

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 17 April 2021 to Friday 23 April 2021

Political persecution for alleged assassination attempt and military coup

The leader of the Belarusian People's Front party, Grigoriy Kostusev, political analyst Alexander Feduta, and lawyer Yuriy Zenkovich¹ have all been arrested and detained for an alleged assassination and kidnapping plot. Alexander Lukashenko, Vladimir Putin, the Belarusian State Security Committee (KGB), and the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) have all responded to news of the arrests.

Lukashenko stated that the three individuals were plotting to assassinate him and kidnap his sons, revealing that they were cooperating with foreign special security forces.² The head of the KGB appeared in a news piece on a state-owned TV channel, saying that the group was plotting a coup d'état in Belarus.³ The FSB added that the coup was planned for 9 May.⁴ Putin stated that the West should have condemned the coup attempt in Belarus, and that the plotters "have crossed all the lines".⁵

All the detainees have been charged with an attempt to seize state power under Article 357 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – a crime punishable, *inter alia*, by the death penalty.⁶

Lawyers continue to face pressure from state authorities

Two lawyers, Valeriy Zinkevich and Svetlana Hololovich, were called in by the Ministry of Justice for an unscheduled meeting to confirm their qualifications. Zinkevich's post on Instagram, where he expressed support for peaceful protesters, was considered "not in line with the lawyer's image in the society".⁷

As the number of disbarred lawyers continues to grow in Belarus, the Belarusian parliament accepted first draft amendments to the law 'On the legal profession', which would effectively prohibit attorneys from practising in private law firms, leaving only the option of practising in state-controlled legal consultancy offices.

¹ <https://news.tut.by/economics/726994.html?tg;> <https://news.tut.by/economics/726996.html?tg;>

<https://news.tut.by/economics/727023.html?tg>

² <https://news.tut.by/economics/726994.html?tg>

³ <https://news.tut.by/economics/726994.html?tg>

⁴ <https://news.tut.by/economics/726996.html?tg;> <https://news.tut.by/economics/727023.html?tg>

⁵ <https://news.tut.by/economics/727478.html?tg>

⁶ <https://news.tut.by/society/727024.html?tg>

⁷ <https://news.tut.by/society/727128.html?tg>

United States renews sanctions against Belarusian companies

On 19 April 2021, the United States renewed its sanctions against nine Belarusian companies:

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- Belarusian Oil Trade House
- Belneftekhim
- Belneftekhim USA, Inc.
- Belshina OAO
- Grodno Azot OAO
- Grodno Khimvolokno OAO
- Lakokraska OAO
- Naftan OAO
- Polotsk Steklovolokno OAO

The Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that such a step by the United States, regardless of the rhetoric used, would affect the financial wellbeing of Belarusian citizens and decrease the economic potential of the country.⁹ Meanwhile, the United States ambassador to Belarus, Julie Fisher, cannot enter Belarus, due to her not having a visa and the Belarusian authorities refusing to provide accreditation.¹⁰

Useful link:

- <https://sanctionsby.info/en/>

⁸ https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/126/belarus_gl2h.pdf

⁹ <https://news.tut.by/economics/727325.html?tg>

¹⁰

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/21-04-2021-us-envoy-julie-fisher-to-start-working-from-vilnius-as-no-belarusian-visa-granted-to-her-yet/>