

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 15 March 2024 to Friday 5 April 2024**

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by detention of young political activists and trial monitoring activists; the issuance of further sentences against independent journalists; continued *in absentia* prosecution of activists abroad ; the detention of online commentators for expressing opinions about the recent terrorist attack in Russia.

#### **Mass detentions of “Malady Front” members**

On 19-22 March 2024, security forces [carried out mass detentions](#) of people who could be connected to the youth opposition organization “Malady Front,” recognized as an “extremist formation,” as well as to its leader and a member of the Kalinovsky Regiment Denis Urbanovich. According to representatives of the movement, security forces detained at least 18 people in the framework of this case. Urbanovich's brothers, father, and sister are among the detainees.

#### **Detentions for comments about the terrorist attack in Russia**

On 22 March 2024, a terrorist attack [occurred](#) in Moscow “Crocus City Hall,” for which the international terrorist organization “Islamic State – Khorasan Province” claimed responsibility. As a result of the terrorist attack, [134 people were killed and 551 people were injured](#). Almost immediately after the incident, Belarusian security forces began detaining people who left online comments about this attack, [comparing](#) the attack with an attack by Russian troops on civilian infrastructure in Ukraine, as well as [theorizing](#) that the terrorist attack could have been organized by the Russian authorities themselves to intensify mobilization. At least 12 people are known to have been detained. A TikTok blogger [was detained](#) for a video in which she stated that “Crocus has been going on in Ukraine for two years now.” She was detained on the basis of propagandist Konstantin Pridybaylo’s coverage of her comments.

#### ***In absentia* persecution of activists abroad is intensifying**

During the analyzed period, Human Constanta documented at least 15 new cases initiated as part of special (*in absentia*) proceedings against political and civil activists living abroad. Criminal cases were brought against activist of the Gramada party [Evgeniy Vilsky](#), member of the Coordination Council of the Opposition [Vadim Dmytrenok](#), activist of the non-profit organization “Dapamoga” [Olga Karach](#), political scientist [Anatoly Kotov](#), political activist [Veronika Tsepkalo](#), bloggers [Andrei Pauk](#) and [Olga Pauk](#), opera singer and activist [Margarita Levchuk](#), and other politically active people.

On 18 March 2024, the court of the Zavodsky district of Minsk [passed verdicts in absentia](#) against activists who in 2020-2022 were involved in activities to document election fraud. The head of the ZUBR platform Pavel Marinich, the creator of the “Voice” platform Pavel Liber, the leader of the “Honest People” community Elena Zhivgolod, and politician Alexander Dobrovolsky were sentenced to 4 years in prison each. According to the investigation, “in January-February 2022, the accused took part in developing a plan of illegal actions to disrupt the republican referendum on the issue of introducing amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus.”

On 20 March 2024, the Investigative Committee initiated a criminal case against the organizations “People’s Embassies” and “Belarusians Abroad” – the initiatives of the Belarusian diaspora to create representative offices of democratic Belarus abroad, (recognized as “extremist formations”). [The statement of the Investigative Committee](#) says that diasporas created people’s embassies and information centers “on the basis of criminal communities” and “radical cells,” who were engaged in “isolating the diplomatic missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs”, “generating information, political and economic pressure on the current authorities,” “disseminating deliberately false information about the country,” “calling for the imposition of sanctions,” and other anti-state actions. The Investigative Committee reported that more than 100 representatives of diasporas, who would potentially become targets of criminal prosecution, were identified.

### **Sentencing of independent journalists continues**

On 21 March 2024, Gomel Regional Court [sentenced](#) freelance journalist and founder of the Gomel Vesti newspaper Andrei Tolchin to 3 years in prison for covering Belarusian socio-political events. On 22 March 2024, Minsk City Court [sentenced](#) journalist Igor Korney to 3 years in prison for cooperation with the non-profit organization “Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ),” which had previously been recognized as an “extremist formation.” According to the prosecution, the journalist created “negative materials insulting the head of state, government officials, journalists and citizens who do not support the unconstitutional change of power,” and also gave “a false picture about the economic, social, military and international situation of the Republic of Belarus” in order to “increase the level of tension in society, create enmity towards government agencies.”

### **Detentions of people involved in monitoring court hearings**

On 4 April 2024, state television showed footage of the [detention](#) of three activists from the Brest region – Alexander Voiteshek, Alexander Romanovich, and Vitaly Chopik, who attended court hearings as part of cooperation with the human rights center “Viasna” (recognized as an “extremist formation”). According to the security forces, the defendants recorded the results of court hearings in order to transfer the data abroad to further put pressure on the participants of the trial.”

### **Political prisoners**

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1400](#). The number continues to grow daily. As of 5 April 2024, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody [for 555 days](#).