

PRESS RELEASE

CCBE Human Rights Award 2021

09/12/2021

The CCBE Human Rights Award 2021 is granted to Belarusian lawyers Lilya Vlasova, Maksim Znak, Dmitry Laevski and Leanid Sudalenko as well as to all endangered lawyers in Afghanistan

The Award ceremony will be held on 10 December during the CCBE Plenary with the participation as a keynote speaker of the **United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**, Michelle Bachelet, through a video message.

The four **Belarusian lawyers** who receive the Award have distinguished themselves for their courage, determination, and commitment to defending citizens' fundamental rights and the rule of law in Belarus. The CCBE wishes to extend its support to all Belarusian lawyers who fight for the respect of the rule of law and the core values of the legal profession while risking their freedom and opportunity to practice. The four recipients of the Award are victims of judicial harassment due to their legitimate activities as lawyers. They are all currently prevented from exercising their profession: **three of them are currently in detention, the fourth has been disbarred.**

Lilya Vlasova was arrested on 31 August 2020 and remains in detention to this day despite protests from several international lawyers' organisations.

Maksim Znak represented many clients in politically sensitive cases and was sentenced to 10 years in prison after one year of pretrial detention. He is still detained.

Leanid Sudalenko represented human rights defenders and activists and was arrested on 18 January 2021 on charges of "organising, financing, training and preparation of actions grossly violating public order and financing such activities". He is currently detained.

Dmitry Laevski is a prominent lawyer who has been vocal on the situation of the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, the legal profession and the right to defence in Belarus. He represented several political prisoners in court. Victim of undue pressure since several years, he was officially disbarred on 9 July 2021 after two disciplinary proceedings against him.

Please consult the [background document](#) for more information on the four Belarussian lawyers.

Furthermore, an exceptional Human Rights Award is also granted by the CCBE to all **endangered lawyers in Afghanistan**. The CCBE wants to raise awareness in the international community of the urgent need to provide adequate protection to those endangered lawyers who are at the forefront of the defence of fundamental rights of Afghan citizens. It is also important to stress the need for an independent legal profession and Bar in Afghanistan in order to preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice and the rule of law.

For more information on the situation of the legal profession in Afghanistan, please consult the CCBE [background document](#) as well as [the Joint call in support of endangered lawyers in Afghanistan \(10/11/2021\)](#) and [the CCBE letter calling for the recognition of an independent Bar in Afghanistan \(25/11/2021\)](#).

About the CCBE:

The Council of European Bars (CCBE) represents the Bars and Law Societies of 45 countries and through them more than one million European lawyers. More information on the CCBE Human Rights Award and past recipients is available [here](#).

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