

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 15 April 2023 to Friday 28 April 2023**

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen – in the past weeks, political prisoner Viktor Babaryka was beaten up in prison, and security forces massively detained people following a series of provocations. The authorities continued to use anti-extremist legislation as a repressive tool against dissenters.

### **Review of the fight against “extremism” in Belarus for January-March 2023**

Human Constanta published a review that reflects the main trends in the use of “extremism” and “terrorism” markers in Belarus in January-March 2023 ([full version available in Russian](#), English version pending). In three months, human rights defenders have recorded at least 201 new criminal cases, 58 sentences, and 123 cases of administrative offenses on “extremist” grounds. In the analyzed period, the maximum recorded punishment for “extremism” was [22 years in prison](#). Human rights defenders note that information about such cases is often non-public and there may be more of such cases.

Security forces organized daily “raids” in regional cities, which were accompanied by mass arbitrary detentions and phone searches of dozens of people perceived as disloyal to the regime. All detentions for “political” offenses were carried out by employees of special units in full uniform and using force.

The practice of detaining friends and relatives of volunteers fighting on the side of Ukraine against Russia has expanded. Dozens of people were detained for registering in opposition initiatives controlled by the security forces in fake Telegram bots, as well as for criticizing the Belarusian regime and the Russian army during conversations in chat roulettes with provocateurs pretending to be Ukrainians.

The courts handed down a number of harsh sentences against independent journalists – the courts interpreted the dissemination of any information about the socio-political situation that contradicted the official position of the authorities as [“incitement to hostility.”](#) For the first time, the professional activity of a lawyer, [Aliaksandr Danilevich](#), providing services to persons who are opponents of the current regime was equated to “harm to national security.” Administrators of opposition channels and people who donated to solidarity funds are harassed even if their actions were committed long before the relevant channels and funds were recognized as “extremist.” For the first time, the informal practice of suspending criminal prosecution for donations was recorded, when the person donated a tenfold sum to the accounts of state institutions and foundations. 20 people were arrested in Machulishchi for an “attempted terrorist attack” – for the first time in the history of “extremism” monitoring, the detainees may face the death penalty.

### **Viktar Babryka beaten up in prison**

On the night of 24-25 April 2023, political prisoner and 2020 presidential candidate [Viktar Babaryka](#) was taken from Novopolotsk prison to the central city hospital with traces of beatings. Sources of opposition initiatives report that due to the numerous traces of beatings, doctors did not even recognize him until they saw the name of the patient who was admitted. He is in the surgery department in a moderate severity condition and has been diagnosed with pneumothorax, which can occur due to injuries.

The politician [has repeatedly been subjected](#) to degrading treatment in prison: he was isolated from communication with other prisoners, regularly placed in a punishment cell for no reason, put on preventative record accompanied by significant restrictions, deprived of the opportunity to receive letters and parcels. The lawyers of the politician [were detained](#).

### **Mass detentions for registration in chatbots controlled by the security forces**

Law enforcement agencies create fake chatbots in a Telegram on behalf of the opposition organization of former security forces BYPOL, which allegedly allow people to check information about the presence of a person in the databases of security forces. Security officers typically send a link to such a bot in opposition chats with calls for their participants to check themselves. People who bought into the trick of the security forces and left personal data in the chatbot are detained on criminal grounds. During the analyzed period, at least 5 people were detained for such actions, including former Krumkachy footballer [Alexander Yatskevich](#), as well as a [teenager](#) whose name is unknown.

### **Political prisoners**

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1495](#). The number continues to grow daily. As of 28 April 2023, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody for 212 days. According to our data, the investigation against Nasta has been completed, her case will soon be sent to court.