**Newspaper “Zgoda”**

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IISEPS Directorate

**KGB and IISEPS**

*Late in the evening on December 13, officers from the Economic Security Department of the Belarusian KGB searched the apartment rented by Alexander Sosnov, deputy director of the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies, member of the board of the United Civil Party, former member of the Belarusian Parliament and minister of labor.*

Around 9 p.m. KGB employees have contacted Alexander Sosnov, requesting him to provide an opportunity to conduct a search in the apartment. The deputy director of IISEPS agreed, but gave a warning that he will invite his colleagues and journalists to be present during the search.

Those who arrived at the scene, including IISESP employees, press members – correspondents from independent Belarusian media outlets, as well as journalists from Russian and other foreign mass media, - were invited to the apartment by A. Sosnov and were present during the search in order to minimize chances for any provocations.

The search was conducted by three employees of the Central Apparatus of KGB, headed by Major Tereshenko. The search warrant was signed by one of the deputies of the head of the KGB.

As the KGB officers explained, the search was connected to investigation of a criminal case of A, Pankov, who was suspected of committing economic crimes. According to them, the suspect was renting this apartment before Sosnov. However, there were not able to explain what exactly they were trying to find at the apartment.

Moreover, the KGB representatives claimed that Pankov resided in the apartment a year ago, even though A. Sosnov was renting the apartment since April 2002.

KGB officers behaved correctly during the search. It seemed like the search was conducted without enthusiasm. In the end, after finding nothing, they wrote a report, and gave a copy of it to Sosnov.

It’s necessary to say that in past months IISEPS has been has been an object to prosecution by the Belarusian authorities. In September and October IISEPS have received 8 letter from the Justice Ministry with various accusations.

Some of them were formal nit-picking, some have been corrected already, and some were simply absurd. For example, one of the letters accused IISEPS of “cooperation with an illegal non-governmental organization Partnership,” based on the fact that a bulletin produced by the organization quoted polls conducted by IISEPS. Another letter contained an official warning for the Institute’s refusal, based on the law on intellectual property, to provide a filled out polling blank to the Ministry of Justice.

Several days before the October 17 Referendum, Oleg Manaev, Director of IISEPS, was invited to meet with the Minister of Justice Golovanov. During the conversation he was shown the reference letter by the Ministry of Justice to the Supreme Court, asking for the liquidation of the institute for “numerous violations.”

In the end of November Oleg Manaev was also summoned to the General Prosecutors office, where he was questioned about the public opinion polls, conducted by Baltic division of the Gallup Institute during the elections and the referendum.

Considering all of the above, we feel it is necessary to make a statement:

1. IISEPS, as the oldest independent research center in Belarus. have never been involved and does not plan to get involved in politics. All of our activities are strictly following the law of the Republic of Belarus. The results of our polls are open to public, any persons or organizations that are interested in them.
2. The recent actions of the authorities can be seen as an attempts to pressure the institute, threaten its employees, and thus to prevent citizens of Belarus and international community from receiving objective information and fact-based analysis of events in the country.
3. Events that took place in recent months, including those related to IISEPS, are a proof that the official Belarusian authorities basically started a war against civil society, trying to prevent inevitable changes from happening.
4. We express our gratitude to everyone who supported and continues to support the institute in this difficult time, and we assert that we will continue to follow our mission – to promote in Belarus by the means of social research the values of democracy, market economy and civil society.