

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 27 May 2023 to Friday 9 June 2023

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by mass detentions of priests and musicians, continued persecution for anti-war stance and donations to solidarity funds, as well as another severe sentence for administrators of opposition resources.

Mass detentions of priests

In recent days, the detentions of clergymen have become more frequent – [Catechism teacher Vladislav Beloded](#), [Catholic Priest Andrei Kulik from Miory](#), [Catholic Priest Vyacheslav Adamovich from Miory district](#), [pastor Alexander Zaretsky from Novolukoml](#), and [Uniate priest Ales Shevtsov](#) were detained. Most of the priests were punished with administrative arrest for up to 15 days under Article 19.11 of the Administrative Code (“distribution of extremist materials”). Zaretsky and Shevtsov were convicted under this article twice in a row – the former will spend at least 30 days in captivity, the latter – 45 days. In their cases, the security forces used the practice of drawing up protocols in such a way that each repost of forbidden information was framed as a separate offense, which then allowed the courts to punish people with multiple consecutive arrests.

Repression against musicians continues

On 25 May 2023, the court [arrested](#) three members of the Belarusian faceOFF band. Denis Petukh and Dmitry Petukh were sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest, while the bass guitarist of the band was sentenced to 13 days. On 30 May 2023, it became known that 4 songs by musicians called “It’s Time!”, “Guardians of the Galaxy,” “Hate,” and “Spring” [were recognized as “extremist” materials.](#) On 6 June 2023, security forces [detained](#) Detroit Hills vocalist and BTTF bass guitarist Artem Novikov on unknown grounds. Earlier, on 7 May 2023, Alexander Zinchuk, Children of Khrushchyovkas band member, [was sentenced](#) to 7 days of arrest for creating the songs “2020,” “Cockroach (Demo),” and “Papitsot,” also recognized as “extremist materials.”

Sofia Sapega pardoned

On 7 June 2023 Alexander Lukashenko [pardoned](#) alleged administrator of the “Black Book of Belarus” (an initiative dealing with deanonymization of government officials involved in human rights violations) Sofia Sapega, who was detained following the infamous [Ryanair incident](#) and sentenced to 6 years in prison. Earlier, she was found guilty of “incitement of enmity and discord” and “illegal collection of information about private life” under Articles 130 and 179 of the Criminal Code.

Repression related to the war in Ukraine

On 31 May 2023, the security forces [detained a student of the Bobruisk state college](#) for leaving critical comments about the Russian military online. On a “confession video” filmed under pressure, he says that after the outbreak of the war, he subscribed to “a lot of Ukrainian resources” and the Telegram channel of the Kalinovskiy regiment (a military formation of Belarusian volunteers, part of the Armed Forces of Ukraine), in which he “wrote nasty things about the Russian military.” The security forces reported that a criminal case was initiated against him for “aiding an extremist formation.”

On 6 June 2023, the security forces detained [Olga Minenkova](#), the head of the folk choir chapel of the Belarusian State University. On a “confession video” she says that in 2022 she was asked to perform in the Russian-occupied Donbass region for local children, but she refused to do it.

Another harsh sentence to the administrator of Telegram channel

On 6 June 2023, Yana Pinchuk [was sentenced](#) to 12 years of prison on charges of administering three opposition Telegram channels from the 97% network, which the security forces consider to be connected with the NEXTA channel – “Vitebsk 97%,” “Orsha 97%,” and “Novopolotsk and Polotsk 97%.” Pinchuk was charged with “creating a terrorist organization,” “creating an extremist formation,” “calling to cause harm to national security,” “inciting hostility,” and “mass riots” under Articles 290-4, 361-1, 361,130 and 293 of the Criminal Code. Earlier, she was extradited from Russia to Belarus in clear violation of the CIS Convention on Legal Assistance by Belarus.

Persecution for donations to solidarity funds continues

On 6 June 2023, Minsk City Court sentenced local resident [Nikolai Vasilyevich](#) to 6 years of prison for “financing an extremist formation” under Articles 361-1 and 361-2 of the Criminal Code – most likely, for making donations to solidarity funds and funds helping the victims of mass repressions.

Employees of the State Security Committee (KGB) [continued](#) to calling those employees of IT companies who made donations to solidarity funds for “preventive conversations,” in the course of which they are forced to sign “confessions” and make a transfer to one of the state-run accounts in a tenfold amount exceeding the amount of the donation, and then bring a payment receipt to the KGB. In case of refusal to make a donation to state accounts or if the amount is less than the amount agreed upon during the “conversation,” criminal cases are initiated, and people who are abroad are threatened with detention immediately upon their return to Belarus. The scale of repression for donations [is increasing](#) – the Department of Financial Investigations of the State Control Committee (DPR KGC) has joined the KGB persecution campaign and a special department has been created in the KGB to work with IT specialists who made “political” donations. Border control officers also ask selected individuals about their involvement in making donations in the post-election period.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1490](#). The number continues to grow daily. As of 26 May 2023, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody for 240 days. According to our data, the investigation against Nasta has been completed, the trial against her is due to start on 13 June 2023.