

The information is aggregated from open online resources and our own practice. Today's newsletter is dedicated to civil society and NGOs in Belarus, we will also shortly update you on human rights violations in numbers and facts.

### **Summary Saturday-Sunday, September 5-6:**

Peaceful protests continue in Belarus, and about 200,000 people took part in a peaceful march on Sunday. The human rights center "Viasna" reports about 194 detainees in Minsk.<sup>1</sup> There were also detentions in other cities. At least 230 people were detained in Minsk over the weekend. The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that more than 600 people were detained across the country on Sunday.

Since August 9, more than 10,000 people have passed through detentions and trials, which is 0.5% of all Minsk residents.<sup>2</sup>

On Sunday march in Minsk several people ran into a small coffee shop to hide. A group of people in civilian clothes and masks ran up and smashed the glass door with batons. Suspects in the peaceful protest were then brutally detained.<sup>3</sup>

Serious problems with mobile internet were observed in Minsk.

### **Civil Society, NGOs and Human Rights**

For 4 weeks targeted pressure has been used on various groups in Belarus: media (journalists, bloggers, photographers), representatives of independent labor collectives; leaders and members of the coordinating council<sup>4</sup>; people within the educational system who do not agree with the pro-government position (schools and university teachers, students and their parents); business representatives (especially the IT sector), independent lawyers (advocates); athletes. Last week targeted pressure started on civil society representatives and NGOs.

Recipients of foreign aids (grants) are called to the departments of combating economic crimes "for a conversation". At least six organizations from different cities have already reported pressure: for many NGOs, foreign grants are the main source of funding.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://spring96.org/be/news/99397>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/protests-in-minsk-as-belarusian-opposition-pressures-lukashenka/30823363.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://people.onliner.by/2020/09/06/video-zhestkogo-zaderzhaniya-v-kafe>

<sup>4</sup> opposition body to the current government

<sup>5</sup> <https://greenbelarus.info/articles/04-09-2020/poluchateley-grantov-vyzyvayut-v-ubep-na-besedu>

It is worth noting that the Belarusian civil society showed unprecedented solidarity in the fight against Covid19, more than 300,000 euros were raised to help medical workers by civil society, including Belarusian diaspora abroad and soon after that an updated presidential decree on foreign aid was issued.<sup>6</sup>

On August 27, 2020, Decree on foreign aid No. 3 entered into force.<sup>7</sup> The main changes are as follows: purposes of using foreign aid are changed, payment for research, development, training and implementation of research programs are excluded. It is possible to use foreign aid for other purposes not fixed in the Decree No. 3, but it is necessary to obtain the approval of the Interdepartmental Commission on Foreign Granted Assistance.<sup>8</sup>

Detentions of prominent NGO representatives began during this weekend:

On Sunday, **Andrei Egorov**, political scientist and civil activist, Chairman of the Coordination Committee of the Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, member of the Green Network, was abducted by unknown people on the streets, during a peaceful protest demonstration. Current location unknown.

**Irina Sukhiy**, Chairman of the Green Network Council and a representative of the Ekodom NGO, leader of the public campaign against the Ostrovets NPP and one of the most well known environmental activists in Belarus, was abducted by people in civilian clothes at her home and placed in the Sovetsky District Police Department in Minsk

**Anastasia Zakharevich**, journalist of the "Green Portal", a media resource of the "Green Network", by people in civilian clothes at the shop. She was charged for participation in non authorised mass event.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> A quite unique “dissident” way of dealing with COVID-19, uncoordinated measures nationwide together with inconsequent official information policy during the pandemic initiated a high level of self-organisation on various levels. Business, civil society and many individuals started a “people’s quarantine” despite lacking any official state recommendations. They worked from home, limited social contacts and raised awareness about the virus. Medical staff published self-made informational videos online, universities and local governments were often forced to take responsibility and make their own decisions in combating the virus, which is not typical for the Belarusian reality. Possibly one of the largest charity campaigns in Belarusian history – [Bycovid19](#) – provided hospitals with needed equipment bought thanks to individual and business donations.

<sup>7</sup><https://eurasiangroup.org/en/v-belarusi-usovershenstvovan-poryadok-polucheniya-bezvozmezdnoy-pomoshhi>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.sorainen.com/ru/publikatsii/obzor-osnovnyh-polozhenij-dekreta-3-prezidenta-respubliki-belarus-ot-25-05-2020-ob-inostranoj-bezvozmezdnoj-pomoshhi/>

<sup>9</sup><https://greenbelarus.info/articles/06-09-2020/trebuem-osvobodit-politicheskikh-zaklyuchennyh-i-vseh-za-derzhannyh-i>

Many civil society organizations are supposed to implement projects, with local governments (or state officials) as one of the target groups within the project framework. Number of organizations have publicly stated that “in current conditions it is impossible to continue working with the state bodies, civil society organizations do not recognize the elections and demand new ones, as well as to stop the violence and punish all people involved in the violence”.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>[https://greenbelarus.info/articles/02-09-2020/s-takoy-vlastyu-nevozmozhno-sotrudnichat-obshchestvennye-organizacii-vremenno?fbclid=IwAR1896BeXes-bvLJzAwIplQ2\\_UWYZNTh6I3i402Qw1rKM93AEPByW0M8xF0](https://greenbelarus.info/articles/02-09-2020/s-takoy-vlastyu-nevozmozhno-sotrudnichat-obshchestvennye-organizacii-vremenno?fbclid=IwAR1896BeXes-bvLJzAwIplQ2_UWYZNTh6I3i402Qw1rKM93AEPByW0M8xF0)