

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 5 February 2022 to Friday 11 February 2022

Developments in politically motivated cases

Human rights activists report that in January 2022, at least [148 people](#) were subject to criminal prosecution for political reasons.

Some of the key developments in politically motivated cases include:

- On 9 February, Minsk City Court sentenced two former employees of the Beltelecom telecommunications company, [Aleksey Bychkovsky and Artem Parkhamovich](#), who were recognized as political prisoners, to 11 years in a strict regime colony under eight articles of the Criminal Code. According to the court, they passed the personal data of regime officials to which they had access to opposition channels. According to relatives, during the arrest Bychkovsky and Parkhamovich were severely beaten and tortured with electric shocks.
- On 8 February, it became known that [an employee of the Life cellular network](#) was also detained for leaking the data of security officers and officials.
- On 8 February, [Galina Mikhailchuk](#), a 69-year-old pensioner from Vaukavysk, was sentenced to 2.5 years in a penal colony for comments critical of the authorities and specific officials on social networks. Despite the fact that Mikhailchuk apologized to the “victims” and admitted her guilt, the prosecutor said that the pensioner “is charged with hatred for the regime”.
- On 7 February, [Oleg Romanchik](#), a resident of the city of Braslav and father of four children, was sentenced to three years of restriction of freedom and sent to a forced labour camp for distributing opposition leaflets, which he placed in the mailboxes of local residents. For these actions, he was accused of “slander”, “illegal actions with personal data”, and “calls for actions that grossly violate public order”.
- The Viasna Human Rights Center reports on the detention of Minsk residents for a variety of reasons: on 7 February, information appeared about the detention of [Anatoly Tereshchenkov](#), who simply photographed a group of policemen and sent this photo to a group chat, and on 5 February, [Anna Kozhemaks](#), who was an observer at the presidential elections in 2020, was detained.

Political prosecution for administrative offences

On 7 February, the Court of the Moscow District of Minsk sentenced [Minsk resident Maksim Matsulevich](#) to 13 days of administrative arrest for “petty hooliganism”. On 4 February, he had been searched, during which nothing was found except for white-red-white bracelets, after which the security forces offered him a choice of which administrative code article he would like to be convicted under.

On 4 January, the house of photographer [Ulady Gridin](#), who was working with the independent media outlet Radio Svoboda, recognized as an extremist formation on the territory of the Republic of Belarus, was searched in a criminal case on “mass riots” in which thousands of people are being treated as suspects. On 7 February, he was sentenced to 13 days of administrative arrest for “disobedience to policemen” because he allegedly did not open the door to policemen who came to him with a search warrant.

‘Extremism’ cases on the rise

On 9 February, on the eve of the referendum on changes to the constitution, [the Honest People initiative](#), whose main goal is to monitor political elections, was recognized as an “extremist formation”, so now people who share photos of their ballots with the organisation or otherwise cooperate with it can face up to six years in prison. On 8 February, the [independent web-resource Real Belarus](#) acquired the same status.

On 8 February, it became known that the web pages of one of [the largest opposition resources, Maya Kraina Belarus](#) (My Country - Belarus), were recognized as extremist materials on all social network platforms. It is worth noting that the Telegram-channel of the resource was recognized as extremist in March 2021, and in October 2021 as an extremist formation. For the storage or distribution of materials from these resources, people face administrative arrest or a fine for a huge sum of money.

Mistreatment of prisoners

On the evening of 4 February, it became known that [Vladimir Matskevich](#), a philosopher and a well-known public and political figure, went on hunger strike because, despite the fact that no active investigative actions are being carried out on him and no clear charges have yet been filed, his detention term is constantly extended.

Political prisoner [Artem Onishchuk](#) was again placed in a punishment cell, known in Belarus for its unbearable conditions. Previously, Onishchuk had been placed in such an isolation facility in June 2021 and had to swallow metal objects in order to draw attention and stop the torture and pressure against himself.

On 8 January, the Viasna Human Rights Center published information about the detention conditions of [arrested people in the Akrestsina detention center](#). According to one of the detainees, up to 19 people could be kept in a cell designed for only two people. Also, warm clothes and jackets were taken away from all prisoners convicted for political reasons, despite the cold, and some guards spoiled the personal belongings of prisoners.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1040](#). The number continues to grow daily.