

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 15 December to Friday 18 December 2020**

Belarus has been roiled by nearly daily protests since early August when it was declared that Lukashenka had won the presidential election. Police have violently cracked down on the protests. There have also been credible reports of torture and ill-treatment, and several people have died.

### **Harassment regardless of age**

Over the past few months the pursuit of minors and seniors for executing their right to freedom of assembly and expression became a regular practice.

On 14 December, the Monday March of Pensioners, also known as the Wisdom March, was dispersed. More than 100 people were detained, with the oldest person aged 78. They spent several hours in police departments, often without the option to sit down. Some of the detained were later released, while others were sent to a temporary detention centre.<sup>1</sup>

On 15 December, a Minsk court convicted **Lizaveta Bursava** for having a white-red-white flag on the balcony of her apartment. Lizaveta Bursava is 87 years old.<sup>2</sup>

A 15-year-old, **Ivan Shashko**, was detained in early December. He is the creator of the second Telegram channel 'Punishers of Belarus', where the personal data of the security forces was published. He was detained by 10 people – riot police and an employee of the GUBOPiK. The interrogation lasted 3.5 hours. Afterwards Ivan was released home, but managed to escape abroad.<sup>3</sup>

### **Defamation sentences**

More and more people in Belarus are punished for criticizing or insulting state symbols, the government, its agencies, or public officials.

**Yury Karnilovich** was sentenced to three years in an open-type penal colony (a so-called 'khimiya') for allegedly insulting former Interior Minister Yury Karayeu in a comment on YouTube. The sentence is the heaviest possible penalty allowed by the charge.

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<sup>1</sup> See Viasna: <https://spring96.org/be/news/100918>

<sup>2</sup> See Belsat: <https://belsat.eu/en/news/87-year-old-woman-convicted-in-minsk-for-flag-on-balcony/>

<sup>3</sup> See Belsat: <https://belsat.eu/en/news/15-year-old-creator-of-punishers-of-belarus-leaves-country/>

**Yahor Karapuzau** was sentenced to 18 months of ‘khimiya’ imprisonment for using the word “tvar” (scum) in a Telegram comment addressing a local police officer.<sup>4</sup>

**Aliaksei Ramanau** was sentenced to 12 months in a penal colony for “publicly insulting the president” at an election rally on 28 July.

## **Business and human rights**

The political and human rights crises in Belarus have hit the country’s businesses. Business owners and top managers see political turbulence as the main reason for the economic downturn.<sup>5</sup>

Reportedly, at least 320 businesses face economic repression for supporting the protests.<sup>6</sup> For instance, O’Petit cafe, which opened the door to protesters at one of the Sunday marches, closed down after endless checks and audits.<sup>7</sup>

Internet outages and mass detentions of specialists made Belarus much less attractive as an IT hub. The scale of IT companies and specialists from Belarus relocating is unprecedented. There are no joint statistics available, but different sources report that at least 800 IT specialists relocated to Poland,<sup>8</sup> 1,200 people moved to Ukraine,<sup>9</sup> 15 IT companies relocated to Latvia (about 1,000 specialists),<sup>10</sup> while Lithuania negotiates relocation with 100 companies (up to 2,500 specialists).<sup>11</sup>

## **Other news**

Amnesty International highlights the case of Belarusian authorities attempting to cover up the killing of a peaceful protester by police by bringing serious criminal charges against a key witness. **Alyaksandr Kardjukou** was with his friend and fellow protester Henadz Shutau until moments before the latter was shot by plain clothes police on 11 August, after a peaceful rally in the western

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<sup>4</sup> See Viasna: <http://spring96.org/en/news/100935>

<sup>5</sup> See report by SATIO and Pro.business:

<https://probusiness-io.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/probusiness.io/amp/strategy/7698-politicheskiy-k-rizis-bet-po-biznesu-belarusi-silnee-chem-covid-19-uznayte-rezultaty-issledovaniya.html>

<sup>6</sup> See NN: <https://m.nn.by/articles/265253/>

<sup>7</sup> See Euroradio:

<https://euroradio.fm/ru/zakryvaetsya-kafe-opetit-vitrinu-kotorogo-razbil-nachalnik-gubopik-karpenkov>

<sup>8</sup> See RFE: <https://svobod1.azureedge.net/a/30897050.html>

<sup>9</sup> See DW:

<https://www.dw.com/ru/borba-za-mozgi-kak-ukraina-pytaetsja-peremanit-belorusskih-it-specialistov/a-55277492>

<sup>10</sup> See dev.by: <https://dev.by/news/belorusskie-kompanii-sozdali-v-latvii-1000-rabochih-mest>

<sup>11</sup> See dev.by: <https://dev.by/news/pereezd-v-litvu-gotovyat-dlya-500-2500-belorusskih-spetsialistov>

city of Brest. Now Alyaksandr is charged with the attempted murder of a police officer, which carries a maximum sentence of life in prison.<sup>12</sup>

### **Useful links**

The non-partisan observation initiative 'Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections' has published the final analytical [report](#) on the results of observations of the 2020 presidential elections in the Republic of Belarus. The conclusion is that significant violations of both national legislation and the fundamental principles of holding fair and democratic elections, including depriving observers of the opportunity to observe the results vote count, does not give grounds to trust the election results announced by the CEC or consider them as reflecting the actual will of the citizens of the Republic of Belarus.

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<sup>12</sup> See Amnesty International:  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/12/belarus-witness-in-police-killing-of-protester-faces-life-sentence/>