

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 28 October 2023 to Friday 10 November 2023

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by more harsh sentences for doing journalistic work, cooperating with independent organizations and making music on political topics, as well as more arbitrary detentions for “unauthorized picketing.” Human rights defenders and international experts continue to document the growing practice of using “anti-extremist” laws to persecute political opponents and civil society representatives.

Extremism cases on the rise

On 8 November 2023, Prosecutor General Andrei Shved [announced](#) that since August 2020, law enforcement agencies had registered 16 thousand crimes of an “extremist nature.” Ms. Anaïs Marin, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, stated in her [report](#) to the General Assembly that Belarusian authorities are misusing counter-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation to further purge civic space, suppress freedom of expression, and eradicate political opposition. Human Constanta human rights defenders in their [Overview of the fight against “extremism” in Belarus for July-September 2023](#) also noted that state bodies and state media continued to use “extremism” as an instrument of political pressure and persecution of representatives of civil society. In three months, human rights activists have documented at least 164 new criminal cases and 46 sentences on “extremist” grounds (excluding cases related to “protests” and “insults”), as well as at least 705 administrative cases for spreading “extremist” information. In the analyzed period, the maximum documented punishment for “extremism activities” was [11 years of imprisonment](#).

Musicians sentenced to imprisonment

On 31 October 2023, Gomel Regional Court sentenced the participants of the popular Belarusian Tor Band, known for their pro-democratic songs. [Dmitry Golovach, Evgeny Burlo, and Andrey Yaremchuk](#) were sentenced to imprisonment for terms ranging from 7.5 to 9 years. They were charged with “inciting enmity,” “creating an extremist formation,” “discrediting the Republic of Belarus,” and “insulting Alexander Lukashenko” under Articles 130, 361-1, 369-1, and 368 of the Criminal Code. Previously, the music group was recognized as an “extremist formation,” and their most popular songs of the group on political topics were designated as “extremist materials.”

Persecution of journalists continues

On 3 November 2023, Molodechno District Court sentenced [Alexander Mantsevich](#), editor-in-chief of the Regional Newspaper, to 4 years in prison on charges of “discrediting the Republic of Belarus” under Article 369-1 of the Criminal Code. According to investigators, the journalist, together with other employees of the media outlet, from 2020 to 2023, deliberately spread false information in print and digital publications that discredited Belarus and its state authorities. Earlier, online resources of the outlet were blocked and recognized as “extremist materials.”

Absurd detentions for “unauthorized picketing”

Despite the fact that protest actions in Belarus were largely and brutally suppressed, law enforcement agencies continue to see manifestations of disloyalty in a variety of everyday

actions. People are routinely detained under Article 24.23 of the Code of Administrative Offences (“violation of the procedure for organizing mass events”) for white-red-white colors on accessories or for laying flowers at monuments.

On 27 October 2023, it became known that Pinsk district court [fined](#) a local resident for the emblem on the jacket. According to the security forces, “during hunting wild animals, in order to protest against the current government, the man carried out individual picketing using protest symbols with a white-red-white emblem on the sleeve of the jacket”. On 30 October 2023, Bobruisk local residents [Danuta Dyachenko and Viktor Skiba](#) were convicted of laying flowers and lighting candles at the monument to the victims of unjustified repression in one of the central squares of the city. On 2 November 2023, security forces [detained](#) a Belarusian, in whose car officers detected two ribbons with Belarusian ornaments and in the colors of the Ukrainian flag. On 3 November 2023, it became known that the Partizansky district court of Minsk [fined](#) a pregnant woman for “picketing” with an umbrella and white-red stripes. During the trial, the woman stated that she did not pursue the goals of expressing a political opinion, but only meant to shelter from the rain with her umbrella.

Cooperation with opposition organizations abroad recognized as “high treason”

On 9 November 2023, [Dmitry Mostovoy](#), an IT specialist from Sennitsa, was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment on charges of “high treason” and “aiding extremist activities” under Articles 356 and 361-4 of the Criminal Code, respectively. Dmitry was accused of setting up an online video broadcast of the landing of military aircraft at the airfield in Machulishchi.: According to the security forces, he launched the broadcast on his daughter’s laptop via a Skype video call to transfer information about the movement of military equipment to independent documentation initiatives.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1460](#). The number continues to grow daily. As of 10 November 2023, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody [for 408 days](#).