

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.

### **Summary Friday-Sunday, August 21 -23:**

From 17 August, major Belarusian companies announced termless strikes, and the protests are still taking place in Minsk, in the regional centres, in big cities and small towns all over the country.

People come out to the peaceful protests to express their disagreement with the election results, as well as with the political vector of the State towards the civilian population, including disproportionate use of force, torture and inhuman treatment of the detained, and the complete absence of working legal mechanisms and rule of law.

On Sunday more than 200.000 people participated in a peaceful demonstration in Minsk. The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that no one was detained in Minsk. The information on the regions is still to be checked.

At the same time Radio Liberty reported 11 people detained during the demonstration to support Belarusians in Moscow.<sup>1</sup>

There are still no initiated criminal cases on the facts of tortures and ill-treatment however there are already dozens of cases based on injuries received by law-enforcement officers.

Nikita Krivcov who disappeared on 12 August was found dead in Minsk forest area on 22 August. His family considered that he participated in demonstration and disappeared after. He might be the fifth participant of protests who are dead now.

### **Politically motivated persecution**

Andrei Ostapovich, a criminal investigator from Belarus, has been detained in Pskov (Russia). He recently quit his job in the Investigative Committee and proclaimed that "Lukashenko has to leave". He tried to reach Latvia via Russia but was detained.<sup>2</sup>

The Interior Ministry announced on Friday that an organizer of a strike at the Minsk Automobile Plant was detained as workers from industries across the country continue to strike.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://t.me/radiosvaboda/8447>

<sup>2</sup> <https://finance.tut.by/news697689.html?tg>

<sup>3</sup> [https://interfax.by/news/obshchestvo/skandaly\\_i\\_proisshestviya/1281479/](https://interfax.by/news/obshchestvo/skandaly_i_proisshestviya/1281479/)

Human rights activist Kristina Kashitskaya, the creator of the telegram channel @zhlobin\_help was detained.<sup>4</sup>

Two Russian journalists (working for @SvobodaRadio) have been detained in Minsk. Yulia Vishnevetskaya and Andrey Kiselev are currently being interrogated. Also, a reporter for @Belsat\_TV, Jauhien Merkis, has been arrested. The editorial team of @SvobodaRadio notes that the journalists' press credentials were issued by the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The government continues to ban many foreign journalists from entering the country, citing their lack of credentials.<sup>5</sup>

The opposition politician - Pavel Sevyarynets served 90 days of administrative arrest. He was supposed to be released on August 21. Now a criminal case has been opened against him.<sup>6</sup>

### **Freedom of speech and media control**

In Belarus, critical journalists and bloggers are threatened and arrested, leading news sites are blocked, access to information is restricted.

The state exercises total control over all TV channels. Dozens of people, including reporters, news anchors and technicians, are quitting their jobs at Belarusian state-owned news companies in the troubled aftermath of the presidential election.<sup>7</sup> Russian specialists took the vacant places. This may be interpreted as Russia started a hybrid operation to establish control over the media, public space, law-enforcement and administration sectors in Belarus. Belarusian TV which earlier was fully controlled by Belarus, now fell under the control of the Russian authorities.<sup>8</sup>

On Friday, the Ministry of Information had restricted access of Belarusian users to websites of a large number of media and political movements. Most well-known of them are Radio Svaboda, Belsat TV, Euroradio, Solidarity newspaper, Udf.by, The Village, By.tribuna.com, Vitebsk Courier, People's News of Vitebsk, Masheka.by, and the website of the Human rights center Viasna<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.voiceofbelarus.com/live-feed-22-aug/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/rfe-rl-correspondents-detained-in-minsk-expelled-from-belarus/30796906.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://news.tut.by/economics/697478.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/2020/08/23/it-was-just-lies-lies-lies-belarusian-journalists-on-life-in-a-state-run-news-company>

<sup>8</sup> <https://isans.org/articles/gibridnaya-intervencziya.html>

<sup>9</sup> The full list of blocked websites:

[https://telegra.ph/Spisok-zablokirovannyh-resursov-BelGIEH-s-22-avgusta-v-Belarusi-08-21?fbclid=IwAR089A9WttggvyyGZyXOqnlSa8BRa\\_RVhHyHUcyrwVtFQvZR7vTXypzJwbq](https://telegra.ph/Spisok-zablokirovannyh-resursov-BelGIEH-s-22-avgusta-v-Belarusi-08-21?fbclid=IwAR089A9WttggvyyGZyXOqnlSa8BRa_RVhHyHUcyrwVtFQvZR7vTXypzJwbq)

On Friday, under the pretext of the printing press failure, the state-owned Belarusian Printing House disrupted the release of Narodnaya Volya and Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belarusi newspapers. For Komsomolskaya Pravda, this is the third time since the presidential election.

