

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 19 June 2021 to Friday 25 June 2021

TUT.BY materials and ‘Long Live Belarus’ slogan to be recognised as ‘extremist’

The use of ‘anti-extremism’ laws to silence political dissenters continues in Belarus:

- On 24 June 2021, a court hearing recognising TUT.BY’s – the largest independent media outlet in Belarus – journalistic materials as ‘extremist’ commenced.¹ During the recent crackdown on TUT.by, its offices were searched, its website was blocked, and dozens of its employees were arrested.² Without access to the original website, the outlet remained active primarily on social media. Based on an evaluation conducted by the Republican Expert Commission, Belarusian authorities now recognise the social media profiles of TUT.BY on Telegram, Facebook, Instagram, and VK as “extremist” and bar access to them.³ The evaluation concludes that TUT.BY materials “negatively characterise state officials”, “manipulate public opinion”, “incite to extremism and public disorder”;⁴
- The Belarusian Ministry of Interior stated that the ‘Long Live Belarus’ slogan, widely used by peaceful protesters and civil activists, should be recognised as “extremist”. The agency mentioned that the slogan represents a “battle-cry” used by Nazi collaborators during the Second World War, and must be considered a Nazi symbol.⁵

For an overview of developments in ‘anti-extremism’ cases and amendments to relevant laws between April and May 2021, see Human Constanta’s recent report.⁶

1

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/18-06-2021-interior-ministry-pushes-for-recognising-popular-media-outlet-tut-by-s-content-as-extremist/>;

<https://telegra.ph/Ploshchadka-dlya-propagandy-ehkstremizma-Vot-cto-govoritsya-v-zaklyuchenii-ehkspertov-s-kotorym-MVD-idet-v-sud-protiv-TUTBY-06-23>

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<https://en.currenttime.tv/a/shutdown-of-belarus-tut-by-part-of-war-against-genuine-journalists-critics-say/31263354.html>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/18-06-2021-interior-ministry-pushes-for-recognising-popular-media-outlet-tut-by-s-content-as-extremist/>

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<https://telegra.ph/Ploshchadka-dlya-propagandy-ehkstremizma-Vot-cto-govoritsya-v-zaklyuchenii-ehkspertov-s-kotorym-MVD-idet-v-sud-protiv-TUTBY-06-23>

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<https://www.dw.com/ru/mvd-belarusi-predlagaet-pripravnjat-lozung-zhyve-belarus-k-nacistskoj-simvolike/a-57987276>

⁶ <https://humanconstanta.by/obzor-borby-s-ekstremizmom-v-belarusi-za-aprel-maj-2021/>

Extreme heat affects conditions in Belarusian prisons

Unprecedented heat, which warranted the introduction of an orange security level warning in Belarus, has particularly affected the Belarusian prison population. In correspondence with relatives, incarcerated political prisoners mention that they are experiencing unbearable heat, with many people experiencing hypoxia and shortness of breath. The prisoners mention wet bed linen and a lack of access to showers and regular walks – as well as the refusal of prison guards to open windows to air the prison cells.⁷

New developments in politically motivated cases

Political persecution is ongoing in Belarus, with the number of detentions, open criminal cases, and new court hearings growing daily. Some of the key developments in such cases include:

- Political prisoner Ivan Bahdzevich was sentenced to two years in a medium-security prison. Ivan was found guilty of “publicly shouting slogans and loudly clapping hands, thereby committing acts aimed at the long-term disturbance of public order”;⁸
- Mikalai Dzenisevich was sentenced to four years of imprisonment for violating public order, intentionally destroying property, and threatening a police officer during a protest. The ‘victims’ in the case were 13 police officers, but only three of them – masked and with changed identities – gave testimony at the trial;⁹
- The prosecutor asked for 15 years of imprisonment in a maximum security prison for former presidential candidate Viktor Babaryka. He is accused of bribery and money laundering;¹⁰
- Musician Uladzislau Navazhylau was found guilty of insulting a public servant by leaving an “insulting comment” on social media. He was sentenced to three years of restriction of liberty in an open-type correctional facility;¹¹
- Mikhail Lyapeika, who was charged with “publicly insulting the President”, was sentenced to compulsory treatment;¹²
- Vadzim Yermalovich was charged and found guilty of publicly insulting Dzmitry Balaba, the commander of Minsk riot police. He was sentenced to 1.5 years of restriction of liberty in an open-type correctional facility;¹³ and

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<https://telegra.ph/Kondensat-po-stenam-i-zakrytye-okna-Kak-lyudi-v-tyuremnyh-kamerah-sidyat-pri-ano-malnoj-zhare-06-23>

