

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 30 September 2023 to Friday 13 October 2023**

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by mass detentions of people for spreading independent information on the Internet, extension of terms of imprisonment for political prisoners on arbitrary grounds, initiation of criminal cases against the initiative to help political prisoners and another opposition organization abroad, as well as the beginning of trials against dead people on charges of genocide of the Belarusian people during World War II.

### **Dissidents' sentences continuously extended**

Article 411 of the Criminal Code ("malicious disobedience to the requirements of the administration of a correctional institution") [continued to be used](#) by representatives of the regime to exert pressure on already convicted political prisoners in places of imprisonment. This article allows courts to continuously extend terms of imprisonment for an additional period from several months to two years. Prisoners may face charges under the article for their refusal to work in improper conditions, an impolite greeting to the prison administration, going to the toilet without prior notification, or having unshaven face. Political prisoners [Vyacheslav Maleychuk](#) and [Polina Sharendo-Panasyuk](#) were sentenced to additional terms of imprisonment of 2 and 1 year, respectively. A trial against another political prisoner and activist [Zmitser Dashkevich](#) was initiated on the same charges.

### **Persecution for taking part in the marathon to raise funds for political prisoners**

On 3 October 2023, the Investigative Committee [initiated a criminal case](#) on the "financing of an extremist formation" under Article 361-2 of Criminal Code against the organizers of the solidarity marathon "We care," which collected more than 500 thousand euros in support of political prisoners. Suspects in this case include about 60 people from the organizing team and their "accomplices." The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) called them "criminals, destructive personalities, radicals who left Belarus." Potentially, people who made donations during the marathon on the territory of Belarus face risks of persecution.

### **Criminal case initiated against the oldest "government in exile"**

On 2 October 2023, The Prosecutor General's Office initiated a criminal case against [Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic](#), the oldest functioning Belarusian political and state institution operating abroad. The leaders and members of the organization are accused of "conspiracy," "leading an extremist formation," "aiding extremist activities," "inciting enmity," "rehabilitating of Nazism," "discrediting Belarus," "inciting to participate in an armed formation on the territory of a foreign state" under Articles 357, 361-1, 361-4, 130, 130-1, 369-1, and 361-3 of the Criminal Code. According to the prosecution, the Rada distributed information materials containing deliberately false information about the situation of Belarus, which were aimed at inciting social enmity and discord. According to the investigation, Rada also coordinated its "destructive efforts" with other pro-democratic organizations, including "Coordinating Council," "United Transitional Cabinet" under the leadership of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, and also established ties with Belarusian volunteers fighting in Ukraine. The authorities dubbed the organization "Nazi" due to the fact that Rada published information about Belarusians who resisted the Soviet government, whom the authorities consider "Nazi collaborators."

### **Mass detentions for the distribution of "extremist materials" continue**

[Systematic “raids”](#) of law enforcement authorities into regional cities and state institutions continue. During such raids, the devices of local residents, who are suspected of “disloyalty to the regime” are examined. As a result, people are detained en masse for subscribing to independent resources or distributing information from them on charges of “distributing extremist materials” under Article 19.11 of the Administrative Code. All such detentions are carried out by the employees of special units in full combat uniforms, who are armed and tend to use force disproportionately. At least 6 such detentions were documented in the [Grodno region](#) and at least 7 detentions in the [Gomel region](#).

### **Dead people on trial in Belarus**

On 17 July 2023, Aleksander Lukashenka signed Law No. 286-Z “On Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Belarus.” The amendments made it possible to initiate criminal proceedings against dead persons for aggressive war, an act of international terrorism, genocide, ecocide, crimes against the security of humanity and for crimes related to violations of international humanitarian law. These changes were adopted in the context of the investigation by the Belarusian authorities of the [genocide of the Belarusian people](#) during the World War II and the post-war years.

On 9 October 2023, it became known that the prosecutor was preparing to take a criminal case against [Vladimir Katryuk](#) to court. The defendant was a former serviceman of the 118th battalion of the Shutsmanshaft, who died in Canada several years ago. He served in the German army until 1944, after which he deserted and joined the anti-Fascist resistance in France. Katryuk will be charged with committing genocide on the territory of Belarus. In particular, he is suspected of participating in the burning of the village of Khatyn in 1943.

### **Political prisoners**

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1484](#). The number continues to grow daily. As of 26 September 2023, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody [for 380 days](#). On 12 October 2023, the State Security Committee (KGB) [included](#) Nasta in the [List of organizations and individuals involved in terrorist activities](#) – now any financial transactions involving her are prohibited, and people raising funds to support her may potentially face charges of “financing terrorist activities.”