

Member of the European Parliament

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His Excellency Aleksandr Mikhnevich
Embassy of the Republic of Belarus in the United Kingdom
6 Kensington Court
London W8 5DL
United Kingdom

3 December 2009

Dear Ambassador,

Reported violations at public hearing on nuclear power plant in Ostrovets, Belarus, 9 October 2009

I am writing to express my concern about reported violations of human rights, frauds and falsifications during so-called “public hearings” on the nuclear power plant environmental impact assessment (NPP EIA). Crucial omissions from the EIA itself are also extremely worrying.

At a public hearing to discuss the EIA, carried out by the Ministry of Energy of Belarus, the municipal administration and police office in Ostrovets, Belarus on October 9, 2009, I understand that distribution of critical materials was forbidden by the hearing officials. This constitutes a violation of the right of access to information and to distribute information.

Copies of a document titled “Criticism of NPP EIA” were confiscated and the Russian nuclear scientist and Ecodefense activist, Andrey Ozharovskiy, who brought these materials to the meeting was arrested.

Before the official start of public registration for the hearing, the hall was already full with people loyal to the project. Access to other participants was made extremely difficult. Those critical of the nuclear power plant that were able to gain access were not given the opportunity to speak. This was clearly not a genuine and democratic public hearing.

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In addition, I understand that the EIA did not mention hazardous effects of NPP emissions and that it did not include an assessment of nuclear waste and spent nuclear fuel management or an assessment of decommissioning the NPP - all of these elements are vital components in a reliable and thorough environmental assessment.

I urge you to do all in your power to ensure that the hearing that took place in Ostrovets in October is not officially recognised and that new public hearings are conducted in an open and transparent manner. Distribution of material conveying different points of view must be allowed, and the EAI must be amended to cover all necessary considerations in a factual and unbiased way.

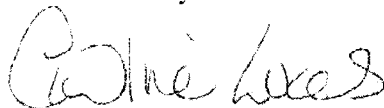
Hearings must consider the wider environmental impact of the NPP, such as Chernobyl-style radiation clouds being released following an accident and should be held under the environmental transparency requirements of the 'Convention of Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context' (Espoo convention) (which Belarus has signed and ratified) and the 'Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters' (Aarhus convention) (which Belarus has signed).

Further, I call on the Belarusian authorities to refrain from repression against researchers, young people, students, environmentalists and scientists who criticize nuclear energy and the plans to build an nuclear power plant in Belarus, which was the country most affected by the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this highly important matter.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely



Caroline Lucas MEP