⁸ <http://spring96.org/en/news/103952>

⁹ <http://spring96.org/en/news/103935>

¹⁰ <http://spring96.org/en/news/103920>

¹¹ <http://spring96.org/en/news/103909>

¹²

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/23-06-2021-elderly-man-from-mahiliou-sent-to-compulsory-treatment-for-insulting-lukashenka/>

¹³

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/22-06-2021-vitsebsk-man-gets-1-5-years-of-restriction-of-liberty-for-insulting-mon-commander-on-web/>

- Political prisoner Uladzimir Nyaronski, host of the YouTube channel Slutsk for Life, has been deprived of food parcels until 4 August 2021.¹⁴

Migration flows at the Belarusian borders

Migration flows at the Belarusian borders continue to increase and intensify. While Lithuania's Interior Minister Agnė Bilotaitė called upon Belarusian authorities for cooperation in controlling migration flows, Alexander Lukashenko made a public statement, mentioning foreign states' "demands" for Belarus "to protect them from smuggling and drug trafficking", and the unwillingness to "spend hundreds of millions of US dollars to protect geopolitical interests" of countries, who "are killing Belarusian economy" and "waging a hybrid war on Belarus".¹⁵ At the same time, concerns remain about the detention and treatment of migrants at the border.¹⁶

New sanctions on Belarus

In a joint statement, Canada, the European Union (EU), the United Kingdom, and the United States have announced taking "coordinated sanctions action in response to the 23 May forced landing of a commercial Ryanair flight between two EU member states and the politically motivated arrest of journalist Raman Pratasevich and his companion Sofia Sapega, as well as to the continuing attack on human rights and fundamental freedoms".¹⁷ All of the countries have proceeded to adopt targeted sanctions against Belarusian officials and companies.¹⁸ Sectoral sanctions followed.¹⁹

OHCHR closed in Belarus

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/21-06-2021-political-prisoner-uladzimir-nyaronski-deprived-of-food-parcels-until-august/>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/23-06-2021-lukashenka-turns-blind-eye-to-illegal-migration-banned-substances-smuggling-to-europe-through-belarus/>

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<https://telegra.ph/U-granicy-s-Belarusyu-snova-zaderzhali-migrantov-Litovskie-pogranichniki-zhelayushchih-nezakonno-popast-v-ES-uzhe-v-pyat-raz-bol-06-20>

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https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/100402/belarus-joint-statement-canada-european-union-united-kingdom-and-united-states_en?fbclid=IwAR17ydg3AUQU9CXmnZGn1QUcz4TLxrZ5WFJF9GLWLXF7IX4wt5zTGbuH4

¹⁸ <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0237;>

[https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/21/belarus-fourth-package-of-eu-sanctions-over-enduring-repression-and-the-forced-landing-of-a-ryanair-flight/;](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/21/belarus-fourth-package-of-eu-sanctions-over-enduring-repression-and-the-forced-landing-of-a-ryanair-flight/)

<https://www.rbc.ru/politics/21/06/2021/60d0a02c9a79476c1a91a590>

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[https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/24/eu-imposes-sanctions-on-belarusian-economy/;](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/24/eu-imposes-sanctions-on-belarusian-economy/)[https://belsat.eu/en/news/23-06-2021-eu-envoys-approve-sectoral-sanctions-which-may-hit-belarus-banking-potash-and-oil-industries/;](https://belsat.eu/en/news/23-06-2021-eu-envoys-approve-sectoral-sanctions-which-may-hit-belarus-banking-potash-and-oil-industries/)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/21/world/europe/eu-belarus-sanctions.html>

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Belarus, Michelle Bachelet, reported that the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has been suspended by the Belarusian government. She added that it was a “window of cooperation”, and the human rights situation in Belarus continues to deteriorate.²⁰

Belarus referenced in the report on Internet shutdowns

A report by the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, ‘Ending Internet shutdowns: a path forward’, describing the alarming trend of using Internet shutdowns to curb political dissent, made several references to Belarus:

- Lengthy shutdowns in Belarus used pre-, mid-, and post-election were mentioned as an example of shutdowns increasing in length and sophistication;
- In the context of business and human rights, the report highlights that Deep Packet Inspection equipment, used by Belarusian authorities to implement shutdowns, was provided to the authorities by a private United States company; and
- Shutdowns in Belarus and several other states have been qualified by the Rapporteur as election-related shutdowns, used to prevent access by people to free information flows.²¹

Sports and human rights in Belarus

In response to a request sent by the Belarusian Sport Solidarity Foundation, the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) responded that “no UEFA competition or other event has taken place or will take place in Belarus in 2021”.²²

Political prisoners

As of 25 June 2021, the total number of political prisoners in Belarus is 503.²³ The number continues to grow daily.

²⁰ <http://spring96.org/en/news/103905>

²¹ <https://humanconstantaby/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/G2114966.pdf>

²² <https://t.me/zozhteam/474>

²³ <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en>