

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.

Wednesday 7 September 2022 to Friday 16 September 2022

Prosecution of independent journalists

Journalists continue to be [persecuted](#) for the performance of their professional duties.

On 13 September 2022, [Yevgeny Merkis](#), a journalist and local historian, was detained in Gomel. The day after, a search was conducted at Merkis' father's house in the framework of a criminal case on calls for actions aimed at harming national security.

On 14 September 2022, Grodno Regional Court sentenced journalist [Denis Ivashin](#) to 13 years and 1 month in a medium-security prison on charges of interfering in the activities of a policeman and high treason. The State Security Committee (KGB) stated that the journalist cooperated with the Ukrainian special services – allegedly, in his publications he “regularly spread false information regarding the so-called hostile actions of Russia against Ukraine and Belarus.”

Repressions against lawyers

Repressions against independent lawyers have been [incessant](#) since 2020. Lawyers who represent political prisoners are particularly at risk. Mass persecution and disbarment of lawyers often leave victims in a situation, where legal assistance is unavailable or can only be provided through a limited amount of secure [online platforms](#).

On 7 September 2022, it was reported that the Qualification Commission of the Ministry of Justice had not certified four lawyers from the Gomel region [Gennady Vlasenko, Pavel Kulazhenko, Anna Pavlyuk and Tatiana Savchenko](#), who had previously acted as counsel in political cases, based on their alleged “improper performance of professional duties.”

On 12 September 2022, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) recognized the [Telegram chat “Belarusian lawyers”](#) as an extremist formation. This chat at various times gathered from 150 to 170 participants and was used to coordinate actions to protect the accused. While the chat was deleted, its former members can be recognized as “members of an extremist formation” and face a penalty of up to 6 years in prison.

On 13 September 2022, security forces detained lawyers [Mikhail Makarov and Anastasia Saganovich](#), who defended the accused in the [“Revolutionary Action” case](#). They are accused of disclosing the data of a closed court session. According to pro-government sources, the detainees allegedly transferred personal data of employees of the Main Directorate for Combating Organized Crime (GUBOPiK), the Investigative Committee, the Prosecutor's Office, and judges, who considered the case, to “extremist” Telegram channels. It is also alleged that the lawyers worked for an “anarchist group,” and “performed the role of messengers, passing information between accomplices.”

“Defamation” cases on the rise

The criminal prosecution of people expressing harsh criticism or negative attitude towards representatives of the regime of Alexander Lukashenko continues. Such actions continue to be interpreted by the security forces as “insulting” or “inciting social hostility,” which in fact deprives people of the right to criticize the regime in any way.

On 9 September 2022, [11 employees of the collection service](#) of “Belgazprombank” were detained. Searches were also conducted at the detainees' homes. According to preliminary information, the detentions were based on charges of insulting Lukashenko in a Telegram chat.

On 12 September 2022, Baranovichi resident [Vladislav Rabich](#), who has the first disability group, was sentenced to 3 years of restriction of liberty for critical online comments addressed to Lukashenko. On 15 September 2022, [five Minsk residents](#) were found guilty of “insulting the president” for a performance with the burning of an effigy of Lukashenko. The court sentenced Ilya Davydenko to 3 years in a penal colony, Marina Markevich to 2.5 years in prison, Anna Kiseleva, Viktor Himarod and Maxim Matsulevich to 1.5 years.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1337](#). The number continues to grow daily.