

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.

## **Saturday 20 August 2022 to Tuesday 6 September 2022**

### **Human rights defenders sentenced to lengthy prison terms and detained**

On 6 September 2022, 10 human rights defenders and activists (Danila Chul, Andrei Marach, Pavel Shpetny, Mikita Dranets, Aliaksandr Kazlianka, Andrei Chapiuk, Aliaksei Halauko, Marfa Rabkova, Akikhiro Hayeuski-Hanada, and Aliaksandr Frantskevich) were [sentenced](#) to terms of 5 to 17 years of imprisonment in the [“Revolutionary Action”](#) group case.

Human rights defender Nasta Lojka was detained in Minsk city court following the hearing, along with relatives of political prisoners, sentenced to imprisonment, and diplomatic personnel, attending the trial. Human Constanta has published a [statement](#) on the politically motivated detention of Nasta.

### **Persecution related to Russian aggression against Ukraine continues**

The practice of criminal prosecution of Belarusians who share information about the movement of Russian troops online continues since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Over the past 3 months, at least 10 people were sentenced and 6 detained on such grounds, which indicates the persistent trend of criminalizing any assistance or solidarity with Ukraine.

On 30 August 2022, Brest regional court sentenced a 1st-year student [Andrei Maslow](#) to 2.5 years of imprisonment for “preparing to take part in an armed conflict on the territory of a foreign state” (Article 361-3 of the Criminal Code). He was detained while trying to cross the border with Ukraine. Law enforcement officers found Andrei’s correspondence with the Telegram bot of the Kalinovsky Regiment – a volunteer unit of Belarusians, which is part of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

On the same day it became known that a resident of Gomel was accused of [high treason](#) (Article 356 of the Criminal Code) for recording and analyzing information about military infrastructure and equipment and sending it to opposition Telegram channels, which, according to the Prosecutor, were “controlled by a foreign organisation.” The man faces 7 to 15 years in prison.

### **Persecution under “anti-extremist” and “anti-terrorist” legislation**

The tendency towards persecution on the basis of “anti-extremist” laws continues in Belarus. At the moment, 4 Belarusian informal organizations have been recognized as terrorist – opposition channels and chats, as well as initiatives created to resist the regime. Any form of interaction and cooperation with “terrorist organizations” can lead to criminal liability under various “anti-terrorist” articles of the Criminal Code (for example, “assistance to terrorist activities” under Article 290-2 or “participation in a terrorist organization” under Article 290-5), punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Cooperating with such organizations can also be interpreted by the security forces as an “act of terrorism,” which is punishable by the death penalty.

Recent cases of “extremism- and terrorism-based” persecution include:

- On 24 August 2022, social networks of the [store of national and opposition Belarusian symbols “Symbal.by”](#) were recognized as “extremist materials.” On 30 August 2022, [Telegram chat “Belarusian Lawyers,”](#) which consisted of about 150 representatives of the legal community, was recognized as “extremist” as well.
- On 30 August 2022, pro-government sources reported that [opposition news outlet “Charter’97”](#) was recognized as an “extremist formation.” The media actively covered peaceful protests in 2020, which was interpreted by the security forces as organizing and coordinating mass riots.” Under anti-extremism provisions of Belarusian laws, subscribers of the outlet or people cooperating with it in any form can be recognized as “members of an extremist formation” and face up to 6 years in prison.
- On 31 August 2022, the Supreme Court, according to the statement of Prosecutor General Andrei Shved, recognized [association of former security officers “BYPOL”](#) as a “terrorist organization.” According to the Prosecutor's office, the organization “is connected with the formation of ideas of radicalism in society and incitement of citizens to extremist activities to change the constitutional order of the Republic of Belarus by unlawful means.”

### **Criminal prosecution for publications about Stalinist repressions on the territory of Belarus**

On 26 August 2022, the Prosecutor General's office initiated a criminal case for the [“denial of the genocide of the Belarusian people”](#) (Article 130-2 of the Criminal Code) because of materials in the publications “Flagshtok” and “Zerkalo.io” news outlets. On 23 August 2022, “Flagshtok” published an article, claiming that on one of the maps of Gomel, published on the website of the local state body, there was a mark indicating mass graves of victims of 1937 political repressions. This material was reprinted by “Zerkalo.io.” Human Constanta’s [special review](#) discusses the risks of the newly adopted law in more detail.

### **Criminal prosecution of peaceful protestors continues**

On 30 August 2022, [Alexander Komar and Andrey Andreev](#) were sentenced to 2 and 3 years of imprisonment respect in a maximum-security prison, respectively, for simply walking in the direction of a retreating security officer during an anti-war rally in February 2022. They were tortured during their detention.

On 1 September 2022, [Natalia Goncharenko](#) was sentenced to 3 years of restriction of liberty after the transport company “Minsktrans” filed a lawsuit against her for allegedly standing on the road and blocking traffic during the protests.

It is also known about the daily detentions of people who participated in protest actions in 2020: for example, [Natalya Azarevich](#), [Kyryl Yasinski and Maria Yasinskaya](#), [Elena Latushka](#), [Denis Navalaev](#), [Andrey Vitalev](#), [Dmitry Kasperovich](#) and other people were detained during the past two weeks. Such politically motivated persecution violates the right to freedom of assembly.

### **Political prisoners**

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1322](#). The number continues to grow daily.