

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 10 April 2021 to Friday 16 April 2021

Updates on persecution of human rights defenders and civil society activists

On 15 April 2021, human rights defender Tatiana Gatsura-Yavorkaya was released from detention. According to the available information, the charges against her were dropped. She mentioned, however, that while she was detained, law enforcement officers assaulted her husband and threatened to take their youngest child to an orphanage if he did not immediately leave the country.¹

Gatsura-Yavorkaya had organised an exhibition called 'The Machine is Breathing, but I Am Not', which opened on 30 March 2021. It was dedicated to Belarusian medical workers and patients during the COVID-19 pandemic, the politicisation of healthcare, and the pressure exerted on doctors. However, it was promptly closed by the Belarusian authorities. On 5 April 2021, Gatsura-Yavorkaya was arrested and detained.

Politically motivated arrests, detentions, and sentences

In the course of the week, there were multiple cases of political persecution both in administrative and criminal realms.

- The leader of Belarusian People's Front party, Grigoriy Kostusev, was arrested and detained, following calls from the State Security Committee (KGB). He is a suspect in a criminal case on causing public disorder.² Political analyst Alexander Feduta was also arrested by the Belarusian KGB in Moscow and brought to Minsk on suspicion of the same crime.³ Lawyer Yuriy Zenkovich was also detained by Belarusian KGB in Moscow.⁴
- A criminal case was opened against the founders of the BYSOL initiative, Alexey Leonchik and Andrey Strizhak. The initiative's activities of providing financial assistance to persecuted protesters, including helping people repay fines, was interpreted by the Investigative Committee as financing activities of extremist groups.⁵
- In Minsk, a 13-year old girl who wrote "Long Live" on the ground ("Long Live Belarus" is a phrase commonly used by peaceful protesters) was taken in for questioning by the police. Her mother was not informed about her daughter being questioned for two hours. When she was allowed to pick up her daughter from the police station, she was accused of two administrative offences: violation of the procedure of organising public gatherings and failure to perform parental duties.⁶

¹ <https://reform.by/217229-tatjanu-gacura-javorskuju-otpustili-iz-sizo>

² <https://news.tut.by/economics/726263.html?tg>

³ <https://news.tut.by/economics/726373.html?tg>

⁴ <https://news.tut.by/economics/726439.html?tg>; <https://news.tut.by/economics/726479.html?tg>

⁵ <https://news.tut.by/society/726128.html?tg>

⁶ <https://news.tut.by/society/725971.html?tg>

- A Grodno resident was fined 3,480 BYN (approximately 1,334 USD) for having a white-red-white flag in his car as punishment for an unsanctioned public gathering.⁷
- Seven Polish Union activists were arrested and detained in Grodno.⁸

10 years since the terror attack in Belarusian subway

On 11 April 2011, there was a terror attack at Oktyabrskaya subway station in Minsk, claiming 15 lives and leaving 400 people injured. While the attack was initially blamed on two suspects, who were found and arrested by the police within a day and ultimately executed, there are also theories circulating among civil society that the attack was orchestrated by Belarusian authorities to distract public attention from protests following the 2010 presidential election.⁹

Euronews broadcasts stopped in Belarus

The Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus officially ceased Euronews TV channel broadcasts on Belarusian TV, explaining it as a consequence of an expired broadcasting licence.¹⁰

⁷ <https://auto.tut.by/news/offtop/726005.html?tg>

⁸ <https://news.tut.by/society/726531.html?tg>

⁹ <https://news.tut.by/society/726004.html?tg>

¹⁰ <https://42.tut.by/726112?tg>