

Brussels, 4 December 2012

CCBE Human Rights Award 2012 goes to Belarus lawyer Pavel Sapelko

As it met in Strasbourg on 30 November 2012, for the first time ever at the European Court of Human Rights, the Plenary Session of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) granted its 2012 Human Rights Award to Mr Pavel Sapelko, one of the most well-known lawyers and human rights defenders in Belarus.

Mr Sapelko had an important role in supporting human rights values in Belarus with perseverance and courage. He supported the campaign "Human rights activists against death penalty" for the abolition of the death penalty in Belarus, the only state in Europe where it is still practised. He was also involved in defending opposition members and political prisoners. Mr Sapelko carried on with his legal work regardless of multiple threats by the state authorities and his exclusion from the Minsk Bar Association as a result of the pressure from the state. He now works as a consultant for the Human Rights Centre 'Viasna' (Spring) and supports victims of the regime and their families. The Human Rights Centre has to work as an underground organisation due to the political situation whereby state authorities refuse to grant it the status of an association under the new law.

An informal English translation of Mr Sapelko's speech which was delivered in Russian is available [here](#).

The CCBE represents the bars and law societies of 31 member countries and 11 further associate and observer countries, and through them around 1 million European lawyers.

The purpose of the CCBE Human Rights Award is to highlight the work of a lawyer or a lawyer's organisation who has demonstrated outstanding commitment and sacrifice to uphold fundamental values and who has brought honour to the legal profession by upholding the highest values of professional and personal conduct in the field of human rights. For further information on the CCBE Human Rights Award, click [here](#).

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