

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 28 August 2021 to Friday 3 September 2021**

### **Pressure on journalist community continues**

Charges of tax evasion were brought against the recently detained employees of BelaPAN news agency: BelaPAN director Dzmitry Navazhylau, editor-in-chief Iryna Leushyna, and accountant Katsyaryna Boyeva. According to the Belarusian Investigative Committee, between June 2018 and January 2021, BelaPAN employees submitted false information to the tax office, which led to non-payment of taxes totalling over 100,000 Belarusian rubles (approximately 40,000 USD).<sup>1</sup>

On 27 August 2021, the Supreme Court of Belarus ruled to disband the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), which unites more than 1,300 media workers. Before the decision on disbanding was issued, on 10 August 2021 Reporters Without Borders submitted an amicus brief to the Belarusian Supreme Court challenging the Ministry of Justice's request to disband BAJ.<sup>2</sup> The European Union Lead Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Peter Stano, has condemned the closure of BAJ as part of ongoing political repression<sup>3</sup> The closing down of BAJ is part of a larger trend of searching and closing down civil society organisations.

### **Political prisoner released from detention but remains a suspect**

On 1 September 2021, Syarhei Pavalishau, the Director General of Belarus's biggest hosting company, hoster.by, was released from a pre-trial detention centre. According to Pavalishau's defence lawyer, the charges against his client have not been dropped, and his release remains merely a change of restraint measure.<sup>4</sup>

### **Migration crisis at Belarusian borders**

While the migration crisis continues to intensify at the Belarusian borders with Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland, Polish authorities have offered the assistance of its security officers to

---

1

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/27-08-2021-belarus-authorities-suspect-arrested-belapan-reps-of-tax-evasion/>

2 <https://belsat.eu/en/news/27-08-2021-supreme-court-liquidates-belarusian-association-of-journalists/>

3

[https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/103516/belarus-statement-spokesperson-repressions-against-journalists-and-media\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/103516/belarus-statement-spokesperson-repressions-against-journalists-and-media_en)

4

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/01-09-2021-authorities-release-hosting-company-ceo-who-was-arrested-as-part-of-tut-by-case/>

Lithuanian border control officers.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, migrants remaining at the Polish–Belarusian border have received humanitarian aid from the Red Cross and the United Nations.<sup>6</sup>

### **Ideological subjects in the school curriculum**

The school year, which started on 1 September 2021, has brought changes to the curriculum at Belarusian schools. The position of military and patriotic upbringing instructor has been introduced in all Belarusian schools. Despite being a secular country, a new optional course of ‘Spirituality and Patriotism’ has been added for 5th and 6th graders. In addition, many schools have been equipped with surveillance cameras.<sup>7</sup>

### **Developments in politically motivated cases**

Key developments in politically motivated cases include:

- Pro-Lukashenka activist Yury Vaskrasenski called on jailed human rights defender Leanid Sudalenka to file a petition for pardon before 31 August 2021 to get released, but Sudalenka refused;<sup>8</sup>
- On 27 August 2021, former riot police officer Maksim Klimovich, who left the service in 2012 and took part in 2020 post-election protests, was arrested on a criminal charge of grossly violating public order;<sup>9</sup>
- On 27 August 2021, former police department driver Vladimir Zhuk was sentenced to 3 years in a medium-security prison for violating a public order by participating in protests;<sup>10</sup>
- On 30 August 2021, the Leninski District Court of Brest issued its verdict in another trial involving participants of a ‘dancing protest’, held in September 2020.<sup>11</sup> The following sentences have been imposed on the sixth group of defendants:
  - Kanstantsin Svidunovich, Syarhei Kananovich, Alyaksandr Zhuk, Hleb Nikanovich, Ihar Syamykin – 1.5 years of restriction of liberty;
  - Katsyaryna Brovach and Yury Satsyuk – 1.5 years of restriction of liberty without being sent to a correctional facility;
  - Artsyom Laski and Danila Dzyatkouski – 2 years of restriction of liberty;
  - Viktor Astroshka – 2 years of restriction of liberty without being sent to a correctional facility;
  - Ilya Yahorau and Ihar Vinakurau – 2.5 years of restriction of liberty;<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/2249.html?tg>

<sup>6</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/2376.html?tg>

<sup>7</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/2098.html?tg>

<sup>8</sup>

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/30-08-2021-imprisoned-human-rights-defender-leanid-sudalenka-refuses-to-file-petition-for-pardon/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/2253.html?tg>

<sup>10</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/2157.html?tg>

<sup>11</sup> <http://spring96.org/en/news/104804>

<sup>12</sup>

<https://belsat.eu/en/news/30-08-2021-years-of-restriction-of-liberty-new-sentences-in-round-dance-case/>

- On 1 September 2021, a new criminal charge of tax evasion was brought against media manager Andrey Alexandrov, already accused of financing protests and of treason;<sup>13</sup>
- Former state TV reporter Ksenia Lutskina, who is currently detained by Belarusian authorities, has been experiencing pain allegedly in connection with a brain tumor. Having gone through brain surgery in 2012, her condition was stable and she was regularly undergoing medical check-ups. However, in detention her medical condition has deteriorated.<sup>14</sup>

## **Political prisoners**

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is 652.<sup>15</sup> The number continues to grow daily.

---

<sup>13</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/2374.html?tg>

<sup>14</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/2168.html?tg>

<sup>15</sup> <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en>