

**Dear Colleagues,**

Since the 9th of August, 2020 Belarus has been facing unprecedented violations of Human Rights. Based on the feedback from the colleagues we would like to start an everyday newsletter with legal facts and human rights defenders' positions.

The information is aggregated from open online resources and our own practice. In these newsletters, we will shortly update you on everyday human rights violations in numbers and facts.

Since we see in the media a lot of fake news and propaganda (including Russian media), we will try to accumulate legal facts.

We hope that you can use this information in your work in order to support Belarus during these ruff times.

**Summary Monday, August 17:**

Based on the information from the Investigate Committee at the moment more than 600 citizens filed complaints about bodily harm during their detention by law enforcement officials, and about 100 people - about bodily harm in places of temporary detention.<sup>1</sup>

122 persons remain in isolation centers according to official data.<sup>2</sup> However human rights defenders are not fully trusting this information. Minsk - 16, Zhodino - 29, Bobruisk - 9, Gomel - 2, Grodno - 1, Smorgon - 1, Brest - 28, Ivatsevichi - 4, Drogichin - 5, Baranovichi - 6, Pinsk - 2, Braslav - 2, Lepel - 3, Vitebsk - 6, Gorodok - 2, Shumilino - 1, Orsha - 5.

There is still no data on the initiated criminal cases of torture and ill-treatment.<sup>3</sup>

Now, according to information from the tut.by portal, 76 people (at the moment of publication of this text) are listed as missing. Most of them are men, only a few women. For some of the missing, the number of days of detention they were given as an administrative punishment is known, but the location of the detention facilities is still unknown. For some, the situation is even worse: neither relatives nor volunteers know anything at all about them. Their names are not included in the lists of convicts, nor in the lists of people in Okrestsino Street or in other temporary detention facilities.<sup>4</sup>

According to the Ministry of Health, two people died during the protests, one of them died in Minsk. There are 158 people in hospitals, three severely injured. All the rest are on a stable footing. There are six detainees at Okrestsino Detention Center who needed medical support.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://t.me/skgovby/2945>

<sup>2</sup> <https://news.tut.by/society/696980.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://news.tut.by/society/696969.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://news.tut.by/society/696958.html?tg>

Today, at their peaceful assembly, doctors demanded that medical personnel be allowed freely to visit detention facilities.

They also demand that medical personnel, who will have the right to examine all detainees physically, be provided with the right to decide on hospitalization and organize access for specialized teams of doctors who will be primarily involved in providing medical care to detainees independently and individually. The teams, according, will be formed directly by medical specialists and will include surgeons, traumatologists, and resuscitators.<sup>5</sup>

### **Summary 9-16 of August 2020**

On 9 August 2020, the presidential elections in Belarus took place. The outcome of these elections was widely reported as unfair, falsified, and manipulated. This led to widespread protests across Belarus. These protests have been, and are being, brutally dispersed and more than 7000 people have been arrested. It is widely reported that those arrested are ill-treated. Those arrested are held in inhuman conditions and there are reports of torture and other prohibited ill-treatment.

### **Human rights violations:**

#### **The right to life**

The Belarusian law enforcement agencies used firearms against the protesters, which indicates that people were deliberately deprived of their lives. According to the ambulance driver's report, those who suffered from gunshot wounds were taken to the Military Hospital. According to an anonymous report from the Military Hospital, they have not less than 60 wounded people.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, the authorities reported only one death in the vicinity of Pushkinskaya Metro Station. The version of the Ministry of Internal Affairs about this case raises many questions since the video distributed by journalists shows that nothing exploded in the hands of the person, who was later found dead. It also shows that the person was shot dead with a firearm, not killed with an explosion of an object in his hands. The victim's wife believes that her husband is in the video. An official investigation into the protest participant's death has not been launched, no investigative actions or examinations have been conducted, and no witnesses have been sought or questioned, which indicates that the authorities are not willing to provide a quick, effective, and independent investigation into the death of the protest participant's death.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://news.tut.by/society/696980.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://news.tut.by/society/696832.html>

<sup>7</sup> Based on the report of the "Zvyano" NGO on violation of the rights of participants of protests in Belarus from August 7, 2020, to August 14, 2020. Available on request, not published.

### **Disproportionate and illegal use of force:**

Between 9 and 11 August, riot militia and other units used physical violence against peaceful demonstrators, rubber sticks, tear gas, rubber bullets, and stun grenades. Rubber bullets were deliberately used from the closest possible distance, which led to serious injuries to the demonstrators. Stun grenades were thrown into the crowd causing severe shrapnel wounds, lacerations, and burns to various body parts. There were two cases when prisoner transport purposefully crashed into a column of protesters. On August 12, the use of a service weapon by a police officer against a demonstrator was reported in Brest. The protester was hospitalized in serious condition with a head wound.

In addition, On 10 and 11 August, riot militia and special services deliberately beat people on the streets, including bystanders. Beatings took place where the officials were not given any resistance. Security forces broke glass and mirrors of by-passing cars for no reason. There has been at least one case when a riot militia officer tried and could not break the car glass and shot it point-blank with rubber bullets several times. A driver was at the driver's seat.

