

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: Saturday 28 November to Monday 30 November 2020

The human rights situation in Belarus continues to deteriorate. For almost four months, peaceful rallies have been held throughout the country, in various forms, in response to the presidential election results and serious human rights violations, including violence and torture, which have occurred since the elections.

More than 30,700 peaceful protesters have been detained. The departments of the Investigative Committee received approximately 4,000 allegations of torture. Although not a single criminal case has been opened concerning human rights violations by law enforcement officers, more than 900 criminal cases have been brought against political opponents of the government.

Peaceful protesters are detained every Sunday, with law enforcement using disproportionate force. On Sunday 29 November, protesters gathered in their neighbourhoods and residential areas and marched together with their neighbours through their districts' main streets. Even though protests were clearly peaceful in nature, riot police went to disperse the rallies, in some cases using non-lethal weapons. Reportedly, 424 people were detained, most of them in Minsk, with at least 10 people taken to hospitals from the police departments.¹ Among the detained are Olga Smolanka, a prominent NGO lawyer and activist (now released) and Dmitry Kruk, a well-known economist and Coordination Council member.

Pressure, use of force, and human rights violations are systematic. Representatives of various professions, including medical professionals, eminent sports players, artists, and teachers, of various ages (including children) are faced with criminal responsibility.

In addition, human rights defenders and lawyers are under pressure;² criminal cases are brought against representatives of independent strike committees; and students are expelled from universities.

Addition to the political prisoners list

In response to reports of criminal charges brought against **Maksim Pauliushchyk**, who painted the phrase 'We Will Not Forget' on a pavement, representatives of the Belarusian

¹ See Viasna: <https://spring96.org/be/news/100682>

² See Viasna: Repression against 'Viasna' human rights defenders: Increase in persecution before and after election <https://spring96.org/en/news/100652>

human rights community recognised the imprisonment of Maksim Pauliushchyk to be arbitrary and politically motivated. Therefore, Maksim Pauliushchyk is considered a political prisoner.³

Digital rights

On 22 November, mobile companies “in accordance with the order of the authorised state bodies” reduced mobile phone internet bandwidth from 11.00am to 4.00pm. This led to a significant deterioration in data transmission quality and/or temporary unavailability of the service.⁴ Since August, the internet for mobile phones has been blocked in Minsk for several hours every Sunday.

Multiple administrative charges and short-term arrests

Olga Khizhinkova, Miss Belarus 2008, who serves her third short-term arrest in a row is not the only person kept in a detention centre for more than a month. Yan Salanovich, a student and an ex-employee of the KGB scientific and technical centre, was arrested on 1 November. Since then he has faced five trials in a row, all while still in the detention centre, and has been sentenced to 71 days of arrest in total.⁵

Good news

Members of the German Bundestag took over godparenthood for several more Belarusian political prisoners: Dzianis Marusevich, Raman Kananovich, and Dzmitry Dubkou.⁶

³ See Viasna: <https://spring96.org/en/news/100672>

⁴ See ONLINER: <https://tech.onliner.by/2020/11/29/v-minske-zabaraxlil-mobilnyj-internet>

⁵ See TUT.by: <https://news.tut.by/society/709456.html?tg>

⁶ See Viasna: <https://spring96.org/en/news/100673>