

The information is aggregated from open online sources and our own practice. In these newsletters, we will update you in brief on everyday human rights violations in numbers and facts.

### **Wednesday 18 January 2023 to Friday 3 February 2023**

Arbitrary detentions of people for political reasons continue in Belarus. Every day, human rights activists [report](#) detentions and court indictments for participating in protest actions, criticizing the authorities on social networks, and spreading information critical of the regime. In addition to the general trends of politically motivated persecution, characteristic of the period 2020-2022, the analyzed period is marked by harsh detentions of people who criticized the authorities in chat roulettes, increasing the term of punishment for political prisoners for “disobeying the administration,” harsh sentences for cooperation with opposition organizations, and continued harassment of lawyers.

#### **Detentions of people who were provoked to criticize the authorities in online chats**

Since the beginning of January 2023, employees of the Main Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption ([GUBOPiK](#)) have detained [at least 13 people](#) for criticizing the authorities and supporting Ukraine in an online chatroulette (a website where one can anonymously communicate with random users via video). The Youtube videos of pro-government blogger [Yuri Komar](#) played a key role in these people’s detention – in the videos, Komar logs into the website, searches for people critical of Belarusian authorities and supporting Ukraine, provokes them to harsh statements, posing as a resident of Ukraine, and then posts recordings of conversations online. All detentions were accompanied by beatings and publishing forced “confession videos,” where detainees apologize for supporting Ukraine under duress .

At the beginning of February 2023, it became known about another provocateur in chatroulette – pro-government blogger [Igor Konyushik](#) uses identical tactics of provoking people, forcing them to confess about participation in opposition activities. Because of his actions, at least 3 people were detained: [a young man](#) who claimed to be a member of the Ukrainian Azov battalion, [a resident of Lida](#) who criticized the blogger for supporting the regime, as well as [a resident of Minsk](#) who mentioned that he was registered in the opposition initiative “Plan Peramoga.”

#### **Mass punishments of political prisoners for “malicious disobedience”**

The practice of punishing political prisoners under Article 411 of the Criminal Code (“malicious disobedience to the requirements of the administration of a correctional institution”) is expanding . The Article is commonly used to put pressure on political prisoners, tighten the conditions in places of detention, and lengthen prison sentences. In 2020-2022, [at least 18 cases were initiated](#) under this article against political prisoners. During the analyzed period, it is known about the initiation of cases against [Alena Hnauk](#), [Viachaslau Maleichuk](#), and [Andrei Navitski](#), punished under this article for the second time. On 26 January 2023, the court added another 9 months for “disobeying the administration” to [Siarhei Yarashevich](#)'s previous sentence of 5.5 years for participating in protests.

#### **Sentences for “aiding extremist activity”**

Article 361-4 (“aiding extremist activity”) continues to be used by the regime to punish people who collaborated with or assisted independent media and opposition organizations recognized as “extremist.”

On 19 January 2023, The Brest Regional Court sentenced [Darya Losik](#) to 2 years in prison on charges of “aiding extremist activities” for an interview with the Belsat TV channel in the spring of 2022 about the husband Igor Losik, previously sentenced to 15 years in prison. According to the prosecution, Darya allegedly “positioned herself as the wife of a political prisoner, and gave a personal negative assessment to state bodies whose competence includes the implementation of criminal prosecution and justice. At the same time, she claimed that her husband had not committed criminal acts and was convicted illegally. She called on the relatives of other convicts to take an example from her.”

On 20 January 2023, Gomel Regional Court, in a closed session, sentenced [Yevgeny Glushkov](#), a resident of Zyabrovka village, to 9 years in prison on charges of “aiding extremist activities,” as well as of “high treason” (part 1 of Article 356 of Criminal Code). On the night of 10-11 August 2022, an incident related to a fire on one of the planes occurred at the airfield in Yevgeny's native village, which was widely covered in the media and after which local security forces began inspections. During the checks, an old photograph of the airfield was found in Yevgeny's phone, which he had taken from the drone and handed over to opposition organizations, as well as contacts of residents of Ukraine. These facts became the basis for the detention and subsequent punishment of Yevgeny.

### **The persecution of lawyers defending repressed people continues**

On 2 February 2023, attorney [Vital Brahinetz](#) was sentenced to 8 years of enhanced regime imprisonment, he was found guilty under four articles of the Criminal Code: incitement of enmity (part 3 of Article 130), calls to action against national security (part 3 of Article 361), creation of an extremist formation or participation in it (part 1 of Article 361-1), and gross violation of public order (part 1 of article 342). Earlier, he defended lawyer Andrei Mochalov, who was deprived of his license for political reasons, as well as human rights defender and Nobel Prize winner Ales Bialiatski.

### **PRAB report “Beaten, punished and pushed back”**

In January 2023, Protecting Rights at Borders initiative published [a report](#) about the systematic use of pushbacks of migrants at the EU borders, violating international law standards. Among other aspects, the review contains information about mass violations of migrants' rights by Belarusian border guards. In 2022, Human Constanta interviewed 131 persons in the territory of Belarus. Countries of origin of those interviewed were Afghanistan, Cameroon, Cuba, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Liberia, Morocco, Syria, Togo, and Yemen. Among those interviewed, 105 people reported experiencing pushbacks. Intimidation, violence and illegal practices by Belarusian border guards were reported by the interviewees. According to the numerous reports from the refugees in transit, Belarusian border guards are directly pushing them to cross the border illegally. In case of unsuccessful attempts to cross the border, refugees in transit find themselves stranded in the forest, trying to survive without shelter, food, water, or access to medical care. Many remain in the forest and experience daily abuse from the Belarusian border guards, who use violence to force people to cross the border into the EU countries. Human Constanta recorded several stories of people who were robbed by Belarusian border guards. Appeals to the Belarusian State Border Committee with a request to evacuate people from the forest on the border were often ignored.

### **Political prisoners**

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1432](#). The number continues to grow daily.