

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

## **Saturday 24 August 2024 to Friday 6 September 2024**

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by pardoning some political prisoners, acts of vandalism against Belarusian organizations in Vilnius, another case of persecution of foreigners for “espionage,” and detention of a Belarusian, who was denied asylum in Sweden and deported to Belarus.

### **Another pardon of political prisoners amid ongoing repression**

On 16 August 2024, Alexander Lukashenko [signed a decree](#) pardoning 30 political prisoners. According to pro-government sources, among those pardoned are 14 women and 16 men, some of whom have serious illnesses or are retired. Pro-government political analyst Yuri Voskresensky [reported](#) a total of 900 requests for pardons from political prisoners that were received by the Belarusian authorities. On 29 August 2024, the Dissidentby initiative [announced](#) that 25 political prisoners had been released.

On 4 September 2024, Alexander Lukashenko [signed another decree](#) No. 343 “On pardoning convicted persons,” according to which he pardoned another 30 people convicted of “protest-related crimes:” among those pardoned were 7 women and 23 men, most of whom are parents of minors and young children. As of the evening of 5 September 2024, human rights activists [were aware of](#) 7 people released at this stage of the pardon, including [Viktoryia Haurylina](#), [Dziyana Zavadskaya](#), and [Maryna Kisialevich](#).

According to Prosecutor General Andrei Shved, these people “[were convicted](#) mainly of insult and slander on the Internet.” He also [said](#) that another meeting of the pardon commission will be held next week, where “quite a few” petitions for pardon would be considered. Moreover, pro-government political analyst Yuri Voskresensky [announced](#) that by the “Day of National Unity,” which government supporters celebrate on 17 September, another 30 political prisoners could be released, but noted that further pardons should then be discussed with representatives of the Western countries, who must offer “something in return” and “respond with positive actions.” He also noted that since the beginning of the year, Alexander Lukashenko has pardoned 80 political prisoners.

Despite the release of some political prisoners, the authorities continue mass detentions. During the analyzed period alone, human rights activists recognized 16 new people as political prisoners. [According to HRC “Viasna,”](#) from the 2nd to the 6th of September 2024 at least 33 people were convicted for participating in the 2020 protests on charges of “gross violation of public order” (Article 342 of the Criminal Code). On 4 September 2024, pro-government channels close to the security forces [reported](#) the harsh detention by the officers of the infamous Main Directorate for the Fight against Organized Crime and Corruption ([GUBOPiK](#)) of a Belarusian who left critical comments online – the security forces accompanied the video recording of the detention with the caption “today 30 vacant places in the logging (slang term for “prison”) have been vacated,” hinting that despite the pardons, detentions will continue.

### **Acts of vandalism against Belarusian organizations in Vilnius**

On 4 September 2024, three anti-Belarusian incidents [took place](#) in Vilnius, Lithuania – the windows of a church, where the Belarusian Orthodox parish of the Constantinople Patriarchate holds services, [were shot at](#); [windows were broken](#) in a Belarusian public center in the capital of Lithuania; and an offensive inscription in Lithuanian [was left](#) near the office of

the Belarusian volunteer organization “Dapamoga.” The Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs “[strongly condemned](#) the acts of vandalism against the Belarusian community carried out according to the KGB playbook” and noted that “the perpetrators will be held accountable.” The democratic leader of the Belarusian opposition Svitlana Tsikhanouskaya [stated](#) that such actions were “clearly aimed at sowing the seeds of enmity between Belarusians and Lithuanians,” and also expressed confidence that “the Lukashenko regime was accountable for these actions.”

### **More cases of persecution of foreigners for “espionage”**

State television regularly releases propaganda films covering the detention of people who are the “accomplices of Western intelligence services.” In most cases, such people are sentenced to severe prison terms.

On 4 September 2024, the state television channel Belarus 1 [reported](#) that “the activities of Japanese special services were stopped for the first time” in Belarus – Japanese citizen Nakanishi Masatoshi was detained for allegedly collecting information about the socio-political situation in Belarus, the implementation of China’s “One Belt, One Road” initiative, the situation on the Belarusian-Ukrainian border, and filming military infrastructure. He [was charged](#) with engaging in “intelligence activities” under Article 358-1 of the Criminal Code.

Moreover, on 27 August 2024, human rights activists learned that several months ago, Russian citizen Dmitry Shletauer [was convicted](#) in the Brest Regional Court on charges of “espionage” and “aiding extremist activity” under Articles 358 and 361-4 of the Criminal Code. The exact term of imprisonment to which Dmitry was sentenced remains unknown, while the sanction under Article 358 of the Criminal Code provides for up to 15 years of imprisonment.

### **Belarusian denied asylum in Sweden was detained at the Belarusian border upon deportation**

On 28 August 2024, [it became known](#) that a Belarusian, who was denied asylum by the Swedish Migration Service, was detained for political reasons immediately after his return to his homeland. The man arrived in Sweden in 2022 and, together with his mother, requested asylum on the grounds that they “both took part in large-scale protests after the 2020 presidential elections.” According to media reports, the applications for migration status stated that a criminal case had been initiated against them in Belarus. Despite these facts, their requests for asylum were rejected. A week earlier, the man and his mother were deported from Sweden to Belarus, where the man was immediately “arrested right at the border.” After the incident it was [reported](#) that the Swedish Migration Agency would review the asylum cases of Belarusian citizens as the agency was previously criticized for using outdated information that did not reflect the large-scale repression in Belarus. It [was also reported](#) that an internal investigation into the decision of the migration service had been launched in relation to the above-described incident.

### **Political prisoners**

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1373](#) (during the analyzed period, human rights activists recognized 16 new people as political prisoners). As of 6 September 2024, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody [for 709 days](#).