

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 8 January 2022 to Friday 14 January 2022**

### **Criminal responsibility for acting on behalf of ‘unregistered organizations’**

On 11 January 2022, it was announced that the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus will be supplemented by an article prohibiting [working on behalf of an unregistered or liquidated organization](#) and making such work punishable by up to two years of imprisonment. Since all human rights organizations and the majority of independent civil society organizations were liquidated by Belarusian authorities in 2021, such an amendment effectively criminalizes human rights work.

### **YouTube removes ads with political prisoners’ interrogations upon Tsikhanouskaya’s request**

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya sent a letter to the executive director of Google, requesting the company deal with the Belarusian authorities’ use of YouTube to share approximately 40 advertisements featuring [interrogations of political prisoners and forced confessions](#) on camera. In an official letter, Tsikhanouskaya drew attention to the fact that forced testimony qualifies as torture under the United Nations Convention against Torture. She urged Google to take measures to stop the streaming of such videos. Google Vice President Karan Bhatia responded to Tsikhanouskaya, saying that all the named advertisements had been removed and that the accounts that posted them would not be able to place propaganda ads in the future.

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

According to human rights defenders, in 2021 alone at least [1,285](#) people were convicted in politically motivated criminal cases. Restriction of liberty applied in 41.8% of the cases. A total of 1,992 years of incarceration were imposed on 537 people. The statistics include criminal cases alone, not administrative cases.

The most applied Criminal Code articles in politically motivated prosecution were:

- “Group actions that grossly violate public order” (Article 342) – 416 people convicted;
- “Insulting a representative of the authorities” (Article 369) – 344 people convicted;
- “Participation in mass riots” (Article 293) – 161 people convicted;
- “Violence against a police officer” (Article 364) – 139 people convicted; and
- “Insulting the President” (Article 368) – 115 convicts.

Some of the key developments in politically motivated cases include:

- On 12 January 2022, the Belarusian Prosecutor General’s Office reported that the case of artist and political prisoner [Ales Pushkin](#) was submitted to court. Pushkin is

accused of “rehabilitation of Nazism” for exhibiting a portrait of soldier Yauhen Zhykhar with an automatic gun on his shoulder;

- On 12 January 2022, at least [3 civil society activists](#) were searched and detained – Antos Zhylko and Natallya Pukhava in Minsk and Aleh Matskevich in Barysau;
- On 10 January 2022, it was revealed that 22-year-old political prisoner [Dzmitry Hopta](#) was denied a pardon. Hopta has a mental illness, causing a significant behavioral disorder, which requires special care and treatment;
- On 10 January 2022, Russia extradited 25-year-old Belarusian citizen [Dzmitry Padlobnikau](#) to Belarus, where he may be sentenced to up to seven years in jail for participation in peaceful protests, under the charge of “disorderly conduct” and “violence against a police officer”;
- On 10 January 2022, a 45-year-old [Mogilev resident](#) was sentenced to two years in prison for leaving comments on social media regarding “Zeltsar’s case”;
- On 8 January 2022, Cuba resident [Roberto Valdes Casanuevo](#), deported from Belarus to Russia, to be followed by deportation to Cuba, because of the 2020 protests, was evacuated to Lithuania;
- On New Year’s Eve, Rechytsa resident [Dzmitry Uskhopau](#) was detained and allegedly beaten to death by the police. On the day of Uskhopau’s funeral, his friends were [detained](#) by the police. Uskhopau’s relatives were [evacuated](#) from Belarus with the help of the BySol foundation for fear of persecution;
- According to the Belarusian Students’ Association, [12 prisoners](#) involved in the so-called “students case” are being forced to file a petition seeking a pardon. To compel the prisoners to seek a pardon, the prison authorities created unbearable conditions: the political prisoners were threatened with deprivation of meetings and calls; received limited correspondence; barred from contacting other prisoners; checked frequently; and subjected to increased pressure.

### **Political prisoner commits suicide**

On 29 December 2021, political prisoner [Dzmitriy Dudoit](#) was sentenced to two years of “chemistry” (restriction of liberty without serving a prison term) for leaving a critical comment on social media. He jumped off the bridge in Mogilev on his way from a regular medical check-up for prisoners.

### **Norwegian company Yara International to stop buying Belarusian potash**

Norwegian company Yara International announced the [discontinuation of purchasing potash fertilizers from Belarus](#) by 1 April 2022. Yara is a principal partner of the Belarusian state-owned company Belaruskali. In its official statement, President and CEO of Yara International Svein Tore Holsether noted a “strong commitment to universal human rights” and condemned all forms of repression and human rights violations, highlighting the desire to promote “positive change by leveraging [Yara’s] presence in Belarus to promote occupational safety and human rights”.

### **Migration crisis**

While the [migration crisis](#) at the Belarus–EU border reached its peak in November 2021 and has subsided in scope since then, some migrants still remain stranded at the border and continue to attempt to cross into European Union territory. On 6 January 2022, 18 people attempted to cross the Polish border and 63 attempted to cross the Latvian border. On 7 January 2022, Polish border control officers reported that 35 people attempted to cross the border, allegedly throwing stones and branches at officers. At the same time, on 7 January 2022, [80 Belarusians](#) successfully crossed the Belarusian–Polish border in search of asylum.

### **Political prisoners**

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [982](#). The number continues to grow daily.