

**PUBLIC**

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**Further Information on UA 59/05 (EUR 49/002/2005, 11 March 2005) and follow-up (EUR 49/003/2005, 16 March 2005) - health concern/prisoner of conscience**

**BELARUS**

**Mikhail Marinich (m)**

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Mikhail Marinich was released on 14 April. He had spent over two years in prison.

A prominent opposition activist and former Minister for External Economic Relations, and Ambassador, he ran for President in 2001. He was detained in April 2004 and convicted in December that year of "embezzlement by means of abuse of his official position executed on a large scale". He was sentenced to five years' imprisonment in a hard labour colony with confiscation of property. His prison term was reduced on appeal to three-and-a-half years, in February 2005.

Amnesty International considered Mikhail Marinich to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned on fabricated charges that were intended solely to punish him for his opposition political activities and to silence his open criticism of the state authorities.

In an interview with the Belarusian human rights organization Charter '97 following his release, Mikhail Marinich spoke of his experience. "Prison has convinced me that we should move ahead, we should fight for fast changes. We must develop our country and society. We must get rid of the dictatorship. Dictatorship is a dead-end".

**No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.**