

The information is aggregated from open online sources and our own practice. In the newsletters, we will update you in brief on human rights violations in numbers and facts.

### **Saturday 13 January 2023 to Friday 26 January 2023**

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by the continuation of persecution of civil society activists *in absentia* and the mass detentions of political prisoners' relatives.

#### **Persecution of activists *in absentia* continues**

On 23 January 2024, the Investigative Committee (IC) announced the beginning of the special (*in absentia*) criminal proceeding against [Ivan Kravtsov](#), executive Secretary of the Coordination Council of the Opposition and member of political prisoner Viktor Babaryka's election team in 2020. He was charged with "inciting enmity," "fraud," "conspiracy to seize state power," and "creation of extremist formation" under Articles 130, 209, 357 and 361-1 of the Criminal Code.

On 25 January 2024, the IC [announced](#) the beginning of the *in absentia* proceedings against 20 representatives of the Belarusian civil society, who were called "Tsikhanouskaya analysts" in governmental reports. The charges were brought against analysts Ryhor Astapena and Lesa Rudnik, political scientists Pavel Usov and Andrei Kazakevich, politicians Alexander Dobrovolsky and Anna Krasulina, journalists Yuri Drakokhrust and Anna Lyubakova, as well as a number of other Belarusian civil society representatives. These people were charged with "conspiracy to seize state power," "implementing the concept of destructive activities against the national security of Belarus," and "contributing to inciting enmity in society" under Articles 357, 361 and 130 of the Criminal Code.

On 21 July 2022, Alexander Lukashenko signed [Law No. 199-Z](#), which introduced the possibility to conduct special *in absentia* trials of people who are accused of "extremist" and "terrorist" crimes and reside outside Belarus. Chairman of the Investigative Committee Dmitry Gora [stated](#) that one of the main goals of the adoption of this law was to create legal grounds for the confiscation of the property of political migrants. He believes that the conversion of such property into state income will allow "at least partially to cover the damage that has been done to the country."

#### **Mass persecution of political prisoners' relatives**

On 23 January 2023, the social initiative "I Need Help BY," which helped victims of repression and their relatives with food, was recognized as an "extremist formation." On the same day, the State Security Committee (KGB) officers began [mass searches and detentions](#) of relatives of political prisoners who received food parcels from the above-mentioned initiative. According to the [human rights center "Viasna"](#) on 23-24 January 2024, security forces conducted searches and interrogations of at least 165 people. Some of the people remained in custody under charges of "participating in an extremist formation" and "financing extremist activities" under Articles 361-1 and 361-2 of the Criminal Code. Some relatives of political prisoners were punished with administrative arrest – for example, Marina Adamovich, the wife of political prisoner Mikalai Statkevich, was sentenced to 15 days of arrest.

#### **Statistics on the use of "anti-extremist" legislation for repression in 2023**

In 2023, the Belarusian authorities continued to use “anti-extremist” legislation as an instrument to suppress civil liberties and persecute those who disagree with the regime's policies. Human Constanta human rights defenders documented:

- at least 3,091 cases of administrative offenses under “extremist” articles of the Administrative Code (almost twice more than in 2022);
- at least 614 cases of arrests and criminal proceedings under “extremist” articles of the Criminal Code, not counting cases of “insults” and “protests” (according to Human Constanta), while according to the Prosecutor General's Office, more than 5,000 crimes of “extremist orientation” were registered;
- 1721 new [“extremist materials.”](#) 61 new [“extremist formations.”](#) and 1 new [“extremist organization.”](#)
- 1,391 people were recognized as [“involved in extremist activities”](#) and 160 people associated with Belarus were recognized as [“involved in terrorist activities.”](#)

### **Political prisoners**

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1418](#). The number continues to grow daily. As of 26 January 2024, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody [for 485 days](#).