

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 10 August 2024 to Friday 23 August 2024

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by the continuation of the *in absentia* persecution of activists and citizens, pardoning some political prisoners, mass persecution of protesters in Brest region, harsh sentences for people who, according to the authorities, were plotting sabotage against the regime.

Another pardon of political prisoners amid ongoing repression

On 16 August 2024, Alexander Lukashenko [signed a decree](#) pardoning 30 political prisoners. According to pro-government sources, among those pardoned are 14 women and 16 men, some of whom have serious illnesses or are retired. Pro-government political analyst Yuri Voskresensky [reported](#) a total of 900 requests for pardons from political prisoners that have been received by the Belarusian authorities. It is known that he called the relatives of political prisoners, told them about the conditions for pardons and agitated them to write petitions. On 22 August 2024, the BY SOL emergency humanitarian aid service [announced](#) that 22 political prisoners had been released, including journalist [Kseniya Lutskina](#); labor union activist [Vasil Berasnieu](#); [Iryna Sankouskaya](#), [Volha Stabrouskaya](#), [Ala Zyeva](#), [Katsiaryna Leu](#), [Natallia Piatrovich](#), [Tamara Karavai](#), [Yauhen Chumila](#), sentenced for online comments; [Volha Novikova](#), [Sviatlana Paluektava](#), sentenced for participating in protests.

Despite the release of several political prisoners, the authorities continue mass detentions. During the analyzed period alone, human rights activists recognized 25 new people as political prisoners. There were cases of sentencing people who had previously been pardoned. On 15 August 2024, the Baranovichi District and Baranovichi City Court sentenced [Pyotr Zinevich](#), who was previously convicted of slander and released in 2023 under amnesty, to 2.5 years of imprisonment for participating in protests under Article 342 of the Criminal Code.

The sentencing of people who supported political prisoners and their relatives continued. On 9 August 2024, Brest Regional Court sentenced 63-year-old Brest retiree [Natalla Malets](#) to 3.5 years in prison for “aiding extremist activity” under Article 361-4 of the Criminal Code for sending money transfers to political prisoners. On 14 August 2024, Minsk City Court sentenced the mother of former political prisoner Volha Takarczuk, [Iryna Takarczuk](#), to 3 years in prison for “aiding extremist” activity” under Article 361-4 of the Criminal Code for sending humanitarian food parcels to her imprisoned daughter.

Prosecution *in absentia*

On 14 August 2024, Minsk City Court sentenced Krav Maga instructor [Hienadz Kapitanau](#) to 6 years in prison *in absentia* for inciting hatred, calling to harm to national security, insulting Alexander Lukashenko and government officials under Articles 130, 361, 368 and 369 of the Criminal Code. On 19 August 2024, Grodno Regional Court sentenced sisters [Nadzezhda Nadzieja Sciapancova](#) and [Zanna Zacharkevich](#) to 5.5 and 5 years in prison *in absentia*, respectively, for “aiding extremist activity” under Article 361-4 of the Criminal Code. On the same day Gomel Regional Court sentenced a paramedic from Zhlobin, [Alina Halinskaja](#), to 2 years in prison *in absentia* for “inciting hatred” under Article 130 of the Criminal Code for writing critical comments online. On 20 August 2024, Grodno Regional Court sentenced journalist and human rights activist [Uladzimir Khilmanovich](#) to 5 years in prison *in absentia* for “participation in an extremist formation” and “aiding extremist activity” under Articles

361-1 and 361-4 of the Criminal Code. Special proceedings were initiated against a popular stand-up comedian [Slava Kamissarenka](#), as well as the artists [Vijaleta Majsuk](#) and [Aliaksandr Isajeu](#).

Mass repressions for participating in the 2020 protests

Sentences and arrests for participation in the 2020 protests on charges of “gross violation of public order” under Article 342 of the Criminal Code continue. In all such cases, security forces claim that protesters “went out onto the roadway” and “blocked traffic.” The repressions in the analyzed period continued in the Brest region. On 8 August 2024, the Leninsky District Court of Brest [sentenced](#) four Brest residents to imprisonment for participating in protests during which they shouted slogans and displayed national Belarusian flags: Alieh Litvinchuk and brothers Macviej and Lieanid Avierchuk were sentenced to 1.5 years in prison, Alevtisna Hudkova – to a year in prison. On 15 August 2024, Baranovichi District and Baranovichi City Court [sentenced](#) Pyotr Zinevich to 2.5 years in prison, Aliaksandr Tarasievich and Dzmitry Blashchanits to 1.5 years in a penal colony on identical charges.

Harsh sentences in the “Victory Day terrorist attack” case

On 12 August 2024, Minsk City Court [sentenced](#) 24-year-old Valery Vodzin to 20 years of imprisonment *in absentia*. He was accused of “illegal actions related to weapons,” “an act of terrorism,” “illegal movement of ammunition across the border,” “creation of an extremist formation,” “participation in an armed conflict on the territory of a foreign state” under Articles 295, 289, 333-1, 361-1, and 361-3 of the Criminal Code. Along with him, the court sentenced four more people (Andrej Hryhoryev, Victorya Volchak, Hanna Savachkina and her mother Tatsiana Rusak) to 7 to 7.5 years of imprisonment for “high treason” under Article 356 of the Criminal Code..

[On 10 May 2023](#), state-owned ONT TV channel aired the film “[Killer Parcel](#)” about the alleged preparation of terrorist attacks by Ukrainian special services in the run-up to the Victory Day celebration on May 9. According to security forces, Belarusian Valery Vodzin, associated with the Kalinovsky Regiment, asked his acquaintances to pick up a parcel with C4 explosives disguised as tabletop electric stoves, and then hide it in a cemetery and a forest for further use in sabotage. Four people who were involved in moving the electric stoves (most of them did not know that they contained explosives) were recognized as “suspects” of committing an “act of terrorism” and “high treason” under Articles 289 and 356 of the Criminal Code.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1373](#) (during the analyzed period, human rights activists recognized 25 new people as political prisoners). As of 22 August 2024, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody [for 695 days](#).