

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 6 November 2021 to Friday 12 November 2021

Migration crisis at Belarusian border

The migration crisis continues to intensify at the Belarusian border with Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland, having reached an unprecedented scale by mid-November 2021.

On 8 November 2021, approximately 2,000 migrants [approached](#) Bruzgi border control point at the Belarusian–Polish border (sources report figures that range between [1,000 and 5,000](#) migrants, with others suggesting [4,000](#)). Videos from the border crossing show migrants attempting to break through the heavily guarded border, and border control officers using gas. The Polish Ministry of Defence [said](#) that the actions of migrants at the border were controlled by the Belarusian authorities, and [stated](#) that they had 12,000 soldiers mobilized, armed, and stood ready to defend the border. The Ministry also [alleged](#) that some of the migrants were involved in armed conflicts in the Middle East. As a consequence, Polish government spokesman Piotr Müller [said](#) that Polish authorities were considering the option of completely closing the border with Belarus.

On 9 November 2021, journalists reported that 500 migrants were [transferred](#) from the Belarusian–Polish border to the Belarusian–Lithuanian border, causing Lithuania to introduce a [state of emergency](#) in the country, following the Polish example. Ukrainian authorities also [strengthened](#) the Belarusian–Ukrainian border. On 10 November 2021, [599](#) attempts to cross the Belarusian–Polish border and [281](#) attempts to cross the Belarusian–Lithuanian border were made.

Belarusian authorities [insist](#) that the actions of migrants were “self-organized,” despite evidence to the contrary.

The Kurdistan Region Parliament has decided to dispatch a [delegation](#) to investigate the case of thousands of Kurdish migrants stranded on the border between Belarus and Poland. At the same time, two honorary consulates of Belarus in Iraq were [closed](#) by the country’s authorities.

As a result of the border situation and in response to the ongoing “hybrid attack” launched by Belarusian authorities, the Council of the European Union (EU) has adopted a decision [suspending](#) the application of the EU–Belarus visa facilitation agreement for Belarusian state officials. According to information from three EU diplomats, the EU is close to imposing more [sanctions](#) on Belarus, targeting some 30 individuals and entities, including the foreign minister and Belarusian airline Belavia, with approval as early as next week.

Human Constanta commented on the situation in the [media](#), providing information of migrants' persecution in their home countries and the rise of hate speech and xenophobia in connection to the crisis, and released a [statement](#) on the matter.

OSCE Vienna Mechanism launched

On 4 November 2021, 35 participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) [invoked](#) the Vienna Mechanism in relation to serious human rights violations in Belarus. The [Vienna Mechanism](#) allows participating States, through an established set of procedures, to raise questions relating to the human dimension of a situation in other OSCE States.

The OSCE participating States have already invoked the [Moscow Mechanism](#) in respect of Belarus, under which *ad hoc* missions by independent experts to assist in the resolution of a specific human dimension problem can be established. The OSCE Moscow Mechanism report, prepared by Special Rapporteur Dr. Wolfgang Benedek, was [published](#) on 5 November 2020 and highlighted human rights violations committed in Belarus before, during, and after the 2020 presidential election.

The questions posed to the Belarusian authorities include the following:

1. Have steps been taken by the Belarusian authorities to investigate allegations that the right to freedom of peaceful assembly is being unduly restricted, that individuals are being arbitrarily detained or arrested, and that numbers of political prisoners are increasing? Please detail the actions taken.
2. Have steps been taken to investigate all allegations of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment? Please detail the actions taken, including steps taken to ensure the independence and integrity of investigations.
3. Have steps been taken to investigate allegations of hate crimes, including the use of state controlled media or social media accounts to incite violence? Please detail the actions taken.
4. Have steps been taken to ensure the ability of civil society and media actors to freely document and report, without reprisal, on human rights concerns in Belarus? Please detail the actions taken.
5. What steps are being taken by the Belarusian authorities to ensure it is not facilitating irregular migration (to other OSCE participating States) which puts vulnerable people at risk, impacts on their human rights, and has a destabilising effect on regional security?
6. What engagement has there been with the OSCE's institutions, including ODIHR and RFoM, to respond to concerns raised by those institutions, and to help realise full compliance with OSCE commitments?
7. Have meaningful steps been taken, including through the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, to engage with the opposition, independent civil society, and human rights defenders? Please detail such steps.
8. Please respond in detail to the recommendations contained in the 5 November 2020 report under the Moscow Mechanism.

The responses from the Belarusian authorities are expected within 10 days.

More civil society initiatives labeled “extremist”

The BYPOL initiative of former Belarusian law enforcement officers and the Peramoha (eng. ‘Victory’) initiative were both [recognized](#) as “extremist formations.” Under Belarusian law, being categorized as such entails the risk of criminal persecution for the formations’ founders. Human Constanta’s recent [report](#) on persecution on “anti-extremism” grounds provides a general overview on the topic.

Hunger strike in Belarusian prison

On 3 November 2021, 10 women cellmates went on a [hunger strike](#) in the two-person cell of the infamous detention centre on Akrestsin Street in Minsk to protest the inhumane conditions of their imprisonment. The women had been deprived of mattresses and any clothes that could be used as mattresses. Everything that the women did not manage to hold in their hands was thrown in the trash by prison authorities, including toothbrushes, hygiene pads, medicines, medical masks, and water bottles. The prisoners were denied access to showers from 1 November 2021 and were not allowed to turn the light in the cell off at night. The prison authorities denied women’s complaints, and instead threatened them with lowering the temperature in the prison cell to +7°C if the complaints continue.

Developments in politically motivated cases

Some of the key developments in politically motivated cases include:

- On 10 November 2021, [Mikalai Dziadok](#), a 33-year-old political prisoner, blogger, and anarchist, was sentenced to 5 years in a medium security prison for grossly violating public order, harming national security, and committing illegal actions with regard to combustible substances. Dziadok reported torture during his arrest and detention;
- On 9 November 2021, reputed Belarusian activist and founder of Radislava women’s rights organization [Volha Harbunova](#) was arrested. The human rights defender was charged with “organising and preparing actions that grossly violate public order” by “staging” [women’s marches](#) in Belarus. The persecution of Harbunova is connected to her professional activities – for 18 years, Radislava has been one of the key actors in combating domestic violence in Belarus, working with survivors and abusers, providing shelter, as well as medical, legal, and psychological assistance. Harbunova’s arrest was preceded by the [liquidation](#) of Radislava;
- On 4 November 2021, [Volha Kazadoy](#) was sentenced to 15 days in jail for following multiple Telegram channels, recognized as “extremist” by Belarusian authorities;
- On 3 November 2021, [Yana Pinchuk](#) was extradited from Russia to Belarus in order to be tried in criminal proceedings connected with her alleged administration of a Telegram channel, recognized as “extremist;”
- The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention shared its [opinion](#) on 6 September 2021 on the detention of political prisoner and activist Siarhei Tsikhanouski.

It states that Tsikhanouski's detention is arbitrary and the Belarusian government should take urgent action to ensure his immediate release.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [846](#). The number continues to grow daily.