

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: Friday 30 July 2021 to Friday 6 August 2021

Olympic athlete escaped forced expulsion to Belarus

After Belarusian sports functionaries decided to make Olympic track and field athlete Kristina Tsimanouskaya run an additional distance of 400 metres which she was not qualified to run, she criticised their decision. Her unwillingness to conform prompted the officials to buy her a ticket to Belarus and prevent her from taking part in the Olympics altogether. Allegedly, the decision to transport her back to Belarus was taken by Alexander Lukashenko himself. Tsimanouskaya released a video on Sunday calling for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to help her avoid being returned to Belarus against her will.

The National Olympic Committee of Belarus published an official statement about the termination of Tsimanouskaya's participation in the Tokyo Games, saying that "according to the conclusion of the doctors, due to the emotional and psychological state of the Belarusian track and field athlete Krystsina Tsimanouskaya, the coaching staff of the national athletics team decided to terminate the performance of the athlete at the XXXII Olympic Games".

According to the head of the Belarusian Foundation for Sports Solidarity, Alyaksandr Apeykin, Tsimanouskaya has successfully left Japan and applied for political asylum in Poland.¹

The IOC stated that it might consider introducing additional sanctions against Belarusian sports functionaries.²

Head of Belarusian House in Ukraine found hanged in Kyiv

The head of the Belarusian House in Ukraine, Vital Shyshou, went for a run in Kyiv on 2 August 2021 and disappeared. On 3 August 2021, he was found dead on the outskirts of Kyiv, hanged on a tree in the forest in the vicinity of the village of Chayki. Shyshou's phone was lying on the ground not far from the scene. Ukrainian MPs from the inter-factional association 'For Democratic Belarus' have urged the Interior Minister to take the investigation of Shyshou's death under personal control since they believe that Belarusian special services may be involved in the tragic event.

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/02-08-2021-belarusian-sprinter-refuses-to-be-taken-home-by-force-after-criticizing-leadership/>;

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/08/01/sport/belarus-kristina-timanovskaya-removed-olympics-airport-intl/index.html>;

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/08/03/sport/kristina-timanovskaya-belarus-flight-intl-hnk/index.html>

² <https://news.zerkalo.io/cellar/1055.html?tg>

Previously the activist had reported being watched by unknown people during his runs. Some suspicious people had repeatedly approached him and his girlfriend and tried to talk to them.³

Migration crisis at the Belarusian border

As the migration crisis continues to intensify at the Belarusian–Lithuanian border, Lithuanian authorities have stated that they may completely stop the transit of Belarusian potash fertilizers. According to Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis, the sectoral sanctions that were imposed on the Lukashenko regime in June have affected only about 20 per cent of transit. At the present time, the restrictions do not apply to all potash cargoes from Belarus, and Lithuania suggests the additional block should bring to zero Belarus supplying potash fertilizers via the port of Klaipeda.⁴

On 2 August 2021, Lithuanian Interior Minister Agne Bilotaite announced that the country’s border service would be authorised to turn back illegal migrants entering Lithuania. The fate of migrants who might not be accepted by both Lithuania and Belarus is unclear.⁵

Developments in politically motivated cases

The key developments in politically motivated cases include:

- On 4 August 2021, 12 defendants in the seventh trial of the so-called “dancing protest case” were found guilty for grossly violating public order. In September 2020, protesters danced and sang protest songs. As a result, the demonstration was dispersed by a water cannon. The following sentences have been imposed on the defendants:
 - Artsiom Andrasiuk – 2 years of restricted freedom in an open penitentiary (khimiya);
 - Aliaksei Birukou – 2 years of home confinement;
 - Tatsiana Birukova – 2 years of home confinement;
 - Siarhei Dziahtsiaryk – 2 years of home confinement;
 - Darya Dziamiyanka – 2 years of home confinement;
 - Andrei Kastsiuk – 3 years of restricted freedom in an open penitentiary (khimiya);
 - Ihar Laptanovich, political prisoner – 2½ years in prison;
 - Yuliya Laptanovich – 3 years of home confinement;
 - Uladzimir Makarevich – 2½ years of restricted freedom in an open penitentiary (khimiya);
 - Andrei Parfeyevets – 2 years of home confinement;

³ <https://belsat.eu/en/news/03-08-2021-head-of-belarusian-house-in-ukraine-found-hanged-in-kyiv/>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/04-08-2021-new-sanctions-amid-migrant-crisis-lithuania-set-to-put-transit-of-belarus-fertilizers-to-complete-halt/>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/03-08-2021-lithuania-starts-to-divert-persons-who-illegally-crossed-lithuanian-belarusian-border/>; <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/1118.html?tg>

- Kanstantsin Piatsinkin – 2 years of home confinement; and
- Natallia Shyla – 2½ years of restricted freedom in an open penitentiary (khimiya).⁶
- Journalist Siarhei Hardziyevich was found guilty of insulting government officials and disseminating false and derogatory information which contained allegations of committing a serious crime. He was sentenced to 18 months in a medium-security prison.⁷
- Belarusian authorities tried to persuade political prisoner Maryia Kalesnikava into giving an interview to one of the state-run TV channels and in exchange filing a petition for pardon and release. Kalesnikava's and Maksim Znak's trial started on 4 August 2021.⁸
- On 4 August 2021, the apartments of philosopher Uladzimir Matskevich, former head of non-profit organization EuroBelarus Ulad Vyalichka, sociologist and analyst Tatsyana Vadalazhskaya were searched. Vadalazhskaya was detained, following the search.⁹
- The Prosecutor General reported that more than 4,200 criminal cases related to extremism and terrorism have been opened in Belarus since summer 2020. The Investigative Committee reported that 4,691 criminal cases have been opened since August 2020, related to “illegal mass events, riots, protests, encroachment on state sovereignty and public safety, deliberate destruction and damage to property, violence and death threats against officials and members of their families”.¹⁰

Political prisoners

As of 29 July 2021, the total number of political prisoners in Belarus is 603.¹¹ The number continues to grow daily.

⁶ <http://spring96.org/en/news/104547>

⁷ <http://spring96.org/en/news/104517>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/04-08-2021-regime-offers-maryia-kalesnikava-to-grant-interview-to-state-tv-in-exchange-for-release-today-her-trial-starts/>

⁹

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/04-08-2021-kgb-raids-flats-of-belarusian-experts-matskevich-vyalichka-vadala-zhskaya-detain-them/>

¹⁰ <http://spring96.org/en/news/104538>

¹¹ <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en>