The Belarusian Association of Journalists published a statement, which states that “these actions not only violate the rights of journalists and the media, but also restrict the constitutional right of citizens to receive complete, reliable and timely information”.<sup>10</sup>

## Digital Freedoms

Blocks and restrictions on Internet access continue. One of the mobile operators (A1) officially explained that the internet outages are due to “government officials' orders to significantly limit the capacity of the network in the interests of national security”. Problems with mobile internet took place during the peaceful protest on Sunday.<sup>11</sup>

## Religious Freedoms

Catholic leaders expressed their support to peaceful protests and spoke out against violence from the state. State radio did not air Sunday divine service that was traditionally broadcasted. Also there's information that some priests called for interrogations.<sup>12</sup>

## Business and Human Rights

The International Game Developers Association (IGDA) has made an open appeal to Lukashenko and the Hi-Tech Park administration.<sup>13</sup>

“The International Game Developers Association (IGDA) is the largest game developer community in the world. As representatives of the IGDA Belarus Chapter, we must speak up against the violence, human rights transgressions, and handling of the recent election.”

“If these requests are not met, we will be forced to advise all of our industry partners, channels, and event hosts to avoid engagements with Belarus. We will provide assistance to our local game studios and developers to relocate to other countries of their choice. We will advise all other developers and related technology companies to avoid investments and dealings with the Republic of Belarus.”

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<sup>10</sup><https://baj.by/en/content/baj-demands-unblock-websites-stop-pressure-media-and-ensure-release-publications>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.dw.com/ru/protesty-v-belarusi-v-centr-minska-stjanuty-voennye-podrazdelenija/a-54661785>

<sup>12</sup><https://naviny.by/new/20200823/1598180216-gosradio-ne-pustilo-v-efir-translyaciyu-bogosluzheniya-v-mariinskom-kostele>

<sup>13</sup>[https://igda.org/news-archive/igda-statement-on-violence-and-human-rights-in-belarus/?fbclid=IwAR0T5xKWKJRiQ8I9EAICHOzCTdfdHcgmRFncSPjtAAd-j\\_aqPSTMmqw9Uk](https://igda.org/news-archive/igda-statement-on-violence-and-human-rights-in-belarus/?fbclid=IwAR0T5xKWKJRiQ8I9EAICHOzCTdfdHcgmRFncSPjtAAd-j_aqPSTMmqw9Uk)

## **Use of military force against civilians and work of Red Cross in Belarus**

On August 23, 2020 the Belarusian military began deploying in Minsk. During Sunday morning Belarusian army units were preparing barricades and setting up barbed wire. Belarusian security forces did not take any action against protesters, but the Ministry of Defense released a statement claiming protesters are waving the flags of “fascists” and stated the military would directly protect World War II memorials in Belarus.

Customary international law prohibits the use of military force against civilians and unarmed people. The use of military force against peaceful protesters can lead in perspective to serious violations of international law such as crimes against humanity.

On 12 August 2020, Belarus Red Cross Community started its First Aid (FA) activities after a long process of discussions with the Belarusian Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior. The range of activities implemented by the Belarus RC include:

- 1) First Aid provision by disaster response teams.
- 2) Support to the detained people in detention centres and to those under investigation.  
But unfortunately, Belarus Red Cross does not have direct access to detainees, and therefore are handing over the donations to the detention centres representatives for the distribution at the moment, but will discuss with the detention centres how to improve the used approaches.
- 3) Belarus Red Cross organizes free of charge First aid training for all applicants.
- 4) Safer Access Framework.

Link to the: [Emergency Plan of Action \(EPoA\) Belarus: assistance to people affected during mass actions.](#)