

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 29 January 2022 to Friday 4 February 2022

Developments in politically motivated cases

Some of the key developments in politically motivated cases include:

- On 31 January, the cousin of the popular opposition politician Pavel Latushko, [Anatoliy Latushko](#), along with two women, was detained as part of a criminal prosecution under an article on hooliganism for stenciling the national coat of arms 'Pahonia'. On 28 January, it became known that the Department of Financial Investigations of the State Control Committee initiated a criminal case against [Yana Latushko](#), the politician's daughter.
- On 1 February, security forces detained [Nikita Storozhenko](#), a former investigator who resigned from the Investigative Committee in protest after the rigged presidential elections in 2020. He is suspected of inciting hatred by a group of people, in connection with which he could face up to 12 years in prison. There is no information regarding which actions led to the criminal case being initiated.
- On 1 February, 64-year-old activist [Alena Gnauk](#) was charged with "slandering" Alexander Lukashenko and "discrediting the Republic of Belarus", in connection with which she could face up to six years in prison. These charges were brought after Gnauk posted on Facebook a description of the migration crisis situation, sharing the circumstances of one of the Kurdish families in Belarus. Earlier, she had already been sentenced to three years of restriction of liberty under other "defamatory" articles of the Criminal Code, which continue to be used to suppress negative opinions of the authorities.
- On 31 January, the Stolbtsi District Court [sentenced seven people](#) to a year in a correctional colony under the criminal article of hooliganism. In the autumn of 2021, they took part in a protest action and damaged bales of straw with paint. At the trial, it was revealed that the security forces had beaten the detainees, drawn a swastika on them, and even threatened to shoot them. According to the defendants, the action was organized by "an unknown man" who was not present at the trial and who is allegedly a provocateur from the police.
- On 29 January, information appeared about the detention of popular Twitter bloggers who had more than a thousand subscribers. One of the detainees was the author of one of the most popular channels, [Mikhail Tsygankov, nicknamed 'Gypsykov'](#), famous for his satirical jokes about the political situation in Belarus.

Political prosecution for administrative offences

On 31 January, information appeared that student [Ilya Dobrodeev](#) was sentenced to 10 days of administrative arrest for having white and red stripes (the color of the national Belarusian flag used by Belarusians at protests) on his backpack, as law enforcement officers considered it "unauthorized picketing".

Pro-government sources also mentioned the detention of Vaukavysk residents [Vadim Lyakhovsky, Dmitry Ragel, Nikolay Voropay](#) for "distributing extremist materials" - the detainees themselves allegedly "confessed" to this on the so-called "repentant videos" produced, under duress, by law enforcement agencies.

'Extremism' cases on the rise

On 31 January, it became known that all information from the [human rights center "Viasna"](#) would be categorized as extremist materials and become prohibited in terms of storage and distribution.

On 27 January, the independent media outlet [Nasha Niva](#) was recognized as an extremist group, so now publication subscribers on social networks can be recognized as "members of an extremist group" and be held criminally liable.

Mistreatment of prisoners

Political prisoner [Natalya Hershe](#), a citizen of Switzerland, began her second hunger strike in a closed regime colony due to the unbearable detention conditions. Despite the fact the cell is very cold, warm clothes were taken from her; she is not allowed out for walks; and the radio is constantly played at maximum volume.

Political prisoner [Stepan Latypov](#) was put on three types of records at once in the colony: as prone to extremism, likely to take hostages, and also prone to self-harm and a suicide risk. Because of this, he is marked with a special yellow tag, restricted in positions at work inside the colony, and additional searches are carried out in his cell throughout the day.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1035](#). The number continues to grow daily.