

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

## **Summary: Saturday 17 July 2021 to Friday 23 July 2021**

### **Students' case**

On 16 July 2021, 12 people were found guilty for gross violation of public order in the infamous 'Students' case'. The following punishments were imposed:

- 2 years of imprisonment in a minimum-security prison for student Hleb Fitzner (only he pleaded guilty);
- 2.5 years of imprisonment in a minimum-security prison for students Kseniya Syramalot, Kasya Budzko, Yana Arabeyka, Yahor Kanetski, Illya Trakhtenberg, Viktoryia Hrankouskaya, Anastasiya Bulybenka, Maryia Kalenik, and Tatsyana Yakelchyk, university lecturer Volha Filatchankava, as well as Alana Hebremaryam, a Coordination Council member and Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya's representative on youth and student affairs.

In total, more than 40 students are currently under criminal prosecution in Belarus for public activity and participation in peaceful protests.<sup>1</sup>

### **Telegram chats case**

On 19 July 2021, 11 activists who administered opposition Telegram chats were found guilty for "rioting", inflicting "deliberate destruction or damage to private property", and conducting "illegal actions with firearms, ammunition and explosives". The following punishments were imposed:

- 5 years in a medium-security prison for Artsiom Kasakouski, Dzmitry Lastouski, and Dzmitry Zheburtovich;
- 8 years in a medium-security prison for Pavel Nyadbaila, Rastislau Stefanovich, Yauhen Prapolski, Alyaksandr Reznik, Syarhei Plonis, Artsiom Mitsuk, and Aliaksandr Yurchyk; and
- 9 years in a medium-security prison for Yury Byalko.<sup>2</sup>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/16-07-2021-up-to-2-5-years-in-jail-minsk-court-imposes-sentences-on-defendants-in-so-called-students-case/>

2

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/19-07-2021-heavy-jail-terms-imposed-on-defendants-in-telegram-chats-case-most-of-them-are-political-prisoners/>

## Crackdown on Belarusian civil society continues

Since the largest crackdown on human rights and civil society organisations in Belarus that took place on 14 July 2021,<sup>3</sup> more searches and detentions have taken place across the country.<sup>4</sup>

On 16 July 2021, security forces searched several Belarusian media workers contributing to independent media outlet Belsat – including Halina Abakunchyk, Yauhen Merkis, Ihar Ilyash, Alyaksandr Sayenka, Hleb Labadzenka, Alyaksei Kairys, Khrystsina Charnyauskaya, Pavel Mazheika, Ales Pushkin, Viktor Yarashuk, Ales Lyauchuk, Milana Kharytonava, Hanna Halyota, Lyubou Lunyova, Maryia Artsybashava, Andrey Yakimush, Syarhei Skulavets, and Larysa Shchyrakova.<sup>5</sup>

On the same day, law enforcement officers raided the office of independent media outlet Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe. Journalists Inesa Studzinskaya and Aleh Hruzdilovich were detained, while another journalist, Valyantsin Zhdanko, had his apartment searched.<sup>6</sup>

On 17 July 2021, the State Security Committee of the Republic of Belarus (KGB) commented that “searches were carried out among the most active subscribers of destructive Telegram-channels ... in respect of which there was information about involvement in extremist activities”. A KGB representative said that “traumatic weapons, ammunition, drugs, Nazi symbols, and paraphernalia” were found in activists’ offices and homes and evidence was found of the activists’ involvement in “criminal offences such as group activities, grossly violating public order, and incitement of social discord”.<sup>7</sup>

Civil society organisations have sustained major losses and impediments on their activities as a result of the recent crackdown. For instance, the national hotline for survivors of domestic violence, run by the public association ‘Gender Prospects’, had to be indefinitely suspended.<sup>8</sup>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/14-07-2021-en-masse-police-raiding-offices-of-belarusian-human-rights-organisations-flats-of-activists/>;

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/15-07-2021-mass-detentions-and-searches-across-belarus-who-became-regime-s-target-on-july-14/>;

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/23/belarus-ngos-condemn-government-crackdown-after-black-week-of-raids>

<sup>4</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/425.html?tg>; <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/454.html?tg>;

<https://news.zerkalo.io/life/516.html?tg>

5

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/16-07-2021-belarusian-security-forces-launch-large-scale-raid-on-belsat-tv-co-ntributors/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://belsat.eu/en/news/16-07-2021-belarus-police-stage-attack-on-rfe-rl-journos-office-in-minsk/>

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<https://belsat.eu/en/news/17-07-2021-kgb-finds-weapons-drugs-and-banned-paraphernalia-at-activists-s-homes/>

8

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/18-07-2021-no-more-hotline-for-victims-of-domestic-violence-after-raid-on-ngos/>

### **Alexey Kudin to be extradited despite the ECHR decision**

Belarusian athlete Alexei Kudin, who left Belarus for Russia for fear of political persecution and applied for political asylum in Russia, is to be extradited to Belarus, despite the decision on interim measures taken by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).<sup>9</sup> Contrary to the ECHR's decision, a Moscow court has ruled that there is no risk of torture and persecution in Belarus and the extradition decision must be upheld. In Belarus, Kudin is suspected of “resisting law enforcement officers using violence” under Article 363 of the Criminal Code.

### **Political prisoners**

As of 23 July 2021, the total number of political prisoners in Belarus is 587.<sup>10</sup> The number continues to grow daily.

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<https://www.currenttime.tv/a/espch-zapretil-ekstradiitsiyu-v-belarus-boytsa-mma-alekseya-kudina/31370122.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en>