

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

Saturday 10 June 2023 to Friday 23 June 2023

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by severe sentences to human rights defender Nasta Lojka and people suspected of organizing resistance to the authorities; more criminal cases for anti-war actions; initiatives to introduce punishment for information about LGBTQ+ relations; restricting access to and recognizing several human rights resources and media outlets as “extremist.”

Nasta Lojka sentenced to 7 years in prison for human rights work

On 20 June 2023, Minsk City Court sentenced Human Constanta human rights defender [Nasta Lojka](#) to 7 years in prison for participating in the writing of 2018 human rights report “[Persecution of Anarchists, anti-fascists, leftists and public activists in Belarus.](#)” The report gives a critical assessment of the activities of police officers in the context of human rights violations, which the investigators in Nasta’s case qualified as “incitement of enmity against a professional group of police officers.” This interpretation of the article does not comply with international human rights standards and contradicts the practice of international judicial bodies. The details of the case are unknown, as the trial was held behind closed doors at the request of the prosecutor in order to “exclude the dissemination of information products containing calls for extremist activity.” 16 human rights organizations [demand](#) the immediate and unconditional release of the human rights defender. As of 23 June 2023, our colleague has been in custody for 268 days.

Verdict handed down in another case of resistance to the authorities and conspiracy

On 21 June 2023, a verdict [was announced](#) in the case of the arson in the house of pro-government Parliament deputy Oleg Gaidukevich and “an attempt to seize power unconstitutionally with terrorist attacks and mass riots.” The deputy earlier [reported](#) that on the night of 10-11 July 2021, unknown people threw “Molotov cocktails” into his house, of which only one caught fire, while no one was injured as a result of the incident. There were 18 people accused in this case at the same time (including whole families), 3 of whom (political activist Vadim Prokopyev, former Special Forces soldier Igor Chemyakin, and former security officer of diplomatic missions Denis Khamitsevich) are abroad and were convicted *in absentia*. All defendants in the case were found guilty and sentenced to severe terms of imprisonment – in total, the defendants were sentenced to almost 240 years of imprisonment, while Prokopyev received a maximum sentence of 25 years *in absentia*.

Belarusian regime plans to introduce chemical castration of pedophiles and responsibility for propaganda of “nontraditional relations”

On 19 June 2023, the press service of the Prosecutor General's Office [announced](#) that on its initiative the Council of Ministers approved an action plan to protect children from sexual violence and exploitation. The Prosecutor General's Office has prepared amendments to the Criminal Code, which provide for compulsory treatment of convicted pedophiles, including with the use of chemical castration. The press service of the Office adds that Alexander Lukashenko also supported initiatives to work out issues on strengthening the responsibility of parents, establishing administrative responsibility for “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations, sex change, pedophilia and childfree.”

Persecution related to the war in Ukraine

On 16 June 2023, Gomel Regional Court sentenced [Anastasia Petruchenko](#) to 3 years in prison for donating to the Kalinovsky Regiment, a military formation of Belarusian volunteers fighting on the side of the Armed Forces of Ukraine under Article 361-2 of the Criminal Code ("financing of extremist activities"). On 20 June 2023, The Investigative Committee [reported](#) the detention of a 53-year-old resident of Mogilev under Article 361-4 of the Criminal Code ("aiding extremist activity") for filming the movement of Russian military equipment on his phone.

Access to human rights resources and independent media continues to be restricted

On 12 June 2023, the Ministry of Internal Affairs recognized extrajudicially one of the most popular media in Belarus "[Zerkalo.io](#)" an "extremist formation" allegedly for "public calls for sanctions, discrediting and insulting officials, organizing activities to prepare for the commission of encroachments on the sovereignty and public security of the Republic of Belarus." On 15 June 2023, all Internet resources and the logo of the [Belarusian Association of Journalists](#) were recognized as "extremist materials." According to the Prosecutor's Office, "members of this association regularly published destructive materials that contributed to creating threats to national security, inciting social enmity and discord through the dissemination of unreliable and politicized information." Dissemination of information from these resources is punishable by up to 15 days of administrative arrest, and criminal liability of up to 8 years of imprisonment for any form of cooperation or interaction. Moreover, on 13 June 2023, the website of the human rights project "[Right to Protection.](#)" aimed at providing information support to lawyers and human rights defenders, was blocked.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1501](#). The number continues to grow daily.