

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

### **Saturday 1 April 2023 to Friday 14 April 2023**

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen – in the past weeks, security forces continued mass raids on regional cities and state-owned enterprises, accompanied by mass detentions, while the courts imposed tough sentences on independent lawyers, journalists, and politicians.

#### **Mass arbitrary detentions continue**

During the first days of April 2023, the security forces conducted [mass searches and arbitrary detentions of Dzerzhinsk residents](#). Reportedly, the searches were connected with the fact that on 31 March 2023, Belarusian (white-red-white) and Ukrainian national flags were hung along the road near the city, and security forces allegedly found an explosive device when trying to remove them. At least 45 people were detained during the “raid.” While most people were released after interrogations, some were criminally charged for participating in the protests. Eyewitnesses reported that security forces installed a special “Magnet” application on the detainees’ phones to detect subscriptions and reposts to prohibited channels and put tracking beacons on the detainees’ cars. On the evening of 3 April 2023, “confession videos” with five detainees appeared on pro-government Telegram channels, which showed how security forces in full armor detained people with the use of force.

On 4 April 2023, “Nasha Niva” [reported](#) that employees of the State Security Committee (KGB) carried out repressions against employees of the paramilitary guard of the Belarusian railway – administrative proceedings were initiated against multiple railway employees in Mogilev and Gomel, while the heads of some units were dismissed. Railway employees told the media that this harassment is conducted on “political” grounds since the detained guards had access to information about the movement of the Russian military equipment on Belarusian territory.

#### **Legal practice equated to “extremism”**

On 10 April 2023, Minsk City Court sentenced [Alexander Danilevich](#), a lawyer and lecturer at the Belarusian State University, to 10 years in prison on charges of “calling for sanctions” and “promoting extremist activities.” It is one of the first cases when the professional activity of a lawyer was actually equated to “extremist activity.” [According to the Investigative Committee](#), the lawyer “supported extremists and adherents of legal nihilism” and “made attempts to politicize sports in Belarus.” According to investigators, he advised employees of the opposition initiative “Sports Solidarity Fund” in the context of their advocacy efforts to cancel sports events in Belarus in connection with mass human rights violations in the country. The lawyer was also accused of writing letters to the Norwegian company Yara, a major buyer of Belaruskali products, in which he described the human rights situation at Belarusian enterprises and urged the company to comply with business and human rights standards. The Investigative Committee also noted that Danilevich communicated with “extremist” resources to “create a destructive information agenda”– in fact, the lawyer gave an interview to one of the Telegram channels, which was then merely reprinted by sport media outlet “Tribuna,” recognized as “extremist.”

#### **Persecution of independent journalists**

On 3 April 2023, General Prosecutor's office announced the detention of the editor of independent media outlet "Regional Newspaper" [Alexander Mantsevich](#), charged with "discrediting the Republic of Belarus" under Article 369-1 of the Criminal Code. According to the agency, the newspaper's articles "contained unreliable information aimed at causing significant harm to state and public interests, undermining the authority of the country and its organs, damaging national interests, destabilizing the situation, forming false ideas about non-compliance with the rights and freedoms of citizens."

On 6 April 2023, the director of the independent media outlet "Belarusians and Market" [Konstantin Zolotykh](#) was sentenced to 4 years in prison for "inciting hostility," "insulting representatives of the authorities and Lukashenka," and "abuse of official authority" for posting critical comments about state officials on his social networks.

### **Sentences of 2020 presidential candidates**

On 6 April 2023, former presidential candidate [Andrei Dmitriev](#) was sentenced to 1.5 years in prison on charges of "gross violation of public order." According to the prosecutor, Dmitriev participated in protest marches three times in 2020, standing on the roadway with other protesters and blocking traffic. Earlier, the Investigative Committee [stated](#) that "Dmitriev's contacts with representatives of the West and the United States may indicate the coordination of his "political" activities from abroad."

On 7 April 2023, Minsk Regional Court, within the framework of "special proceedings" (*in absentia*), sentenced the politician [Valery Tsepkalo](#) to 17 years in prison under 12 articles of the Criminal Code. Tsepkalo was found guilty of "calling for actions against national security," "creating and leading an extremist formation," "financing extremist activities," "slandering and publicly insulting Lukashenka," "discrediting Belarus," "spreading propaganda of war," as well as a number of financial crimes. As an additional measure of punishment, he was sentenced to a fine of 2.3 million Belarusian rubles (more than 800 000 USD).

### **Political prisoners**

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1483](#). The number continues to grow daily. As of 14 April 2023, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody for 198 days.