

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 23 October 2021 to Friday 29 October 2021

Migration crisis at Belarusian border

The migration crisis continues to intensify at the Belarusian border with Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland. On 27 October 2021, [313](#) attempts to cross the Polish border and [96](#) attempts to cross the Lithuanian border were made. On 25 October 2021, a woman who was transferring 42 migrants in her car was [detained](#) at the Polish border. Incidents of [using force](#) and [violence against women](#) were reported, while [humanitarian aid](#) failed to reach migrants on several occasions.

Three Facebook groups, which allegedly facilitated the cross-border movement of migrants, were [blocked](#) by Facebook at the request of Polish authorities with the cooperation of the United States embassy in Poland.

After documenting [eight deaths](#) at the border, in a recent [statement](#), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) called for urgent action to save lives and prevent further suffering at the border areas between Belarus and the European Union (EU). The UNHCR's Regional Director for Europe, Pascale Moreau, has mentioned that people stranded at the border "are held hostage by a political stalemate which needs to be solved now". According to the agency, "among those stranded at the border are people with international protection needs, including 32 Afghan women, men and children", who "have been left in limbo... since mid-August in dire conditions and are unable to access asylum and any form of assistance on either side" and who face problems accessing proper shelter, food, or water. After the statement was made, [the ninth death](#) at the border was reported.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran [expressed](#) its concern regarding the situation of people "trapped at the border" and [called upon](#) the Belarusian side to cooperate within the framework of bilateral relations.

The EU is expected to adopt the fifth package of sanctions against Belarus in November. According to the Head of the EU Delegation to Belarus, Dirk Schuebel, "the fifth package of [sanctions](#) against the Lukashenka regime will be primarily levelled against individuals and companies responsible for smuggling migrants from the Middle East and Africa to the European Union through the territory of Belarus".

Aarhus Convention member states condemn persecution of environmental NGOs in Belarus

On 21 October 2021, the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention) member states [adopted](#) the [Decision](#) on Belarus which recognizes the closure of the

environmental organization Ekadom (eng. Ecohome) as a case of persecution and oppression of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The Decision not only condemns the closure of the organization but also provides for the suspension of Belarus's rights and privileges under the Convention if the country does not take steps to restore registration by 1 December 2021.

It is the first time in the history of the Convention that all attempts to reach a consensus have been exhausted and the parties have been forced to resort to voting. 34 out of 39 countries voted in favour of the Decision on Belarus.

Belarusian Workers' Union urges people to join nationwide strike

The Chairman of the Belarusian Workers' Union, Syarhei Dyleuski, called upon Belarusians to join a [nationwide strike](#) on 1 November 2021. The demands of the Belarusian Workers' Union include: putting an end to the current reprisals and the release of political prisoners; the start of negotiations between the authorities and democratic forces; the adjustment of salaries and pension payments to the economic situation; the exercise of the constitutional right to freedom of speech; and unhampered activity of independent trade unions.

Belarusian Ministry of Internal Affairs to create a “list of extremists”

According to law enforcement official [Vyachaslau Arlouski](#), the Interior Ministry is preparing a list of individuals who are linked to “extremist activities”. The list is to be published on the agency's website, with the database of ‘extremists’ to be kept for five years from their inclusion on the list. Arlouski emphasized that all subscribers to “extremist” Telegram channels participate in the popularization of extremist resources and mere subscription may result in criminal prosecution.

Developments in politically motivated cases

Some of the key developments in politically motivated cases include:

- On 25 October 2021, a Minsk resident was [sentenced](#) to two years of restriction of liberty for dancing with a white-red-white flag at one of Minsk's squares during 2020 protests in Belarus;
- On 25 October 2021, at least eight civil society activists were [detained](#) in Homiel, allegedly for following protest-linked Telegram channels;
- On 25 October 2021, [Aleh Harmazinski](#) was sentenced to two years in a minimum security prison for posting “insulting messages” in a Telegram channel;
- On 21 October 2021, police raided the home of [Aksana Zaretskaya](#), a Belarusian cultural studies scholar and member of the opposition Coordination Council. Although she has not been arrested, it was already the second search conducted at the activist's apartment;
- Political prisoner [Mikita Yemyalyanau](#), kept in punitive confinement since 11 October 2021, has been on hunger strike for two weeks;

- Belarusian IT specialist [Syarhei Saveliyev](#), who gave the Gulagu.net project a notorious archive of video recordings of torture in Russian prisons, is now wanted by Russian authorities;
- The Chairman of the Audit Committee of the Free Trade Union of Belarus in Polatsk, [Viktar Stukau](#), is accused of distributing “extremist materials” for reposting material by Belarusian independent media outlet Belsat, recognized as ‘extremist’ by Belarusian authorities.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [833](#). The number continues to grow daily.