

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 4 May 2024 to Friday 17 May 2024

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by mass persecution of activists abroad; pressure on activists working with excessively stringent anti-drug legislation; alleged introduction of criminal liability for the distribution of “extremist materials;” and the issuance of a court decision against the ex-editors of NEXTA, according to which they must reimburse millions of dollars to the Belarusian regime.

Persecution of activists abroad is intensifying

On 6 May 2024, [information appeared](#) that the Partizansky district court of Minsk convicted six Belarusians abroad *in absentia*. Anatoly Ostrovsky, Viktor Puzin, Alexander Terluk, Irina Stoloka, Gennady Gutor were sentenced to 2 years in prison for “participating in actions grossly violating public order” under Article 342 of the Criminal Code for taking part in 2020 protests. Vitaly Pakhomchik, who, in addition to participating in the protests, wrote critical comments on Telegram, was also sentenced to 2 years on an additional charge of “insulting a representative of the authorities” under Article 369 of the Criminal Code.

On 16 May 2024, the Investigative Committee [reported](#) that it identified the members of Belarusian diasporas who celebrated Freedom Day abroad. This national holiday is usually widely celebrated by pro-democratic Belarusians. Investigators reportedly identified 104 Belarusians who took part in Freedom Day celebrations in Warsaw, Vilnius, Wroclaw, Bialystok, Brussels, Batumi, Prague, Philadelphia. These people are suspected of “creating an extremist formation” and “discrediting the Republic of Belarus” under Articles 361-1 and 369-1 of the Criminal Code. The investigators also announced that they had received information about the real estate owned by diasporas’ representatives. Independent media [reported](#) mass searches and arrests of the political emigres’ property.

On 16 May 2024, the Minsk City Court sentenced [Ivan Kravtsov](#), a politician and secretary of Opposition Coordination Council, to 11 years in prison *in absentia* on charges of “inciting enmity,” “conspiracy,” and “creating an extremist formation” under Articles 130, 357, and 361-1 of the Criminal Code. Criminal cases within the framework *in absentia* proceedings on “extremism” charges were also initiated against the founders of the Imaguru startup hub [Tatyana Marinich](#) and [Anastasia Khomenkova](#); activists [Jerzy Grigencha](#), [Ekaterina Tumanova](#), [Andrei Zuev](#), and [Alina Galinskaya](#); ex-political prisoners [Nadezhda Stepantsova](#), and [Zhanna Zakharkevich](#).

Security forces are also paying close attention to the elections to the Coordination Council of Belarusian opposition, which will be held on 25-28 May 2024. All 12 coalitions of candidates that are running for the new convocation of the Coordination Council [were recognized](#) by the security forces as “extremist formations.”

Repression against representatives of “Mothers-328” initiative

On 7 May 2024, human rights activists [reported](#) the detention of Marina Vladyko, coordinator of the “Mothers-328” initiative, which helps orphans sentenced to disproportionately long terms of imprisonment for drug trafficking under Article 328 of the Criminal Code. Later it became known that she was sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest. Marina Vladyka's arrest was apparently a preventive measure before the movement's meeting, which was supposed to take place at the end of May. [It is also known](#) that the Chairman of the Council of the Republic, Natalia Kachanova, organized a personal meeting with citizens, while

activists of this organization were denied a meeting with her. Moreover, moderators of specialized websites also blocked access to the publication of petitions on the topic of drug crimes.

Reposting of prohibited information may now result in criminal liability

On 6 May 2024, Telegram channel associated with security forces, [announced](#) opening the first criminal case on “aiding extremist activities” by reposting “extremist” information in instant messengers under Article 361-4 of the Criminal Code. This article provides for punishment of up to 7 years of imprisonment. The channel stated that “correct practice” would be mainstreamed and similar deliberate actions would be strictly punished.” Previously, the distribution of “extremist materials” was considered as only an administrative offense, punishable by up to 15 days of arrest or a fine.

Pardoned journalist Raman Pratasevich must pay the regime millions of dollars

On 7 May 2024, the Minsk District Court [considered](#) the civil claim of the Deputy Prosecutor General of Belarus against Raman Pratasevich and his former colleagues in the NEXTA Telegram channel, Yan Rudik and Stepan Putilo, who are based abroad. The court decided to recover more than 24.5 million rubles (more than \$7.6 million) from the defendants. They are expected to reimburse all costs associated with the mass protests in 2020, which they were convicted of organizing. In particular, this amount includes bonuses for security forces who dispersed the protests; costs of weapons (grenades, ammunition); insurance compensation for security forces who sustained injuries and much more.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1367](#). The number continues to grow daily. As of 17 May 2024, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody [for 597 days](#).