

Mr. Nicolas Kalinin, Vitebsk, Belarus

Mr. Kalinin is an active human rights defender of Roma and other minorities in his country, a lawyer by training. Currently he heads a non-governmental organization, Belarusian Lawyers Group, based in Minsk.

Mr. Kalinin and his colleagues at the Belarusian Lawyers Group offer legal advice free of charge for the Roma in the country, aiming to fight racism and discrimination at all levels. The Belarusian Roma Lawyers Group consists of lawyers both Romani and non-Romani origin alike.

Mr. Kalinin considers lack of proper education by Roma, and on the other hand the current situation where the society at large is virtually entirely ignorant of any aspects of Romani culture or history as very serious problems needing to be tackled by human rights activists and the authorities together.

The Belarusian Lawyers Group has chosen to be politically active, to extend to openly oppose the positions of the government when appropriate for the objectives of the work.

Mr. Kalinin is also concerned about the situation of the young Roma of his country, and is one of the co-founders of the recently established Roma youth organization in Belarus.