Moreover, it is revealed that in places of detention the demonstrators do not receive any food, 30 to 50 people were kept in cells designed for 4-6. The detainees were purposefully beaten by riot policemen. Close relatives were not informed about the whereabouts of those detained and arrested. Many relatives were also detained when coming to the police offices to find out about their loved ones, including minors. The trials were held behind closed doors without the access of lawyers.

### **The Right to a fair trial**

Those detained at peaceful assemblies had their rights to a fair trial, including the right to a defense, to open public hearings, and the right to appeal against a court decision, significantly limited.

At this point, it is known that between 10 and 12 August most of the detained peaceful protesters were tried right in the buildings of detention facilities (isolation centers for offenders, temporary detention centers) in Minsk, in Zhodino (Minsk region), in Grodno, in Baranovichi, Drogichin and Pruzhany (Brest region), Mogilev, Brest, and other cities.

In court buildings, information is provided only about mobile court proceedings, names of judges, and addresses of respective detention centers. There is no chance to get to the trial held in isolation facilities due to the status of restricted premises. Lawyers are not allowed there. Information on the outcomes of those proceedings is never provided.

Following a result of consideration of administrative cases, many detainees get sentenced to lengthy periods of administrative arrest without the possibility of appealing against the decision (they are not given paper, writing supplies, there is no opportunity to pay a fee and consult lawyers).

### **Internet service disruptions**

During the whole day of 9 August 2020 Internet access in Belarus was wholly or partly limited. Blockings were either total or concerned specific Internet services, web sites, social networks, messaging services, whether local or global. It is alleged that the Belarusian authorities decided to block data transfer protocols which led to the disruption of connectivity of the Belarusian networks. All foreign traffic was directed through one channel only in an attempt to allow for deep-packet inspection making VPN services ineffective.

Problems with Internet access are continuing.

### **Strikes**

Over the past week, workers across Belarus went on strike and joined mass protests. On Friday, 14 of August 2020, workers at three major state-run automotive plants (BelAZ, MAZ, and MTZ) and several other enterprises in Belarus, including metallurgy, electronics and technology, pharmaceutical, fertilizer, ceramics, and other enterprises, went on strike in protest against police violence following the country's disputed election. Healthcare workers and members of the Minsk Philharmonia have also walked off the job.

After the opposition had called for a general strike, on Monday the protesters gathered in front of the heavy vehicle manufacturer MZKT headquarters. Crowds of workers from other factories were on their way to MZKT to join the protests. At the state-owned automobile giant, BelAZ workers marched through the factory chanting in protest.

Among the demands of striking workers - to stop the violence on the part of riot militia and other security units and to hold them responsible, the resignation of Alexander Lukashenko, the recognition of the elections as illegitimate and the appointment of new ones, the release of political prisoners. Workers have no economic demands.

At the moment, the strikes have not yet led to a complete shutdown of enterprises, but the list of enterprises on strike continues to grow. Independent trade unions are calling for the creation of strike committees, including the national one.

### **On the side of the State:**

According to the Investigative Committee, on August 10, 21 criminal cases were opened on the facts of riots and violence against internal affairs officers on the night of August 9th to 10th

in Minsk, Brest, Grodno, Gomel, Pinsk, Polotsk, Zhlobin, Lida, Soligorsk, Bobruisk, Slonim and Volkovysk. 80 people were detained in the matter of these cases.<sup>8</sup>

### **On the side of Human Rights defenders and society:**

Belarussian human rights defenders are directly working with victims and their families ,monitoring human rights violations, trying to monitor court hearings (court hearings are mainly closed for the public). .

United support center has been established - <https://probono.by>. Legal professionals, lawyers, human rights defenders, medical representatives, volunteers, and others are united efforts to support victims of human rights violations and torture.

Number of International NGOs joined to support the work with victims - OMCT, IPHR.<sup>9</sup>

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### **Useful link to follow up the situation**

#### **Recent Statement of Belarusian Human Rights Defenders:**

- [Civil society organisations requested Supreme Court to consider election results appeals](#)
- [Срочное обращение к Спецдокладчикам ООН в связи с шатдауном в Беларуси](#)
- [HRDs appeal to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Thematic Special Rapporteurs](#)
- [Human rights activists call to end arrests, violence, and use of weapons against peaceful civilians](#)
- [Правозащитники обратились к Верховному комиссару ООН по правам человека и тематическим спецдокладчикам по ситуации в Беларуси](#)
- [Urgent appeal concerning Internet service disruptions in Belarus in the context of the presidential elections of 9 August 2020](#)

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<https://www.belta.by/incident/view/sk-vozbudil-21-ugolovnoe-delo-po-faktam-massovyh-besporjadkov-i-nasilija-v-otnoshenii-pravoohranitelej-402352-2020/>

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[https://www.iphronline.org/call-for-volunteer-support-collecting-verifying-and-organizing-open-source-evidence-on-ongoing-human-rights-violations-in-belarus.html?fbclid=IwAR2tX94zs7wSpPaMVHvbEb2a1C0iccwDTq-HDLKdW2zOOGK\\_XFaStWV0cCU](https://www.iphronline.org/call-for-volunteer-support-collecting-verifying-and-organizing-open-source-evidence-on-ongoing-human-rights-violations-in-belarus.html?fbclid=IwAR2tX94zs7wSpPaMVHvbEb2a1C0iccwDTq-HDLKdW2zOOGK_XFaStWV0cCU)