

*Translated from Russian*

On 8 April 2010 at 5.40 p.m. the Austrian police stopped a Mercedes E-230 vehicle (number plate WD854) belonging to the Embassy of the Republic of Belarus in the Republic of Austria, driven by Mr. S. I. Blinov, an Embassy driver. Ambassador A. N. Sychev was in the vehicle, en route to an official meeting.

The police officers, without giving any explanation, demanded to see the driving licence and vehicle registration and the accreditation documents of the driver and the ambassador. After a lengthy verification of the documents, lasting about 20 minutes, the police officers demanded that the Embassy driver take a blood alcohol test. The police officers also demanded to see the fire extinguisher, the hazard sign and the first aid kit, which may be regarded as an indirect attempt to inspect the vehicle.

The Embassy driver was sober and had not violated traffic regulations. He refused to take a blood alcohol test and waited for a consular official from the Embassy to arrive.

In the course of the verification the police officers behaved rudely, ignored the fact that the ambassador was in the vehicle, refused to show their identification documents, repeatedly demanded that the driver get out of the vehicle, threatening him with arrest and detention of the vehicle, and also showed a willingness to use physical force against the driver.

In addition, the police officers did not wait for the arrival of a consular official from the Embassy and after some time curtly insisted that the vehicle should move on from the place where it had been stopped. Despite the absence of alcoholic intoxication, the Embassy driver was forbidden to drive the vehicle, his driving licence was confiscated, and the ambassador was forced to drive the vehicle. Mr. Blinov's driving licence was subsequently returned in the police station (Stiftgasse 2) to staff of the Embassy of Belarus.

The inappropriate actions of the police officers and their unwillingness to await the arrival of the consul on the scene may be regarded not only as exceeding their authority but also as a violation of article 29 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Furthermore, the detention of the ambassador for a fairly long time (about one hour) while he was on his way to an official meeting and the confiscation of the Embassy driver's driving licence were a direct hindrance to the performance of official duties.

Starting on 18 April 2010, there were pickets of up to 100 people outside the building of the Belarusian diplomatic mission in Kyrgyzstan nearly every day. During these actions traffic was blocked in front of the building and overt threats made against the diplomatic mission and its staff. The Embassy also received information about possible seizure of the Embassy building and of its staff as hostages.

Belarus repeatedly asked the Kyrgyz authorities to ensure the security of the Belarusian diplomatic mission and its staff in accordance with the provisions of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

In order to prevent harm to the lives and health of the staff of the Embassy of the Republic of Belarus in the Kyrgyz Republic, a decision was taken in May 2010

to transfer the Embassy staff to Minsk, to recall the Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus for consultations and to remove the property of the Belarusian diplomatic mission.

During the second half of 2009, in the Republic of Estonia, there were two burglaries of apartments occupied by members of the Belarusian consular office in Tallinn.

During the night of 10 August 2009, the apartment of Mr. S. I. Ventsel, consul of the consulate-general of the Republic of Belarus in Tallinn, was broken into. Cash, valuables and documents were stolen.

On 21 December 2009 the apartment of Mr. E. L. Feshchenko, vice-consul of the consulate-general of the Republic of Belarus in Tallinn, was broken into and valuables were stolen.

An investigation is underway.

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