

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 7 August 2021 to Friday 13 August 2021**

### **One year on from the 2020 presidential election**

On 9 August 2020, the sixth presidential election was held in Belarus, followed by the largest political repressions in the country's modern history.<sup>1</sup> The following figures, put together by human rights center "Viasna", characterise the scale of repression since then:

- 35,000 people have been detained;
- more than 4,690 criminal cases have been opened to target people involved in "manifestations related to illegal mass events, riots, protests, encroachment on state sovereignty and public safety, deliberate destruction and damage to property, violence and threats of violence against officials and members of their families";
- 4,644 allegations of torture by security forces have been received;
- 3,906 people were fined for participating in "unauthorised activities" or "disobedience to the police"; and
- 1,450 individuals are involved in political criminal cases.<sup>2</sup>

This month, marking a year of resistance, foreign states have imposed more sanctions against Belarusian authorities. On 9 August, the United States,<sup>3</sup> Canada,<sup>4</sup> and Great Britain introduced new sanctions.<sup>5</sup> On 11 August, Switzerland extended the sanctions list.<sup>6</sup> Following the United States' sanctions, the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs withdrew its consent for appointing Julie Fisher as the United States Ambassador in Belarus and recommended the United States embassy in Belarus limit its staff to five employees.<sup>7</sup>

### **Migration crisis at the Belarusian border**

The migration crisis continues to intensify at the Belarusian–Lithuanian border. Since the beginning of the year, 4,112 migrants have been detained – a number 50 times higher than the total number of migrants in 2020. Some migrants are trapped between Lithuania and Belarus, since both countries refuse to accept them. According to volunteer project Alarm Phone, five Iraqi citizens are trapped in the neutral zone, with no food and water.<sup>8</sup> The Iraqi authorities have opened an investigation in connection with the death of one of the migrants at

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/09-08-2021-point-of-no-return-year-passes-since-start-of-biggest-ever-protests-in-belarus/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://spring96.org/en/news/104608>

<sup>3</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/1392.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/1390.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/1395.html?tg>

<sup>6</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/1486.html?tg>

<sup>7</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/1468.html?tg>

<sup>8</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/1324.html?tg>; <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/1267.html?tg>

the border<sup>9</sup> and suspended all passenger flights to Belarus,<sup>10</sup> except for special flights evacuating its citizens from Belarus.<sup>11</sup> Human rights defenders characterise this phenomenon of entrapment as “mistreatment from both sides”,<sup>12</sup> while the European Union calls upon Belarus to respect its international obligations in terms of preventing illegal migration flows and human trafficking.<sup>13</sup>

## Developments in politically motivated cases

The key developments in politically motivated cases include:

- On 11 August 2021, security officers unexpectedly visited a number of delegates from the platform Skhod (Assembly). The Skhod Platform of People’s Representatives was founded as an alternative to the pro-government Belarusian People’s Assembly; its goal is to start and facilitate a dialogue between the nation and the authorities. Its delegates were elected by Belarusians on a special web platform. At least 23 searches have been conducted.<sup>14</sup>
- Aliaksei Kudzin, Belarusian MMA fighter and multiple world champion in kickboxing and Thai boxing, has been sentenced to two and a half years in a medium security prison on charges of “resistance to a police officer or other officer in charge of public order enforcement, associated with the use of or threat of violence”. Previously, Kudzin was detained in Moscow and extradited to Belarus, despite the European Court of Human Rights decision ordering to stay Kudzin’s extradition.<sup>15</sup>
- 41-year-old Minsker Dzmitry Bubenka was sentenced to 12 days in jail for placing his child’s drawing on the window. The prosecution considered such actions “unauthorised picketing.”<sup>16</sup>
- Aleh Dzyachkou, the Chairman of the Mahiliou branch of the Belarusian Language Society, has been sentenced to 15 days in jail for sharing the materials of independent media outlet Belsat. The prosecution qualified such actions as “distributing extremist information”.<sup>17</sup>
- 23-year-old Kastus Tsaulouski was detained on 10 August 2021 at Pushkinskaya metro station in Minsk. He was laying flowers in memory of murdered protester Alyaksandr Taraykouski, a 34-year-old Minsk resident who was shot by police officers

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<sup>9</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/1386.html?tg>

<sup>10</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/1320.html?tg>

<sup>11</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/world/1335.html?tg>

<sup>12</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/1267.html?tg>

<sup>13</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/1259.html?tg>

<sup>14</sup>

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/11-08-2021-belarusian-security-forces-search-homes-of-persons-linked-to-assembly-platform/>; <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/1487.html?tg>

<sup>15</sup> <http://spring96.org/en/news/104637>

<sup>16</sup>

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/10-08-2021-minsk-man-sentenced-to-12-days-in-jail-for-having-kid-s-drawing-on-window/>

<sup>17</sup>

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/11-08-2021-mahiliou-local-guide-aleh-dzyachkou-arrested-for-15-days-for-sharing-belsat-materials-on-web/>

during the crackdown on protesters at Pushkinskaya metro station on 10 August 2020.

<sup>18</sup>

- 24-year-old Dzimtriy Shutau, the son of Henadz Shutau, who was shot by security forces in August 2020, was detained. His apartment was searched.<sup>19</sup>

### **Disbarment of lawyers**

The Qualification Commission under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice has disbarred three more Belarusian lawyers – Olha Karpushonok, Eugeniy Maslau, and Yulia Knyaz.<sup>20</sup> The tendency to disbar lawyers who express views contrary to those of the Belarusian authorities continues.<sup>21</sup>

### **Political prisoners**

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is 629.<sup>22</sup> The number continues to grow daily.

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<sup>18</sup>

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/11-08-2021-minsk-police-detain-young-man-who-laid-flowers-in-memory-of-murdered-protester/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/1334.html?tg>

<sup>20</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/1482.html?tg>

<sup>21</sup>

[https://www.hfhr.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Belarus\\_lawyers\\_Laevski-Statement\\_Segnees\\_07.2021\\_RU\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.hfhr.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Belarus_lawyers_Laevski-Statement_Segnees_07.2021_RU_ENG.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en>