



**Polish Community Council of Australia Inc.**  
**Rada Naczelna Polonii Australijskiej**

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Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am writing to express the outrage of Poles in Australia at the 8 year sentence in Belarus of Andrzej Poczobut, a Polish community leader and journalist. He was found guilty on trumped up charges of promoting disorder and neo-nazism in Belarus, and was listed as a "terrorist", because of his support for Western sanctions against Belarus.

The Polish Community Council of Australia sees this sentence as part of a pattern of repression against the independent Polish organizations in Belarus. This included the confiscation and sell off the abolished Polish Education Society headquarters, the conversion of the 4 Polish-speaking day schools in Belarus into Russian language schools, and the liquidation of the Union of Poles in Belarus, a member of World Polonia Council. Since March 2021 community leaders have been arrested for celebrating Polish Saints' days and offered a choice between imprisonment and permanent expulsion from the country.

The Polish ethnic minority have been living in Western Belarus since the Middle Ages, yet at least 14 historic pre-war and wartime Polish cemeteries are now being levelled with the ground and individual graves of Polish soldiers are defaced. Polish speaking parishioners have been denied access to the historic XIXth century Polish Catholic church in Minsk (known as the "Red Church" because of the colour of its brickwork). This persecution against the Polish minority in Belarus has intensified ever since the suppression of the democratic opposition to President Lukashenka's fraudulent re-election in 2020.

Kind regards,

Małgorzata Kwiatkowska  
President

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