

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 2 November 2024 to Friday 15 November 2024**

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by the fifth stage of pardoning political prisoners in recent months, the death of another political prisoner in custody, growing repression ahead of the presidential election, the meeting of political prisoner Maria Kalesnikava with her father, and the continued harsh sentencing for “high treason.”

### **The fifth stage of pardoning political prisoners in recent times**

On 7 November 2024, Aliaksandar Lukashenka [decided to pardon](#) 31 people convicted of “extremist crimes.” Lukashenka's press service reported that 2 women and 29 men were pardoned, of whom 17 have chronic diseases and 3 are disabled. It is also reported that 27 pardoned convicts are parents, 7 of whom have several children. The convicts were released from the main punishment without removing their criminal record, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) stated that it would “ensure control over their law-abiding behavior.”

Thus, 146 political prisoners have been released during 5 stages of pardon since 3 July 2024. However, the pardons affected a small share of the total number of arbitrarily detained and unjustly convicted, and, as the information described below shows, during the reporting period more people were convicted and detained than released.

### **Death of another political prisoner in custody**

On 1 November 2024, human rights activists [reported](#) that a 22-year-old political prisoner, Russian citizen Dmitry Shletgauer, died in Mogilev Correctional Colony No. 15. His death certificate stated that he died of “mechanical asphyxia,” while the colony's management has not provided any details about Dmitry's death to his relatives. In August 2024 he was sentenced to 12 years in prison for “espionage” and “aiding extremist activity” under Articles 358 and 361-4 of the Criminal Code. Shletgauer has already become the seventh political prisoner to die in custody.

### **Growing repression ahead of the presidential election**

On 23 October 2024, the House of Representatives of the National Assembly [scheduled](#) the presidential elections of the Republic of Belarus for 26 January 2025. Traditionally, the pre-election period is marked by increased repression.

According to the BYSOL foundation, from 31 October 2024 to 5 November 2024, at least 80 people [were arbitrarily detained](#) during the pre-election raids by Belarusian security forces. However, some sources [report](#) that around 100 people were detained. Activists reported that the raids were carried out by the State Security Committee (KGB) in cooperation with special forces in full combat gear. It is also reported that due to mass detentions, the infamous temporary detention center on Akrestina Street in Minsk, [notorious for torture](#) used against detainees, is overcrowded – 16 people are being held in cells for 3-4 people at a time. Human rights activists [reported](#) that criminal cases were being initiated against many of those detained on charges of “conspiracy” and “calls to harm national security” under Articles 357 and 361 of the Criminal Code. In Smarhon and Slonim (Hrodna region), human rights activists [documented](#) at least 50 people detained in this regard; at least 20 people [were detained](#) at the dairy plant in Khoyniki, and mass detentions [were also reported](#) in Navahrudak, Maladzechna, and Mahileu.

The security forces also [stepped up](#) “preventive work” with those Belarusians who previously came to their attention for “political” reasons – the authorities often hold “preventative” conversations with such individuals and issue official warnings, while people are forced to sign papers on refusing to take part in “extremist activity.” Activists [report](#) that the KGB plans to conduct such “conversations” with 60 people in the Minsk branch of the Belarusian Railways alone.

### **Maria Kalesnikava met with her father**

On 13 November 2024, former opposition journalist and current pro-government activist Raman Pratasevich [reported](#) that the father of [Maryia Kalesnikava](#), prominent political activist and current political prisoner, was able to meet with his daughter after submitting a petition to Aliaksandar Lukashenka. [According to Nasha Niva](#), the meeting took place in a prison hospital. Until that moment, Marya Kalesnikava had been *incommunicado* for more than 600 days. Kalesnikava's father also [reported](#) that Maryia was considering writing a petition to Alexander Lukashenka for pardon. Pratasevich also [stated](#) that he communicated with relatives of political activists [Viktar](#) and [Eduard Babaryka](#), as well as [Mikalai Statkevich](#), who also have *incommunicado* status.

### **Continued harsh sentencing for “high treason”**

According to the Human Rights Center “Viasna,” during the period from 9 August 2020 to 6 November 2024, at least 88 people were convicted in Belarus for “high treason” under Article 356 of the Criminal Code. This number is growing rapidly, since 9 months ago it was almost half as much. Thus, on 4 November 2024, [it became known](#) that on 14 August 2024 Hrodna Regional Court sentenced 21-year-old cadet of the MIA Academy Ilya Naryshkin to 15 years in prison on charges of “high treason” and “participation in an armed formation on the territory of a foreign state” under Articles 356 and 361-3 of the Criminal Code. Human rights activists [believe](#) that the sentence could have been handed down for his connections with Belarusian volunteer units that are part of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and fighting against Russian aggression.

### **Human Constanta supports Lithuania’s referral to the ICC to investigate alleged crimes against humanity in Belarus**

Thirteen leading human rights organizations, including Human Constanta, have published an [open letter](#), calling on the State Parties of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to support and join [Lithuania’s referral](#) to the ICC to investigate alleged crimes against humanity in Belarus.

### **Human Constanta calls Sandvine company to make good on its commitments and stop harming human rights**

Human rights organizations and experts, including Human Constanta, in an open letter inquired about Sandvine’s [recent reforms](#) resulting in its removal from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Entity list, and requested evidence of the adequacy and effectiveness of the announced measures.

### **Political prisoners**

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1275](#) (during the analyzed period, human rights activists [recognized](#) 14 new people as political prisoners). As of 15 November 2024, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody for more than 2 years ([780 days](#)).