

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 25 November 2023 to Friday 8 December 2023

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by mass searches in the homes of opposition representatives who fled repression abroad, initiating criminal proceedings for anti-war actions, continuing mass detentions for spreading information from independent sources, as well as recognizing several civil initiatives as “extremist groups.”

“Coordination Council of the Opposition” case

On 28 November 2023, the Investigative Committee (IC) [announced](#) the initiation of another criminal case against the members of “Coordination Council of the Opposition.” This organization was created by the Belarusian opposition in August 2020 in response to the falsification of the presidential elections in Belarus – its goals were called the peaceful transit of power and overcoming the political crisis. In March 2023, long-term imprisonment sentences were already handed down *in absentia* against the leaders of the organization, but during the analyzed period, the security forces expanded the persecution of more ordinary members of the organization. According to the IC, more than 100 people are suspects in this case – state authorities stated that one of the participants of the organization contacted the security forces and returned to Belarus as part of the procedures of the “commission for the return of political refugees,” after which “he proactively provided an expanded the list of fugitive criminals.” On the same day, [more than 200 searches](#) were conducted throughout Belarus at the place of residence of people who are in any way connected with the Coordinating Council and are abroad, as well as their relatives and friends. [According to the IC](#), searches were conducted to “establish the presence of suspects' property and real estate in the territory for the purpose of subsequent arrest,” in order to then convict these people *in absentia* and confiscate their property as punishment. Deputy Interior Minister Gennady Kazakevich [said](#) that police officers conducted 130 searches and seized property 145 times.

It is known that searches [took place](#) at the press secretary Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya Anna Krasulina, delegates of the Coordinating Council Mikhail Taube and Yuri Gubarevich, human rights defender Roman Kislyak, director of the National Anti-Crisis Management Pavel Latushko, analyst Sergei Chaly, activist Alexei Trubkin. Also, after the search, the court [arrested](#) the mother of Margarita Vorikhova, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's adviser on youth policy, for 15 days. During the searches, the security forces intentionally damaged the property of the activists, after which the “pro-government” resources demonstrated the disorder in their places of residence – for example, the security forces most likely [filled up Sergei Chaly's apartment with piles of empty bottles](#). A criminal case against supporters of the organization was initiated for “high treason,” “conspiracy,” “calls to harm national security,” “participation in an extremist formation,” “financing of extremist activities,” and “aiding extremist activities” under Articles 356, 357, 361, 361-1, 361-2, and 361-4 of the Criminal Code.

Mass detentions for the distribution of “extremist materials”

As of 1 October 2023, there were 4068 materials on the [Republican list of extremist materials](#), including 1392 Telegram resources. The list continues to be updated regularly. [Systemic “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 online on charges of “distributing extremist materials” under [Article 19.11 of the Administrative Code](#). [According to Human Constanta](#), From 1 October 2021 to 31 November 2023, at least 4310 cases of persecution under this article have been documented. During the analyzed period, the documented cases include mass arbitrary detentions in [Gomel](#) (at least 5 detentions), [Lida](#) (at least 7 detentions), [Brest](#) (at least 15 detentions of students of local universities).

“The Union of Mothers of Belarus” case

On 9 October 2023, organization “The Union of Mothers of Belarus” was recognized as an “extremist formation” extrajudicially by decision of the State Security Committee (KGB). “The Union of Mothers of Belarus” is an anti-war social movement created immediately after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The organization’s website states that its members help mothers “take an anti-war stance, find like-minded women and important information to save the lives of their children.” Then, on 29 November 2023, the Baranovichi interdistrict prosecutor’s office [announced](#) the initiation of a criminal case against the 60-year-old founder of the organization and her husband, who are abroad. According to investigators, the woman “created and led an extremist formation using computer technology, mobile devices, Internet resources, Telegram messenger, and other platforms.” The suspect’s husband was accused of giving interviews to an “extremist formation” twice in March 2023. Both spouses are also accused of “slandering” and “insulting Lukashenko,” including accusing him of serious crimes.

Civil initiatives and independent media recognized as “extremist formations”

The authorities continued to recognize independent civil initiatives as “extremist formations” extrajudicially. During the analyzed period, the initiative to support political prisoners in Belarus “dissentby,” the association of former Belarusian security forces “BELPOL,” as well as independent media and information resources “Tribuna.com Belarus,” “6TV Bielarus,” “Mogilev Media,” and “Mogilev Region News” [were recognized](#) as “extremist formations.” Now criminal liability may arise for any form of cooperation with these organizations.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1473](#). The number continues to grow daily. As of 8 December 2023, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody [for 436 days](#).