

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 13 March 2021 to Friday 19 March 2021

Mass political persecutions continue

According to the official statement of the General Prosecutor's Office, 468 criminal cases relating to unauthorised mass events, violations of public order, hooliganism, threats of the use of force against law enforcement officers, causing damage to public property, and mocking state symbols have been initiated against 631 persons. The agency noted that more than 400 people have already been sentenced in criminal trials. The official statement also mentioned that "prompt identification of involved persons" is made via specialised equipment and software.¹

According to information from the Human Rights Center "Viasna", criminal cases have been initiated against at least 950 people.²

Some of the most recent cases of political persecution include:

- Anton Belenskiy, a volunteer for former presidential candidate Viktor Babariko's team, was sentenced to 1.5 years of restriction of liberty in an open-type prison for grave violations of public order (Article 293 of the Criminal Code);³
- Businessman Alexander Trotskiy was sentenced to 10 years in a maximum security prison for attempted murder (Article 14 and 362 of the Criminal Code). During August protests, masked men in plain clothes asked Trotskiy to leave his car and, when he refused, pointed their guns at him. As he was trying to escape the scene and flee to safety, he bumped into a road patrol officer; fortunately, this did not cause him serious harm;⁴
- Ten people received criminal sentences under charges of mass riots. The sentences range from three years in juvenile correctional facilities to four years in maximum security prisons (Article 293 of the Criminal Code);⁵
- The Prosecutor's Office in Mogilev asked for 9.5 years of imprisonment for cartoonist who was charged with committing a terrorist act (Article 295 of the Criminal Code), based on sharing a Telegram post saying that "police officers' cars deserve to be set on fire" and texting that the "KGB building must be taken by storm";⁶

¹ <https://news.tut.by/society/722792.html?c>

² <https://spring96.org/be/news/99638>

³ <https://news.tut.by/society/721378.html?tg>

⁴ <https://auto.tut.by/news/road/721336.html?tg>

⁵ <https://news.tut.by/society/721866.html?tg>

⁶ <https://news.tut.by/society/722109.html?tg>

- Seven people were detained in Brest as members of “criminal anarchist groups”;⁷
- At least 20 people were detained during the first meeting of a student organisation, the League of Student Unions;⁸
- Six people were detained while celebrating the folk holiday Maslenitsa in their backyard. Three of them have already been charged with 15 days of administrative arrest;⁹
- Ten people have been detained in Minsk for “illegal picketing”.¹⁰

Suicide attempts in Belarusian prisons

In the course of the week, two political prisoners and bloggers, Sergey Petrukhin and Igor Losik, slit their veins in detention facilities, protesting repressions and injustice. Both were subjected to punishment for doing so and sent to solitary confinement cells. Losik has announced his second hunger strike, following these events.¹¹

Other news

Tikhanovskaya plans for negotiations

On 18 March 2021, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya announced the launch of a global survey for Belarusians. Using the online civil tech platform Golos, which was previously used to document votes in the presidential election, she is asking Belarusians to express their opinion on the idea of holding negotiations with the Belarusian *de facto* leadership. She stated that gaining the support of the population via this online platform will help international platforms like the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe assist in negotiation-related processes.

On 18 March 2021, Amnesty International released a statement with other human rights organisations calling for an end to the crackdown on human rights defenders in Belarus: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR4938542021ENGLISH.pdf>

⁷ <https://news.tut.by/society/721478.html?tg>

⁸ <https://news.tut.by/society/721483.html?tg>

⁹ <https://news.tut.by/society/722570.html>

¹⁰ <https://news.tut.by/society/722362.html?tg>

¹¹ <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-56404692>