

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 24 June 2023 to Friday 7 July 2023

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by more repressive measures against the journalistic community, political and anti-war activists, as well as Belarusians who have family ties with Poland. Also, the access to media resources whose coverage of the war in Ukraine contradicts the official position of the Belarusian authorities was restricted.

Eduard Babaryka sentenced to 8 years in prison

On 5 July 2023, Minsk Regional Court sentenced [Eduard Babaryka](#) (the son of political prisoner [Viktar Babaryka](#) and the head of his 2020 election campaign) to 8 years of imprisonment. Despite the fact that Eduard spent more than three years in a temporary detention facility before sentencing, the court did not deduct it from the sentence. The businessman and founder of several charitable foundations was found guilty of “inciting hostility” and “tax evasion” under Articles 130 and 243 of the Criminal Code. The court session was held behind closed doors, leaving the details of the charges unknown. Human rights activists believe that the only reason for Eduard's persecution is participation in his father's political activities.

Persecution related to the war in Ukraine

On 28 June 2023, according to the decisions of the prosecutor of the Vitebsk region, access to the Internet resources “glavred.info,” “spektr.press,” “hromadske.ua,” “news.online.ua,” “tribun.com.ua” [was restricted](#). According to the agency, “extremist information was posted on the portals, encouraging citizens to oppose the state authorities of the Republic of Belarus in connection with the situation regarding the Wagner PMCs, [and] “false information was reported, discrediting the President of the Republic of Belarus.” Social networks of the [Legion “Freedom to Russia” and the “Russian Volunteer Corps.”](#) which are units of Russian citizens fighting in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, were also recognized as “extremist materials.”

On 4 July 2023, the prosecutor's office [reported](#) that a 23-year-old resident of the Ostrovetsky district was sentenced to 2 years in prison on charges of “preparing to participate in armed formations on the territory of a foreign state” under Article 361-3 of the Criminal Code. According to the investigation, he “expressed a desire” and then “indicated an intention” to join the Kalinovsky Regiment (a unit of Belarusian volunteers fighting on the side of Ukraine), after which he handed over his personal data to the regiment and collected information about places which sell military equipment.

On 5 July 2023, employees of the infamous Special Purpose Police Unit (OMON) detained a resident of Novopolotsk, [who doused a car with paint](#). There were stickers with the letter Z on the car, which is a symbol of support for Russian aggression against Ukraine. The security forces reported that a criminal case on hooliganism was initiated against the detainee under Article 339 of the Criminal Code. The security forces did not punish the car's owner for stickers symbolizing a pro-aggression political position, while the placement of opposition symbols on personal belongings [is usually interpreted as “unauthorized picketing”](#) and is punished with arrests or large fines.

Repression against representatives of the media community continues

On 29 June 2023, the State Security Committee (KGB) put Komsomolskaya Pravda journalist [Gennady Mozheyko](#), convicted in March 2023 for “inciting hostility,” on the [list of organizations and individuals involved in terrorist activities](#).

On 30 June 2023, Minsk City Court sentenced journalist and videographer [Pavel Podobed](#) to 4 years of imprisonment. He was found guilty of “participation in an extremist formation” under Article 361-1 of the Criminal Code. Due to the fact that the trial was held behind closed doors, the nature of the charges remains unknown, but it is likely that the reason for the prosecution was cooperation with independent media recognized as “extremist.”

On 4 July 2023, Minsk City Court sentenced [Andrei Fomin](#), the editor of the samizdat “Vestniki,” to 7 years in prison on charges of writing and editing texts critical of the Belarusian authorities . He was found guilty of “gross violation of public order,” “calls for sanctions,” and “creation of an extremist formation” under Articles 342, 361, and 361-1 of the Criminal Code, respectively.

Pressure continues on people with ties to Poland

According to human rights center [“Viasna.”](#) holders of the “Pole's card” (a document confirming family ties with Poland) are sent to “talk” with KGB officers when passing the Belarusian border, after which the officers offer such people to “voluntarily” abandon the “Pole's card” and write a corresponding statement to the Polish consul at the border. Those who refuse to do this are allegedly threatened with arrest. Reportedly, at least 10 people have faced such threats.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1493](#). The number continues to grow daily. As of 7 July 2023, our colleague Nasta Lojka has been in custody for 282 days.