

*Translated from Russian*

On 8 April 2010 at 5.40 p.m. the Austrian police stopped a Mercedes E-230 vehicle (number plate WD854) belonging to the Embassy of the Republic of Belarus in the Republic of Austria, driven by Mr. S. I. Blinov, an Embassy driver. Ambassador A. N. Sychev was in the vehicle, en route to an official meeting.

The police officers, without giving any explanation, demanded to see the driving licence and vehicle registration and the accreditation documents of the driver and the ambassador. After a lengthy verification of the documents, lasting about 20 minutes, the police officers demanded that the Embassy driver take a blood alcohol test. The police officers also demanded to see the fire extinguisher, the hazard sign and the first aid kit, which may be regarded as an indirect attempt to inspect the vehicle.

The Embassy driver was sober and had not violated traffic regulations. He refused to take a blood alcohol test and waited for a consular official from the Embassy to arrive.

In the course of the verification the police officers behaved rudely, ignored the fact that the ambassador was in the vehicle, refused to show their identification documents, repeatedly demanded that the driver get out of the vehicle, threatening him with arrest and detention of the vehicle, and also showed a willingness to use physical force against the driver.

In addition, the police officers did not wait for the arrival of a consular official from the Embassy and after some time curtly insisted that the vehicle should move on from the place where it had been stopped. Despite the absence of alcoholic intoxication, the Embassy driver was forbidden to drive the vehicle, his driving licence was confiscated, and the ambassador was forced to drive the vehicle. Mr. Blinov's driving licence was subsequently returned in the police station (Stiftgasse 2) to staff of the Embassy of Belarus.

The inappropriate actions of the police officers and their unwillingness to await the arrival of the consul on the scene may be regarded not only as exceeding their authority but also as a violation of article 29 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Furthermore, the detention of the ambassador for a fairly long time (about one hour) while he was on his way to an official meeting and the

to transfer the Embassy staff to Minsk, to recall the Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus for consultations and to remove the property of the Belarusian diplomatic mission.

During the second half of 2009, in the Republic of Estonia, there were two burglaries of apartments occupied by members of the Belarusian consular office in Tallinn.