

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 8 December to Friday 11 December 2020

Four months ago, protesters took to the streets to have a say against the rigged election, police brutality, violence, and ill treatment in detention. The authorities continue their policy of severe crackdowns, mass detentions, and intimidation.

The groups under particular pressure are:

- journalists (five journalists currently in jail, three of them facing criminal charges¹; 370 journalists were detained around 80 have resulted in a prison sentence, at least 62 journalists have been victims of violence, mistreatment or even torture while detained);
- students (there are at least 14 students among over 160 long-term political prisoners in Belarus. In the last three months alone, at least 144 students have been forcibly removed from the register of students from their universities for their political activities. Over 380 students have been arrested²);
- medical workers;
- human rights activists (in a recent case, human rights activist Ales Kaputski was detained when he disseminated the text of Universal Declaration of Human Rights on International Human Rights Day);
- people who used to work in law enforcement agencies and now support the protest;
- residents of 'rebel' neighbourhoods;
- administrators of local Telegram channels;
- those who faced police violence and tried to file complaints through the state prosecutor's office or Investigation Committee (there has not been a single case opened to investigate police violence; instead, there are dozens of cases where the protesters are accused of violence against the police. For instance, Natallia Hersche, a Belarus-born 51-year-old Swiss national, has been sentenced to two and a half years in prison for removing a balaclava from a riot police officer during a protest on 19 September,³ Oleg Efremenko from Viciebsk was sentenced to four and a half years in prison for violence against a police officer, who fell down and scratched his hands⁴);
- people who promote and defend the symbols of the protest (Raman Bandarenka was beaten to death after he objected when strangers cut off white-red-white ribbons near his place; several people are facing long-term criminal charges for painting "We will not

¹ See BAJ: <https://baj.by/be/analytics/represii-suprac-zhurnalistau-tablica-spis-aryshtavanyh>

² See Students Solidarity Alliance Belarus and Libereco petition: <https://act.campax.org/petitions/stop-the-repression-against-belarusian-students>

³ See Viasna: <http://spring96.org/en/news/100817>

⁴ See Viasna: <http://spring96.org/ru/news/100860>

forget” on the pavement;⁵ people are arrested for having flags or even white-red-white clothes on their balconies);

- pensioners (regular Monday pensioner marches result in everything from detentions and sentencing to short-term arrests).

Rule of law

Ex-political prisoner Mikalay Autukhovich arrested and called ‘leader of terrorist group’. The police and the KGB arrested a ‘group of terrorists’ who are behind serious crimes in Hrodna and the region, including committing acts of arson and bombing to “exert pressure on security forces and their families”, state-controlled TV station Belarus 1 reported on Tuesday. According to them, the gang was led by former Vaukavysk businessman **Mikalay Autukhovich**.⁶ The news story contains police footage featuring Mikalay Autukhovich, who says that the Belarusian authorities might jail him for life because he repeatedly called for the overthrow of the regime.⁷

Universal Jurisdiction

Lithuania’s Prosecutor General, Evaldas Pasilis, has launched a pre-trial investigation into crimes against humanity under a complaint by Belarusian citizen **Maxim Khoroshin**.⁸ In response, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Belarus stated: “The subjective interpretation by individual officials of the Lithuanian oversight body of the possibility of using the universal jurisdiction principle in this case is used as a tool of interference in Belarus’s domestic affairs.”⁹ Tikhonovskaya urges other countries to follow Lithuania’s suit and investigate torture in Belarus.¹⁰

Human rights and COVID19

Minsk imposes a temporary ban on exiting the country through land border checkpoints for citizens and permanent residence card holders. Although departure of citizens through land checkpoints is temporarily restricted, the ban does not apply to Minsk National Airport; one still

⁵ See Viasna, “We Will Not Forget”: Prison sentences for writing on pavement:

<http://spring96.org/en/news/100832>

⁶ See more about Mikalay Autukhovich: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikalay_Autukhovich

⁷ See Belsat:

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/state-run-tv-calls-ex-political-prisoner-mikalai-autukhovich-leader-of-terrorist-group/>

⁸ See Delfi:

<https://en.delfi.lt/politics/prosecutor-generals-office-launches-probe-into-police-violence-in-minsk.d?id=85955159>

⁹ See BelTa:

<https://eng.belta.by/society/view/belarusian-prosecution-service-responds-to-lithuanias-use-of-universal-jurisdiction-principle-135723-2020/>

¹⁰ See The Baltic Times:

https://www.baltictimes.com/tikhonovskaya_urges_countries_to_follow_lithuania_s_suit_investigate_torture_in_belarus/

has the opportunity to fly out of Belarus. Persons who study abroad or have another country's residence card will be allowed to leave the country no more than once in six months. The new rules also impose restrictions on foreigners arriving in Belarus. They will have to show a certificate confirming the negative result of a lab test for COVID-19.¹¹

Foreign citizens

Roberto Valdes Casanuevo, graphic designer from Cuba who has lived in Belarus for almost 30 years, having a family and three children here facing deportation. He was detained during the peaceful march on November 8, and is currently in the process of deportation because his residence permit was not extended due to his active civil position.¹²

Other news

- A coalition of Belarusian human rights defenders presented a report entitled 'Belarus. August 2020: 'Justice' for Protesters'. It highlights violations of the standards of a fair trial after tens of thousands of peaceful demonstrators protested the rigged presidential election, then thousands were detained en masse and were convicted in August 2020. The [report](#) (in Russian) was prepared by the Human Rights Center, Viasna, and experts of the Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House, with support from the International Federation for Human Rights and the World Organization against Torture.¹³
- The law on the ratification of the agreement between Belarus and Russia on the mutual recognition of visas and on other issues related to the entry of foreign citizens and stateless persons into the territory of the Union State has been signed.¹⁴

Good news

As a sign of solidarity with Belarusians, **Bert Bouwmeester**, the mayor of Coeverden (Brest's sister city) officially appealed to the Belarusian authorities and asked to stop violence and Human rights violations, and a white-red-white flag was raised at the city hall.¹⁵

¹¹ <https://belsat.eu/en/news/coronavirus-as-official-reason-belarus-to-close-land-border-for-leavers/>

¹² <https://pen-centre.by/en/news/cultural-right>

¹³ See Viasna: <http://spring96.org/en/news/100856>

¹⁴ <https://belsat.eu/en/news/lukashenka-signs-law-on-ratification-of-agreement-on-mutual-visa-recognition-with-russia/>

¹⁵ <http://www.coevorden.nl/>