

The information is aggregated from open online resources and our own practice. In these newsletters, we will shortly update you on everyday human rights violations in numbers and facts.

### **Summary Tuesday-Friday, 20-23 October:**

It has been almost three months since the start of the massive peaceful Belarusian protests against elections' falsifications and serious human rights' abuses. Severe human rights violations continue.

According to the state officials: more than 400 criminal cases have been opened in relation to mass riots; organising and preparing actions that seriously violate public order; resistance, violence or threats of using violence against police officers; destruction of property or damage; hooliganism," the statement reads.<sup>1</sup>

In turn, more than 1,000 persons filed complaints against police violence. On August 26, an interdepartmental commission was set up to probe into police abuse cases reported by citizens. However, there have been no public reports on the work of the commission or criminal proceedings brought against policemen over resorting to excessive force yet.

**9 more people were recognized as political prisoners, the current list contains 102 names.**<sup>2</sup>

### **Digital rights and freedom of speech**

On 20 October 2020, Central District Court in Minsk issued a ruling labelling the NEXTA-Live Telegram channel and NEXTA logo as "extremist".<sup>3</sup> The court's decision follows complaints by the Interior Ministry's Main Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption (GUBOPiK). The court decided that materials published by the channel include calls for mass riots. The decision follows months of protests in the state, and an increasingly violent and repressive response by authorities who have sought to shut down the internet, arrest human rights defenders, journalists and opposition leaders, and abuse and intimidate protesters.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://belsat.eu/en/news/belarusian-authorities-report-400-criminal-cases-linked-to-protests/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://spring96.org/en/news/100058>

<sup>3</sup> NEXTA is an independent news resource that has gained popularity since the fraudulent presidential election on 9 August 2020 and the protests that followed. It uses the Internet messaging service Telegram to share videos and photos related to the protests, including documenting violence of the law enforcement. Currently, NEXTA operates with two Telegram channels: Nexta Live, which has 1.9 million subscribers, and Nexta, which has 900,000. NEXTA is also known for publishing the names of law enforcement officers involved in suppressing the protests. It was established by a Belarusian blogger Stsiapan Putsila, the main office is located in Warsaw, Poland.

<sup>4</sup> <https://humanconstanta.by/en/authorities-designate-telegram-channel-nexta-as-extremist/>

An administrator of Telegram channel 'Data of Punishers of Belarus'<sup>5</sup>, was detained in the Belarusian town of Dobrush (Homiel region). According to the Homiel police department, the detainee who turned out to be a 15-year-old person admitted that he posted information about employees of the internal affairs bodies on Telegram.<sup>6</sup>

### **COVID19 & Medical workers and human rights**

On October 21 the Belarusian Health Ministry updated information on the coronavirus situation in the country: 733 new cases have been confirmed, 4 COVID-19 deaths have been reported.<sup>7</sup> In the meantime, despite the difficult epidemiological situation, the pressure on the representatives of the medical profession continues. On October 11, riot police detained at least 13 doctors during peaceful protests.<sup>8</sup>

After the director of the Children's Hospice<sup>9</sup> in Hrodno was detained during a courtyard meeting on October 15, the Office of the Financial Investigation Department visited the hospice. The lease agreement was unilaterally terminated with the Children's Hospice on October 22.<sup>10</sup>

Hrodna doctors have recorded a video message demanding to recognize the presidential elections as rigged and to hold new ones. The doctors say they are against violence and repressions.<sup>11</sup>

More than 1,200 medical workers signed an open letter for new elections and against violence.<sup>12</sup>

### **Academic liberties**

Since the beginning of the post-election protests in Belarus, the rectors of eight colleges and universities have been replaced. It is clear that the rectors who were unable to quash protests

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<sup>5</sup> The channel published the personal data of officers who reportedly used violence against peaceful protesters.

<sup>6</sup> <https://belsat.eu/en/news/belarus-police-detain-15-y-o-admin-who-posted-pacifying-siloviki-s-data-on-web/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://t.me/minzdravbelarus/1373>

<sup>8</sup> <https://euroradio.fm/ru/videl-kak-upal-na-spinu-v-belarusi-za-den-zaderzhali-minimum-13-vrachey>

<sup>9</sup> Now the organization helps about 7 dozen families with seriously ill children who have cancer, genetic, or pathological diseases.

<sup>10</sup> <https://belsat.eu/ru/news/u-grodnenskogo-detskogo-hospisa-zabirayut-pomeshhenie/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://news.tut.by/society/705094.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://t.me/tpbela/3139>

at their educational institution, or were simply too liberal in their response, have been relieved of their duties.<sup>13</sup>

Belarusian scientists recorded a video message addressed to the entire scientific community, all citizens of Belarus and the country's authorities. They are against state violence, reprisals against citizens who do not support the actions of the authorities, against dismissals and arrests.<sup>14</sup>

Recently, the Ministry of Education, together with the Ministry of Finance, issued a decree stating that students with 10 hours of absenteeism will be deprived of scholarships. This decision also aims to repress protesters.<sup>15</sup> Student protests continue in the majority of Universities in Minsk.

### **The world of culture and Human Rights**

Poet and PEN Belarus member **Dmitry Strotsev** was sentenced to 13 days in prison after taking part in a peaceful demonstration in Belarus. Strotsev has used social media to publish poetry criticizing the Belarusian government.<sup>16</sup>

**Andrey Luhin**, the musician of the band “Laudans” who was detained on October 20 after giving a concert in a courtyard on Angarskaya Street, Minsk was sentenced to 15 days of arrest.<sup>17</sup>

### **Other news**

Despite the fact that the border has been closed due to coronavirus, about 10,000 Belarusians have left for Poland, 3,000 have headed to Ukraine, and about 500 have gone to Lithuania and Latvia since the beginning of September. Compared with the international migration figures from Belarusian National Statistical Committee, this means that in less than two months, several times more people have left Belarus than in all of 2019.

### **Good news**

The Presidium of the European Parliament decided to award the annual Andrei Sakharov Prize “**For Freedom of Thought**” to the democratic opposition of Belarus.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup><https://naviny.by/article/20201020/1603205719-naznacheny-novye-rektory-oni-dolzheny-obespechit-terror-i-zapugivanie>

<sup>14</sup><https://reform.by/173991-pochemu-my-molchim-uchenye-zapisali-obrashhenie-protiv-nasilija-bezzakonija-i-repressij>

<sup>15</sup><https://belsat.eu/en/news/lukashenka-replaces-rectors-in-three-universities-amid-ongoing-student-protests/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://pen.org/press-release/poet-and-pen-belarus-member-imprisoned-for-demonstrating/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.voiceofbelarus.com/live-feed-21-oct/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.voiceofbelarus.com/live-feed-22-oct/>