

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 22 July 2023 to Friday 4 August 2023

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by the continuation of the persecution of people for their anti-war stance, the use of “anti-extremist” laws to curb any disloyalty to the authorities, and the detentions of people whom the security forces identified in the footage of the film by Lithuanian media outlet Delfi about the 2020 protests in Belarus.

“Extremism” cases on the rise

On 21 July 2023, Minsk Regional Court sentenced 4 defendants (one of whom is a minor) in the [“Union of the Belarusian National Shield” case](#) to 3 to 3.5 years of imprisonment. Oleg Bobrinev, Kirill Balakhonov, Alexander Rykoit, and Vladislav Efimovich were accused of “inciting enmity,” “creating an extremist formation,” and “aiding extremist activities.” According to the investigators, the members of the corresponding Telegram chat “spread false information about the involvement of the Republic of Belarus in the special military operation conducted by the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine,” “called for attacking police officers and taking weapons from them,” “stopped military equipment,” and “posted information with calls to damage the railway track and instructions for making Molotov cocktails.”

On 25 July 2023, Minsk City Court sentenced scientist [Yuri Abramov](#) to 3 years in prison for “financing extremist activities” under Article 361-2 of the Criminal Code. Earlier, he was detained for making 24 donations to the solidarity funds “BYSOL” and “By_Help” for a total of \$1,590.

On 26 July 2023, Grodno Regional Court [sentenced](#) journalist Pavel Mozheyko and lawyer Yuliya Yurgilevich to 6 years in prison for “aiding extremist activities” under Article 361-4 of the Criminal Code. According to the investigators, Yurgilevich shared information about her disbarment and the sentence of her client and political prisoner Ales Pushkin (now deceased) with Mozheyko. . Allegedly, Mozheyko in turn passed the information to the independent media outlet “Belsat,” recognized as an “extremist formation” in Belarus. “Right to Defense” initiative [drew attention](#) to the fact that information on the revocation of the lawyer's license was publicly available on the website of the Ministry of Justice, hence, Yurgilevich was accused of publicizing already open information.

On 27 July 2023, Minsk City Court sentenced Minsk resident [Yevgeny Verkhovodkin](#) to 7 years in prison for “calling to cause harm to national security” and “creating an extremist formation” under Articles 361 and 361-1 of the Criminal Code, respectively. He was accused of editing posts in a local opposition chat, as well as writing comments calling for participation in protest actions.

You can learn more about the trends in the use of anti-extremist legislation in Belarus in our recent “Review of the fight against “extremism” in Belarus for April-June 2023” [via the link](#).

Persecution related to the war in Ukraine

On 28 July 2023, the employees of the infamous Main Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption (GUBOPiK) announced the detention of [Borisov resident](#) for saying the phrase “Glory to Ukraine” in a chatroulette (a website where one can communicate with

random users via video) conversation. The security forces evidently [continue](#) to detain people on the basis of provocations by pro-government bloggers who, posing as Ukrainians, are looking for people in chatrouettes who criticize the Belarusian authorities and support Ukraine and provoke them to make statements, which are “self-incriminatory” in the eyes of the authorities.

On 2 August 2023, the court of the Central district of Minsk [sentenced](#) singer Patricia Svitina to 2.5 years of “home chemistry” (restriction of freedom without referral to a correctional institution) on charges of “actions grossly violating public order” under the infamous Article 342 of the Criminal Code. She was accused of participating in the protests in 2020 and “inciting enmity and hatred among Slavic peoples.” In one of her messages, the defendant expressed disagreement with the use of the territory of Belarus for aggression against Ukraine in Belarusian and Ukrainian languages. In another message, she called on those who “support Putin” to unsubscribe from her accounts.

On 3 August 2023, the security forces detained [Ivanovo resident](#), who was listening and singing along to “Ukraine above all” (“Україна понад усе”) song in her apartment. In the “confession video,” the woman admitted that she was worried about Ukraine, after which a voice behind the camera ordered her to sing the official anthem of Belarus.

Mass detentions of people featured in the film about the 2020 protests

On 24 July 2023, Lithuanian media outlet Delfi published Yuri Maminov’s documentary film “Chronicles of the Present,” which consists of documentary chronicles of the Belarusian protests in 2020 and features faces of the protesters which are visible and identifiable. Channels close to the security forces [declared](#) that the film will be used to identify people caught in the footage and bring them to criminal responsibility. A few days later, the security forces reported the detentions of [at least 5 people](#) in connection to this incident.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1482](#). The number continues to grow daily. As of 21 July 2023, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody for 310 days.