

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

Summary: Tuesday 17 November to Friday 20 November 2020

Following arbitrary mass detentions during the rally on Sunday 15 November, there was another round of administrative court hearings. Human rights activists report that since 1 November, 1,325 people were sentenced to short-term arrests (13 days on average) and 520 people were fined (some after having awaited trial in detention).¹

There are repeated reports about police brutality, torture, and ill-treatment of participants of peaceful protests. Protestors are taken to hospitals from police departments and detention centres.² The police record intimidating videos with the protestors (who are bruised, their faces marked with blood) that are later broadcast by state TV.

Investigating Raman Bandarenka's death

The General Prosecutor's office initiated a case regarding the disclosure of medical confidentiality, bringing grave consequences. The charge is brought against a Minsk Emergency Hospital doctor who provided TUT.by with details about Raman Bandarenka's condition on his arrival to hospital, specifically that there was no alcohol in his bloodstream.

The General Prosecutor's office commented that "these actions [disclosure of medical confidentiality] entailed grave consequences, expressed in increased tension in society, creating an atmosphere of mistrust in the competent state bodies, encouraging citizens to aggression and unlawful actions".

Kaciaryna Barysievich, a journalist who wrote the article about Raman Bandarenka's death for TUT.by, was arrested and taken to the KGB pre-trial detention facility, and her home was searched.³

Access to water in Novaja Baravaja

The Minsk 'rebel' neighbourhood of Novaja Baravaja had its water supply and central heating cut for several days. The water flow to the central water pipe was turned off deliberately, which

¹ See Viasna: <http://spring96.org/ru/news/100499>

² Here we refer to numerous publications in the press and social media. Architect Vadzim Dzmitronak (Gazetaby: <https://gazetaby.info/post/zhenazaderzhannogo-arxitektora-v-priemnom-pokoe-v/170908/>); sysadmin Michail (TUT.by: <https://news.tut.by/society/708208.html?tg>); actor Ilya Yasinski (TUT.by: <https://news.tut.by/society/708208.html?tg>)

³ See TUT.by: <https://news.tut.by/society/708514.html>

was discovered later. Despite this, it took several days to restore the water supply back to normal levels.⁴

Politically motivated criminal cases

There are ongoing hearings in criminal courts where charges are linked to protest activity (several cases in Minsk, Vaukavysk, Hrodna). Sentences were imposed on both Anton Lakishyk, three years in a penal colony,⁵ and on Paviel Mankinienka, four years,⁶ for violence against the police.

Criminal cases are brought against the administrators of popular Telegram channels. One of the admins of the White Coats Telegram channel for medical workers, Uladzislau Marcinovich, was detained on 19 November. He is charged for organising actions breaching the public order.⁷ On 18 November, Iryna Shchasnaja, who also administered a popular Telegram channel, was detained in Minsk.⁸

Other news

Diplomatic missions in Minsk addressed the Belarusian authorities with a strong joint statement.⁹ The statement repeats the call on the Belarusian authorities “to immediately stop indiscriminate violence against their own people and release all those unjustly detained” and urges the authorities “to observe and respect the Belarusian people’s human rights and fundamental freedoms”. The statement indicates that “pressure on the medical, academic, and media communities has been especially harsh”. Diplomats also ask them to address their “repeated requests for access to political prisoners and penitentiary facilities”.

UN human rights experts are gravely concerned by increased reports of mass detentions, intimidation, and torture. They called on authorities to conduct a prompt, independent, and impartial investigation into the excessive use of force and unlawful retaliation at peaceful protest.¹⁰

The US House of Representatives approved the Belarus Democracy, Human Rights, and Sovereignty Act of 2020. The act calls “for the immediate release without preconditions of all

⁴ See Belsat:

<https://belsat.eu/ru/news/gryaznye-no-ne-slomlennye-zhiteli-novoj-borovoj-ne-veryat-v-obychnoe-otklyuchenie-vody/>

⁵ See Viasna: <https://spring96.org/be/news/100476>

⁶ See Viasna: <https://spring96.org/be/news/100481>

⁷ See Ministry of Internal affairs, press office Telegram channel: <https://t.me/pressmvd/2398>

⁸ See Viasna: <https://spring96.org/be/news/100485>

⁹ See EU Delegation to Belarus. Joint Statement by the EU Delegation to Belarus on behalf of the EU Member States represented in Minsk, the British Embassy, the Embassy of Switzerland, and the Embassy of the United States of America on the deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus.

https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/belarus/88853/node/88853_en

¹⁰ See OHCHR. Belarus: UN experts call for probe into violence against protestors:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26520&LangID=e>

political prisoners in Belarus”. It also mentions the need to support democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, as well as freedom of religion and freedom of speech.¹¹

¹¹ US Congress. Belarus Democracy, Human Rights, and Sovereignty Act of 2020:
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/8438/text>