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Summary: Friday 15 January to Friday 22 January 2021

Belarusians continue to protest against the rigged presidential election (9 August 2020), police violence, and human rights violations by Lukashenka's regime. As the protest movement takes new and often creative forms, the regime responds with more oppression and targeted actions to stop and prevent active citizen engagement.¹

The financial police searched the offices of the Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities, which is accused of illegal fundraising and misuse of finance.² Similar allegations were formulated against the Press Club team (tax fraud),³ while human rights and non-profit organisations are under constant pressure. Earlier, Belarusian Foreign Minister Makei declared that in response to the recently adopted [EU](#) and [US](#) sanctions, the authorities will review the activities of humanitarian, education, and cultural programmes funded from abroad.⁴

New trials and detentions

Arrests, detentions, and criminal trials of protesters continue in Belarus.

- [Evgeniy Kalinovskiy](#), a 22-year-old protester and a grantee of the President's Fund for Talented Youth, was sentenced to four years in prison and a fine for using force against members of the OMON special forces and violating public order.
- Journalist and media manager [Andrei Aliksandrau and his wife Iryna Zlobina](#) were arrested and detained on suspicion of "financing persons who took part in the protests in Minsk, including by paying fines and reimbursing the costs of imprisonment in the detention facilities of Minsk".
- The General Prosecutor's Office has initiated an international search procedure for the former diplomat and leader of National Anti-Crisis Management, Pavel Latushko, who famously resigned from the civil office at the start of the protests. The relevant documents have been sent to Interpol.⁵
- Vitold Ashurak, an activist from Lida region, was sentenced to five years in a penal colony.⁶ In the same court several people who attended the hearings were detained as they showed "disrespect to the court".⁷

Amendments to the Administrative and Criminal Codes

¹ For example, a person was detained for displaying the flag of Japan, as it also has a white-red-white pattern (<https://svabod1.azureedge.net/a/31051020.html>), and women exercising in a park were accused of organising an illegal mass event (<https://news.tut.by/society/714731.html?tg>).

² See NN: <https://m.nn.by/articles/267009/>

³ See VoA: <https://www.voanews.com/press-freedom/belarus-press-badge-makes-you-target>

⁴ See Belta:

<https://www.belta.by/politics/view/makej-rasskazal-ob-otvetnyh-merah-belarusi-na-tretij-paket-sanktsij-evr-osojuza-421302-2020/>

⁵ See TUT.BY: <https://news.tut.by/economics/715339.html>

⁶ See Euroradio:

<https://euroradio.fm/u-lidze-na-5-gadou-asudzili-vitolda-ashurka-dokaz-zlachynstva-pasvedchanne-bnf>

⁷ See NN; <https://nn.by/?c=ar&i=266959&lang=ru>

A law with new amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences, the Code of Administrative Procedure, the Criminal Code, and the Code of Criminal Procedure has been signed. They are due to enter into force on 1 March 2021.

The Administrative Code is widely used to imprison protesters based on Article 23.34 on violating the procedure of organising public events. According to the authorities, the amended Code seeks to “liberalise administrative responsibility”.⁸ However, the amendments include harsher punishments for organising unauthorised public events and disobeying orders from authorities. The new version of the Code also effectively prohibits the use of white-red-white flags, as they now qualify as an unauthorised and unregistered symbol.⁹

The new edition of the Criminal Code does not allow civil servants convicted of corruption to be subject to conditional early release. It also stipulates the conditions upon which those convicted can opt for financial redress for economic crimes instead of serving a sentence. The punishments for those responsible for automobile accidents have also become more severe.¹⁰

Creative and art industries and human rights

Private publishing houses are targeted. Two private publishing houses (Knihazbor and Yanushkevich) are now under investigation by the financial and economic police.¹¹

A well-known translator of fiction, Volha Kalackaja, was detained and remains in custody under a criminal case investigation (organisation of illegal mass events).¹²

Other news

- On 15 January 2021, [BYPOL](#), an initiative by police and special forces officers, published a [recording](#), where allegedly the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs and Commander of Internal Troops, Nikolai Karpenkov, describes the strategy of handling the protests.¹³ Belarusian human rights defenders have appealed to six United Nations Special Rapporteurs in relation to the information contained in the recording.¹⁴
- The International Ice Hockey Federation will move the 2021 Ice Hockey World Championship from Minsk. The organisation officially announced this decision on 18 January, stating that the championship cannot be held in Belarus for security reasons.¹⁵

⁸ See Belta:

<https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-podpisal-novye-kodeksy-po-voprosam-administrativnoj-otvetstvennosti-423975-2021>

⁹ See DW:

<https://www.dw.com/ru/shtraf-za-simvoliku-na-balkone-v-belarusi-zapretili-protestnyj-flag/a-56241543>;

See Euroradio: <https://euroradio.fm/ru/statya-2334-samoe-opasnoe-pravonarushenie-v-novom-koap>

¹⁰ See Reform.by: <https://reform.by/193743-v-belarusi-vneseny-izmeneniya-v-ugolovnyj-kodeks>

¹¹ See RFE: <https://svabod1.azureedge.net/a/31048198.html>

¹² See RFE: <https://svabod1.azureedge.net/a/31050939.html>

¹³ For full transcript of the recording, see Voice of Belarus:

<https://www.voiceofbelarus.com/belarusian-auschwitz/>

¹⁴ See Belarusian Helsinki Committee:

<https://belhelcom.org/ru/news/pravozashchitniki-obratilis-k-6-specialnym-dokladchikam-oon-kasatelno-audiozapisi-o-sozdanii-v>

¹⁵ See IIHF:

https://www.iihf.com/en/events/2021/wm/news/24134/iihf_to_move_2021_world_championship

Good news

JSC 'Belaruskali', the country's biggest exporter of potash fertilisers and one of the state giant enterprises, now declares it will guarantee employment to all workers dismissed due to their political and civil position. This [declaration](#) is published on the company's website in the context of regular dialogue with Yara International, and most likely was enabled by the Norwegian partner.¹⁶

¹⁶ See NN: <https://m.nn.by/articles/267007/>