

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 20 April 2024 to Friday 3 May 2024

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by continued persecution for participation in 2020 protests, donations to pro-democracy initiatives, leaking personal data of security forces involved in human rights violations. State television also released another story about the detention of “saboteurs,” including several minors.

Mass detentions of young people for cooperation with Ukrainian special services

On 29 April 2024, state television released [a propaganda film](#) that covers the detention of at least 7 teenagers and college students who, according to security forces, were recruited by Ukrainian special services to commit sabotage on the territory of Belarus and Russia. The film tells that 16-year-old Ukrainian citizen Maria Misyuk moved with her family from Ukraine to Belarus in 2022, where she created an “anarchist cell for preparing terrorist attacks.” Allegedly, she managed to recruit five Belarusian teenagers into her organization: Trofim Borisov, Sergei Zhigalev, Dmitry Zahoroshko, Anastasia Klimenko, and Alexandra Pulinovich. According to the security forces, they gathered in a rented apartment in Baranovichy to make an explosive device to blow up the local police department or the prosecutor’s office. It is mentioned that Maria has been charged with an “act of terrorism” under Article 289 of the Criminal Code. There is no information provided about charges having been brought against the other detainees, but those mentioned in the film could face up to 20 years in prison.

The film also reports on the detention of other young people. 18-year-old Daniil Garasim from Minsk was detained on charges of “high treason” for photographing missile and artillery facilities and subsequent transfer of photos to the Ukrainian special services. Also the film mentions the detention of a “recruited” 16-year-old teenager from Mogilev, who responded to an advertisement for a part-time job as a cash courier, and two students who exchanged videos and instructions for making ammunition.

Recently state propaganda has regularly published films about terrorist attacks and sabotage organized by “Western” or Ukrainian intelligence services. In many cases, [traces of state involvement](#) into such crimes can be detected, and some of the reported “sabotages” are completely staged.

Harsh sentences for whistleblowing

On 30 April 2024, The Minsk City Court sentenced leading engineer of Minskenergo [Artur Pedko](#) to 9 years in prison on charges of “inciting social enmity” under Article 130 of the Criminal Code. According to the prosecution, he leaked personal data of more than 500 officials, who could be involved in human rights violations, to opposition Telegram channels. In addition to the main punishment, the man was ordered to pay claims totaling more than 100 thousand dollars.

More independent media recognized as extremist formations

On 29 April 2024, the media outlet “Deutsche Welle Belarus” and the media project “UDF - News of Belarus” were extrajudicially [recognized as “extremist formations”](#) by decision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Now criminal liability may arise for any form of cooperation with

these organizations, including material donations, sending information or media files, and assistance in producing materials. As of 2 May 2024, 200 civil initiatives and independent media were recognized as “extremist formations” and “extremist organizations.”

Persecution for donations to solidarity funds continues

On 19 April 2024, Grodno Regional Court sentenced [Fyodor Shvedov](#) to 3.5 years of restriction of freedom with assignment to an open correctional facility (“home chemistry”) on charges of “financing extremist activities” under Article 361-2 of the Criminal Code. According to the prosecution, he donated more than 100 Belarusian rubles (about \$30) to the election monitoring initiative “Honest People,” the initiative “Belarusian Rada of Culture,” and the fund for helping the repressed “By_Help.” On 30 April 2024, security forces, as part of a criminal trial, [detained](#) a Belarusian who made donations to the opposition organization “Country for Life.”

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1386](#). The number continues to grow daily. As of 3 May 2024, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody [for 583 days](#).