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**Belarus:**

**105 years of the first Belarusian democratic state**

**#freeallwords gives a voice to threatened Belarusian authors**

**New translations: a new piece by the journalist and political prisoner Yekaterina Andreyeva (Belarus), Vika Biran (Belarus), Dmitri Strotsev (Belarus), Vika Trenas (Belarus), Marianna Kijanowska (Ukraine) and Elina Sventsytska (Ukraine)**

(Brussels/Berlin, 23 March 2023) On March 25th, the democratic forces of Belarus celebrate the 105th anniversary of the Belarusian People's Republic (1918), the first Belarusian democratic state, as a symbol of the Belarusians' steadfastness in their struggle for the country's freedom and independence.

Unfortunately, the challenges faced by the country 105 years ago – how to get rid of the imperial Russia and how to build the Belarusians' own democratic state - are becoming even more topical today under the conditions of Russia's war against Ukraine and the strengthening of the brutal dictatorial pro-Russian regime in Belarus.

At the moment, Belarus is experiencing an unimaginable scale of repressions against civil society and Belarusian residents in general. There are thousands of opponents of the regime in prisons, who are subjected to severe tortures. Arrests and detentions are taking place every day. Everything that has to do with the Belarusian language and culture is being destroyed, too.

Public activists receive long prison terms for their active social, cultural, and human rights defending activities. Thus, the human rights defender, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, writer, and one of the participants of the #FreeAllWords project - Aleś Bialacki - was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Another participant of the project - poet Antol Khinevich - has already served his term and is free now.

Currently #freeallwords publishes a new poem by the journalist and political prisoner Yekaterina Andreyeva (Belarus), works by the Belarusian poet and journalist Vika Trenas, the LGBTIQ+ activist and journalist Vika Biran (Belarus), and the Ukrainian poet Kateryna Derysheva. And there are also Maryna Bandarenka and Morti Black, Dzianis Maciesha, Zmicer Zaharevich, Dmitriy Strotsev, Hanna Komar, Elina Sventsicka, Marijana Kijanowska and Nasta Kudasava.

New translators into Italian, Portuguese, and Catalan have joined #FreeAllWords project. Thus, 34 translators into 14 European languages - Catalan, Danish, English, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese and Romanian - take part in the project. More than 70 works of prose and poetry have been translated since the inception of the project.

The #FreeAllWords project continues to convey to the European audience what is happening in their European neighboring countries – in Ukraine that is defending its

independence and in Belarus grasped by the dictator's hands – with the help of the clear word of writers from these countries.

### **About the project #FreeAllWords**

The project #FreeAllWords was set up by the European Writers Council to support the Ukrainian and Belarusian writers, who continue to create their works under the conditions of Russia's military aggression on the territory of Ukraine and the brutal suppression of freedom of speech and self-expression by the Belarusian state. The main idea of the project is to introduce works by Ukrainian and Belarusian writers to a wide European audience.

**More details** on the #FreeAllWords project: <https://freeallwords.org/>

### **Kontakt**

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