

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 4 September 2021 to Friday 10 September 2021**

### **Guilty verdict for Maryia Kalesnikava and Maksim Znak**

Members of the presidium of the Coordination Council of Belarusian opposition and political prisoners, Maryia Kalesnikava<sup>1</sup> and Maksim Znak,<sup>2</sup> have been sentenced to 11 and 10 years in prison, respectively. The court found them guilty of “calling for actions threatening national security”, “conspiring to seize power in an unconstitutional manner”, and “creating and administering an extremist group”. The trial was held behind closed doors and the defence lawyers were forced to undertake non-disclosure obligations.<sup>3</sup>

### **Migration crisis at Belarusian borders**

The migration crisis continues to intensify at the Belarusian borders with Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland. On 8 September 2021, the European Court of Human Rights issued a decision on interim measures in the case *Sadeed and Others v. Lithuania* concerning five Afghan nationals who have been attempting to enter Lithuania from Belarus. The Court stated to the Government of Lithuania that the applicants should not be removed to Belarus, provided that they are already on Lithuanian territory. The measure will apply until 29 September 2021, inclusive.<sup>4</sup>

On 8 September 2021, the Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Belarus delivered a demarche to the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Belarus on illegal border crossings from Belarus into the European Union. In the statement, the EU condemned the instrumentalisation of migrants for political purposes and urged the authorities in Belarus to stop this practice.<sup>5</sup> The NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg during a meeting of European foreign ministers in Slovenia also noted that there was tension on the borders of NATO and Belarus because official Minsk used migrants as weapons.<sup>6</sup>

### **Developments in politically motivated cases**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en/person/maryja-kalesnikava>

<sup>2</sup> <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en/person/maksim-znak>

<sup>3</sup> <http://spring96.org/en/news/104877;>

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/06-09-2021-opposition-activist-maryia-kalesnikava-reputed-lawyer-maksim-znak-get-heavy-jail-terms/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://mediazona.by/news/2021/09/08/no>

<sup>5</sup>

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/08-09-2021-instrumentalisation-of-migrants-eu-delivers-demarche-to-belarus-authorities-on-illegal-border-crossings/>

<sup>6</sup>

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/04-09-2021-nato-and-european-ministers-accuse-belarusian-authorities-of-using-migrants-as-weapons/>

Key developments in politically motivated cases include:

- On 3 September 2021, 64-year-old activist Alena Hnauk was found guilty of “insulting the president” and sentenced to three years of restriction of liberty;<sup>7</sup>
- On 3 September 2021, Vadzim Mikhailau, an employee of the Palimir plant and deputy chairman of the primary organisation of the Belarusian Independent Trade Union of Naftan joint-stock company, was detained;<sup>8</sup>
- On 7 September 2021, Andrey Kukharchyk, the editor-in-chief of the Virtual Brest website, was charged with insulting a government official for creating a Telegram chat “Discussing Dangerous Brest;”<sup>9</sup>
- On 7 September 2021, BelaPAN news agency director Iryna Leushyna and former director Dzmitry Navazhylau were accused of tax evasion. If found guilty under this article, they may be sentenced to up to 5 years of restriction of liberty or 3 to 7 years in jail;<sup>10</sup>
- On 8 September 2021, the house of human rights activist Veranika Ivanova was searched. On 7 September 2021, it became known that Ivanova was suspected of leaking policemen’s data to the anti-regime Telegram channels known as The Black Book of Belarus;<sup>11</sup>
- Minsktrans state transport company claims nearly 29,000 Belarusian rubles in compensation from two political prisoners for “blocking roads” during protests. The defendants are political prisoners Ivan Tshaholok and Uladzimir Zhykhar;<sup>12</sup>
- Detained philosopher Uladzimir Matskevich was labeled “person prone to extremism” in the detention facility. In practice, such a label entails more severe treatment for these inmates.<sup>13</sup>

## Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is 661.<sup>14</sup> The number continues to grow daily.

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/03-09-2021-brest-elderly-activist-gets-three-years-of-restriction-of-liberty-face-s-new-administrative-charge/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://belsat.eu/en/news/06-09-2021-naftan-trade-union-leader-detained-in-navapolatsk/>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/07-09-2021-criminal-case-opened-against-brest-news-editor-for-insulting-official/>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/07-09-2021-official-charge-brought-against-arrested-executives-of-non-state-news-agency-belapan/>

11

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/08-09-2021-pinsk-police-search-home-of-human-rights-activist-veranika-ivanova/>

12

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/06-09-2021-minsktrans-claims-nearly-29k-rubles-in-compensation-from-two-political-prisoners-for-blocking-roads/>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/07-09-2021-imprisoned-philosopher-uladzimir-matskevich-labeled-as-person-prone-to-extremism/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en>