

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 26 June 2021 to Friday 2 July 2021

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 include:

- The case of Mariya Kalesnikava and Maksim Znak is transferred to the Supreme Court. The two campaign team members of former presidential candidate and now political prisoner, Viktor Babaryka, are accused of an attempt to seize power and run an extremist organisation. In total, they may face up to 24 years in prison;¹
- Sofia Sapega and Raman Pratasevich, arrested after the infamous Ryanair incident, have been put under house arrest and remain suspects in a criminal case;²
- Arrested journalist Andrey Alyksandrau was charged with high treason under Article 356-1 of the Criminal Code for paying fines imposed on peaceful protesters for participating in 'unauthorised gatherings'. If found guilty under this article, the defendant may face up to 15 years of imprisonment;³
- Valeryia Kastsyuhova, political commentator and editor of nmnby.eu, the website of the Belarusian expert community, was detained. Her flat in Minsk was searched. Political scientist Pavel Usau believes that the Belarusian authorities have started a campaign of persecuting independent experts and analysts;⁴
- Tatsyana Kuzina, a reputed Belarusian expert in the field of good governance, was detained when going through a passport check-point at Minsk Airport before boarding her plane to Tbilisi. Kuzina is involved in the BIPART research project, and she is a member of the board and co-founder of SYMPA (School of Young Managers in Public Administration);⁵
- Byaroza district resident Tatsyana Dzyamidchyk was charged with "insulting a police officer" under Article 369 of the Criminal Code for her comment on the social network

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/26-06-2021-general-prosecutor-s-office-sends-case-of-kalesnikava-and-znak-to-court/>

2

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/25-06-2021-belarus-authorities-put-sofia-sapega-raman-pratasevich-under-house-arrest/>

3

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/01-07-2021-belarus-authorities-accuse-imprisoned-media-expert-andrey-alyksandrau-of-high-treason/>

4

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/01-07-2021-minsk-political-analyst-valeryia-kastsyuhova-detained-her-home-raided/>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/29-06-2021-expert-tatsyana-kuzina-detained-at-minsk-airport-taken-into-custody/>

site Odnoklassniki. The comment said that she “pitied the officer’s mother for giving birth to such a monster”. The officer is set to hold all 97 commentators, who left comments under the social media post with his image, accountable. He has already filed a complaint with the Belarusian Investigative Committee;⁶

- Hrodna resident Tatsiana Kashko was sentenced to two years of house arrest for insulting a police officer. When Kashko demanded the trial be conducted in Belarusian, the judge ignored her request and proceeded to hold the trial in Russian;⁷
- 16-year-old Daniil Kalesnikau was sentenced to one year and three months in a juvenile correction facility for participating in group actions that grossly violate public order, under Article 342 of the Criminal Code. Earlier, Kalesnikau’s father had been convicted for disorderly conduct, involving a minor in a crime, and organising and participating in actions that grossly violate public order;⁸
- 17-year-old political prisoner Mikita Zalatarou is accused of assaulting an employee of a detention center under Article 364 of the Criminal Code. His parents have expressed concern about his well-being in detention, since the teenager has epilepsy;⁹
- Minsk resident Volha Sinialiova, who refused to lease her apartment to the assistant prosecutor of Frunzenski district of Minsk, Alina Kasjanchyk, was found guilty under Article 190 of the Criminal Code for a violation of the non-discrimination principle. She was sentenced to two years of house arrest;¹⁰
- Hrodna resident Aliaksandr Babkin was accused of insulting the president of Belarus under Article 368 of the Criminal Code and sentenced to one year of imprisonment and compulsory rehab treatment;¹¹
- Music teacher Hanna Vazhnik was sentenced to one year of house arrest for changing the lyrics of the Belarusian national anthem to “We are extremists – peaceful people...” and posting it on Twitter to reflect on the increasing practice of persecution under the pretence of ‘anti-extremism’;¹²
- Several former employees of state TV channel ONT reported that the Investigative Committee has summoned them to question them as witnesses in an unnamed criminal case.¹³

Sports Ministry to prohibit the use of unofficial symbols

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/30-06-2021-drahichyn-policeman-set-to-punish-97-persons-who-left-negative-comments-about-him-on-social-media/>

⁷ <http://spring96.org/en/news/104077>

⁸ <https://belsat.eu/en/news/28-06-2021-zhlobin-another-minor-sentenced-in-belarus/>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/25-06-2021-underage-political-prisoner-sick-with-epilepsy-under-pressure-in-prison/>

¹⁰ <http://spring96.org/en/news/104067>

¹¹ <http://spring96.org/en/news/104047>

¹² <http://spring96.org/en/news/104021>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/28-06-2021-former-state-tv-employees-who-went-on-strike-in-august-summoned-for-questioning/>;

<https://telegra.ph/Sotrudnikov-gostelekanala-ONT-kotorye-bastovali-vo-vremya-protestov-vyzyvayut-nadoprosy-v-SK-CHto-ob-ehom-izvestno-06-26>

The amendments to the Labor Code and the Law on Physical Culture and Sport, proposed by the Belarusian Ministry of Sport, include obliging athletes and coaches to:

- Only use Belarusian national symbols during sports competitions;
- Know the text of the Belarusian national anthem; and
- Take measures to prevent “undue influence” over participants and organisers of sporting events.¹⁴

The proposed legislative changes may be inspired by the increasing trend of sports fans to support athletes by waving white-red-white flags during competitions.

World Athletics removes Minsk as host of 2022 World Race Walking Team Championships

World Athletics has announced the 2022 World Race Walking Team Championships will be moved from Minsk amid uncertainty over diplomatic relations with Belarus and ongoing travel restrictions. The Council's decision comes as a result of a report prepared by the World Athletics Risk Committee, which concluded that uncertainties around diplomatic relations and international travel restrictions with regard to Belarus would impact significantly on the staging of the championships in Minsk.¹⁵

EBRD to increase control over private projects' financing in Belarus

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has announced that it will increase control and oversight over funding private projects in Belarus to make sure that such projects have no ties with the government.¹⁶

A new agency to monitor 'national security threats' online is created

An Inter-Agency Commission on Information Security has been created in Belarus. The Commission, consisting of, inter alia, Alexander Lukashenko's press secretary and the head of the State Security Committee (KGB), will have the authority to decide whether materials published online contain “threats to national security”.¹⁷

Political prisoners

As of 2 July 2021, the total number of political prisoners in Belarus is 529.¹⁸ The number continues to grow daily.

¹⁴

<https://reform.by/237085-minsporta-predlagaet-objazat-sportsmenov-ispolzovat-tolko-gossimvoliku-i-zn-at-gimn>

¹⁵ <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1109624/world-athletics-minsk-race-walking>

¹⁶ <https://telegra.ph/EBRR-06-29>

¹⁷

<https://telegra.ph/V-Belarusi-eshche-odin-organ-budet-otslezhivat-vrednyuyu-informaciyu-v-internete-Na-eh-tot-raz-chinovniki-iz-vysshego-ehshelona-vl-06-30>

¹⁸ <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en>