



**Statement
of the Belarusian national youth council “RADA”
in relation with All-Belarusian People's Assembly**

Minsk

10/02/2021

We, the union of twenty eight democratic youth organizations of Belarus, being created with the purpose of consolidating of youth organizations and initiatives of Belarus for representation, promotion and defending common interests, exercising right to freedoms of association and other constitutional rights, represented by the Governing Body – the Board of “RADA”, make the following statement:

The VI All-Belarusian People's Assembly (APA) is to take place in Minsk on February 11-12. 2,700 Belarusians will gather in the Palace of the Republic during the epidemiological and political crisis in the society. The official sufficient reasons for this risk for the participants of the APA are the consideration and adoption of the “Basic Provisions of the Program of Socio-Economic Development of the Country for 2021-2025 and Directions of Socio-Political Development”.

According to the “Law on Republic and Local Assemblies”, these assemblies are called "The main form of direct participation of citizens in the management of the society and the state”, and participants must be elected at meetings of workers, places of study, political parties, NGOs. But is there such a possibility of governance now?

The first thing to note is the irrelevance of the proposed agenda of the APA: according to the organizers, the list of important issues of socio-political development does not include any political or epidemiological crises of 2020. It is also a misunderstanding that the “[Basic Provisions](#)” do not contain up-to-date data and forecasts on the impact of the above-mentioned crises on the life of the society. The document assigns a passive and reactive role to young people as objects of "patriotic education". Although participation in social and political life is mentioned, it does not have any definite forms, which does not solve long-standing issues of development and self-realization of the youth of Belarus.

The procedure for selecting participants of the APA deserves special attention. It is clear from the [Convening Document](#) that the candidates were elected by local authorities. In this case, according to the [Law on Assemblies](#), there may be representatives of social and labor movements, regardless of their views. But as a result - according to media reports - there will be neither representatives of the Belarusian opposition political parties and movements, nor democratic civil society organizations at the APA. This gives us a reason to believe that alternative views were discriminated against at the stage of selection of participants.



For these reasons, we have to state that the APA, which is presented by the authorities as a platform for dialogue, is in fact a meeting of the closest supporters of the government at the expense of state funding.

Of the 2,700 participants, there will be none of those who by their actions and words represent an alternative to power, as well as those who raise important questions for the society.

We also believe that the APA is an attempt to divert attention from current issues and fulfilling the 3 main demands of society after August 9, 2020: holding new elections, releasing political prisoners and investigating cases of torture and violence, unconditionally and immediately.

Given all this, we recognize that:

1. The VI All Belarusian People's Assembly is not a representative body, so any of its decisions have no force.
2. The APA is not a platform for dialogue and cannot replace a genuine dialogue in the society as long as there are political prisoners and constitutional rights are being violated.
3. Participants of the APA unreasonably risk their personal health and possible intensification of the pandemic process in the country.

We call upon:

- Participants of VI APA to refuse to participate until the 3 main requirements of society are met;
- Organizers to cancel the VI APA and postpone it to a safe time with an open form of participation for all comers and discussion of all relevant socio-political issues;
- Belarusian and international organizations and missions not to view any decision of the VI APA as an expression of will or choice of the Belarusian people and to continue to demand that the Belarusian authorities comply with the three main demands of the society: holding new elections, releasing political prisoners and investigating torture and violence.