

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.

Sunday 1 January 2023 to Tuesday 17 January 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 criminal prosecution of opposition politicians, repressions for donations to solidarity funds, harsh sentences against labor union representatives.

Review of the fight against “extremism” in Belarus for October-December 2022

Human Constanta has published a legal report analyzing the practice of using “anti-extremist” and “anti-terrorist” legislation by the Belarusian authorities. According to the report, state bodies and state media continued to use “extremism” as a tool of political pressure. In three months, at least 129 new criminal cases, 89 sentences, and 127 administrative cases on “extremist” grounds were documented. According to government agencies, 5000 “crimes of extremist nature” were documented in 2022. The maximum recorded punishment for “extremism” is [25 years in prison](#).

The analyzed period was marked by [the first trials in absentia](#) of opposition representatives abroad with the subsequent confiscation of their property. For the first time, a verdict was passed for [giving an interview to “extremist” media](#) on an article “promoting extremist activities.” Punishments for subscribing to “extremist” opposition resources have become part of daily repressive practices. A wave of sentences on charges of “calls to harm national security” started [against labor union activists](#) who called for disobedience at state-owned enterprises. The moderation of social networks of opposition organizations recognized as “terrorist” on the territory of Belarus began to be interpreted by the security forces as [“participation in a terrorist organization.”](#) People who passed information to Belarusian organizations located abroad began to be punished for [“high treason.”](#)

As of 1 January 2023, there are 2849 materials on the Republican List of Extremist Materials, including 1019 Telegram resources, the absolute majority of which are Internet resources of the opposition and civil society. For the first time, the List of Extremist Formations was supplemented by a non-profit organization – the environmental organization “Ecodom.” The List of “Nazi symbols” has come to include the opposition slogan “Long live Belarus!”.

Read the full review by [following the link](#) (available in Russian, English translation pending).

Laureates of the Human Rights Community of Belarus Award for 2022 have been announced

On 11 January 2023, the winners of the Belarusian Human Rights Community of Belarus Award for 2022 [were announced](#) at a ceremony at the Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House in Vilnius. The award in the nomination “Human Rights Defender of the Year-2022” was given to human rights activist Nasta Lojka who is currently being held in a temporary detention facility [on charges](#) of “organizing actions that grossly violate public order,” her case being [under consideration](#) at the Human Rights Committee. The nomination “Journalist of the Year-2022” was awarded to Aksana Kolb, a former [political prisoner](#), a journalist of the “Novy Chas” publication. The award in the nomination “Human Rights

Campaign/Initiative of the Year-2022” was won by [the International Committee for Investigation of Torture](#) – an association of human rights organizations, documenting cases of torture in Belarus, as well as providing support to victims.

Criminal prosecution of opposition politicians continues

On 11 January 2023, information appeared about the detention of the candidate in the 2020 presidential election, the co-chair of the liquidated public organization “Tell the Truth” [Andrey Dmitriev](#). Two days later, the Investigative Committee charged the politician under the infamous Article 342 of the Criminal Code (“organization of actions grossly violating public order”) – he is accused of participating in peaceful protests in 2020. The department also [believes](#) that “Dmitriev's contacts with representatives of the West and the United States may indicate the coordination of his political activities from abroad. There is information that the detainee contacted the U.S. Department of State and personally with its former head Hillary Clinton.”

On 16 January 2023, the Investigative Committee of the city of Zhodino initiated a new criminal case against political prisoner politician [Siarhei Tsikhanouski](#), who at the end of 2021 was sentenced to 18 years in prison for his political activities. According to the investigation, while serving his sentence, Tsikhanouski “systematically disobeyed lawful requirements of the administration of the correctional institution and provoked conflicts.” The criminal case against him was initiated under Article 411 of the Criminal Code (“malicious disobedience to the requirements of the administration of a correctional institution”), which is commonly used to put pressure on political prisoners.

Persecution for donations to the solidarity funds

On 9 January 2023, independent media [reported](#) that the Belarusian security services have completed the identification of persons who donated to the “BYSOL” and “BY_help” solidarity funds in 2020-2021. Money transfers to these funds were interpreted by the security forces as “financing extremist activities” under Article 361-2 of the Criminal Code, since the funds were recognized as “extremist formations” at the end of 2021. The security forces are persecuting even those people who donated to the funds long before they were recognized as “extremist.” According to media reports, the head of the Belarusian Hi-Tech Park agreed with the staff of the State Security Committee (KGB) that IT-specialists should not be persecuted, provided that they come to the KGB for a “preventive conversation” and transfer the amount of the their donation tenfold to one of the state bank accounts. The security forces started to send out lists of people who have made donations and who need to appear in the KGB to avoid criminal prosecution to the management of IT-companies.

On 12 January 2023, the security forces brutally detained Homel businessman [Yuriy Tashkinov](#) on charges of “financing extremism” for helping Ukraine by the donations through the “BYSOL” foundation. In his social networks, he spoke out against Russian aggression in Ukraine and published reports on humanitarian aid.

Severe sentences for labor union activists

On 5 January 2023, the Minsk City Court has sentenced [activists of Belarusian independent labor unions](#) on charges of “calling for restrictive measures aimed at harming national security,” “inciting other social hatred and discord,” and “creating an extremist formation or participating in it” under Articles 361, 130, and 361-1 of the Criminal Code, respectively. Henadz Fiadynich and Vasil Berasnieu were sentenced to 9 years in prison, Viachaslau (Vatslau) Areshka – to 8 years in prison.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1437](#). The number continues to grow daily.