

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.

Saturday 6 March to Friday 12 March 2021

Women's human rights and justice¹

Since last summer, Belarusian authorities have filed at least 141 politically motivated cases against women; 49 are currently in detention or under house arrest. Another 75 are suspects in politically motivated criminal cases, and thousands of other women have fled Belarus in fear of their safety.

- Human rights activist Marfa Rabkova has been detained since September 2020 for documenting evidence of human rights violations, including torture and other ill-treatment of peaceful protesters by law enforcement officials.
- Katsyaryna Andreyeva and Daria Chultsova, a reporter and a camerawoman, covered a protest in November and were arrested for simply ensuring Belarusians had access to the truth. Katsyaryna Barysevich, a journalist with independent media outlet TUT.by, was sentenced to half a year in prison following the publication of an article in which she cited medical documents indicating that protester Raman Bandarenka died of severe injuries and had a 0% blood alcohol level at the time of death—contrary to official claims.²

Summary

As of 12 March, 279 persons in Belarus are considered political prisoners.³

Bloggers, business people, presidential campaign members, and peaceful protesters are held in prisons because they were unafraid to exercise their rights—the right to participate in peaceful assemblies and to express their opinions.

Police and security forces raided several apartments in Minsk on the night of 10 March overnight and detained dozens of people.⁴ Human rights activists and volunteers said the majority of those detained were registered in Minsk's Lebyadziny and Novaya Baravaya districts, where police and security forces swept through buildings and searched apartments.

¹ This is a section dedicated to International Women's Day and summarises events going back further than this week.

² <https://by.usembassy.gov/usosce-role-of-women-in-belaruss-fight-for-democracy/>

³ <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en#list>

⁴ <https://www.svaboda.org/a/31144720.html>

According to an updated list filed by an independent volunteer initiative, more than 100 people were detained and are currently in custody.⁵ No official explanation for the sweep or the arrests has been given.

Sergey Tskihanouski's case: Official charges brought

On Thursday 11 March 2021, the State Investigative Committee of the Republic of Belarus [brought four formal criminal charges](#) against the video blogger and political prisoner Sergey Tskihanouski, namely:

- Organisation of mass riots (Article 293, para. 1 of the Criminal Code);
- Incitement to social hatred (Article 130, para. 3 of the Criminal Code);
- Impeding the work of the Central Electoral Commission (Article 191, para. 2 of the Criminal Code); and
- Organisation of action flagrantly violating public order (Article 342, para. 1 of the Criminal Code).

If the charges are sustained, Tskihanouski may face up to 15 years in prison. Tskihanouski has been detained without charge since May 2020.

Increase in 'anti-extremism' cases

The State Investigative Committee of the Republic of Belarus has made an official statement on the number of 'anti-extremism' cases initiated in recent months. According to the state agency, [2,407 criminal cases](#) have been brought against Belarusian citizens since summer 2020.

While commenting on the criminal 'anti-extremism' charges brought against blogger [Anton Motolko](#), the State Investigative Committee [noted](#) that some social media chats of neighbours and local residents tend to transform into "extremist groups that promote radical actions".

At the same time, more than 1,800 complaints regarding torture and use of force by law enforcement officers remain uninvestigated.

Other news

Belarus expels Polish diplomat

On 9 March 2021, the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a formal [statement](#)

⁵ https://t.me/spiski_okrestina

expelling Polish diplomat Jerzy Timofejuk. The decision was motivated by the diplomat's participation in an event dedicated to Poland's 'cursed soldiers' who fought against both German and Soviet occupation during World War II. According to the Ministry, such participation amounted to the "heroisation of war criminals".

The Polish Foreign Ministry [responded](#) by promising to react in a prompt and adequate manner and noted that the conduct of the Belarusian officials may limit the opportunities for dialogue and cooperation between the two states.