

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 19 February 2022 to Friday 25 February 2022

Human Constanta expresses its solidarity with the people of Ukraine and urges the prioritization of voices and stories of Ukrainians, the highlighting of violations of human rights and international law, and calls for accountability for the actions of the aggressor.

Suppression of opinion regarding Russian aggression against Ukraine

According to pro-government resources, police officers are actively detaining people for [calling for protest against the war in Ukraine](#). For example, there is evidence of the [detention of a man from Home1](#) who tried to write criticism of Vladimir Putin on a roadside pavement.

Prosecution under defamatory articles of the Criminal Code

- On 21 February, it became known that the Grodno Regional Court sentenced geography teacher [Ruslan Sadovnichy](#) to 3.5 years in a penal colony for critical comments about police officers, under three articles of the Criminal Code: “Insulting a representative of the authorities”, “Inciting racial, national, religious or other social enmity or discord”, “Violence or threat against an official performing official duties, or another person performing a public duty”. Before the trial, Sadovnichy was kept in a punishment cell under torture conditions for a significant period of time.
- On 23 February, [Denis Petko](#), a resident of the city of Verkhnedvinsk, was sentenced to 2.5 years of restriction of freedom and sent to an open correctional facility for allegedly making insulting comments about Alexander Lukashenko, as well as about employees of the armed forces, prosecutors, and state media workers.

Political prosecution for administrative offenses

Repression of relatives of activists and opposition actors who were able to leave the territory of Belarus continued. On 18 February, armed officers of the State Security Committee (KGB) broke into the apartment of activist Polina Burko, who has been living outside Belarus for a while. In his apartment, security forces found [the mother of activist Elena Burko](#), who was detained and sentenced to 12 days of arrest.

There are also dozens of other cases against people which use a whole range of ‘political’ articles: Brest resident [Yuri Kostyuk](#) and Smorgon resident [Romuald Ulan](#) were punished with 15 and 14 days of arrest, respectively, for “distributing extremist materials”; two Belarusian State University teachers were punished with 15 days of arrest, [Anna Kureichik](#), for “disobedience to the requirements of an official”, and [Tatyana Sinitza](#), for “petty hooliganism”. On 22 February, Vitebsk doctor [Vladimir Martov](#) was detained “for illegal picketing”.

Political persecution ahead of the constitutional referendum

Despite the fact that it is only the [second day of early voting](#), human rights activists have already recorded a number of gross violations of electoral legislation: many employees of state enterprises (Grodnoazot, Belorusneft), university students (Brest State University, Belarusian National Technical University, Belarusian State Medical University, Vitebsk Academy of Veterinary Medicine), and even employees of medical institutions (Brest Children’s Regional Hospital) [are forced to vote](#), and the voting booths are equipped in such a way (no curtains, a certain angle of the tables) that all actions of the voter, including their

vote, are visible to members of the election commission, which grossly violates the principle of secret voting.

Pro-government TV channels [aired footage of the detention of a group of people](#) who allegedly “planned to disrupt the referendum”. According to law enforcers, a group of citizens sent leaflets to members of election commissions calling for votes to be counted in an honest manner. At the moment, it is already known that nine criminal cases have already been initiated, including for obstruction of the right to participate in a referendum, illegal actions in relation to personal data, slander, and damage to property.

A resident of the Gomel region, [Nikolai Sushkov](#), expressed a desire to participate in the referendum as an observer and prepared all the necessary documents for this. After submitting an application to the governing bodies, the head of the local village council called Sushkov for a conversation on local issues, after which communication with him disappeared for several days. On 21 February, it became known that the man was convicted for allegedly subscribing to opposition resources on the Internet.

On 22 February, it became known that one of the observers in the city of Mozyr, [Elena Shatilo](#), was deprived of her accreditation for unknown reasons, and then detained by police officers, after which there was no contact with her.

‘Extremism’ cases on the rise

The local opposition [Telegram channel Bobruisk Online](#), which was used to organize peaceful meetings and cooperation of residents on ordinary everyday issues, was recognized as an extremist formation based on a decision by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Now, just for subscribing to this channel, people can be punished with up to six years in prison.

The [information resource Cynic](#), which published independent analyses on the political situation in Belarus and in the region of Eastern Europe on Telegram, was recognized as publishing extremist materials. Now, storing or distributing publications from this channel can result in an administrative arrest of up to 15 days or a large fine.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1078](#). The number continues to grow daily.