBW and Mr Piatrovich and ensure that the Government plays a more active role in awareness-raising across the international community and in your discussions both with Foreign Ministers and as part of the ongoing UK’s diplomatic missions. I would also ask that the UK continues to apply pressure on the Belarusian regime for the release of all citizens unlawfully arrested since last Summer and to press for the holding of free and fair elections under international observation, following the country’s widely denounced Presidential elections.

I look forward to hearing from you [by email](mailto:nsolomon@societyofauthors.org).

Yours sincerely,



Nicola Solomon

Chief Executive