

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 29 June 2024 to Friday 12 July 2024

The human rights crisis in Belarus continues to deepen. The analyzed period was marked by amnesty of 18 political prisoners, the adoption of another EU package of sanctions in connection with Belarus' involvement in the aggression against Ukraine, the continuation of the prosecution of political activists *in absentia*, an increase in the number of detentions for communicating with Belarusian units fighting on the side of Ukraine, the initiation of new criminal cases for disobeying prison administrations, another sentence against a foreigner for engaging in “espionage,” the continued prosecution of activists for making money transfers to political prisoners.

At least 18 political prisoners released

On 3 July 2024, Alexander Lukashenko [signed the law](#) “On amnesty in connection with the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Belarus from the Nazi invaders.” According to the law, criminal punishment could be mitigated for minors, pregnant women, people with disabilities, people with serious illnesses, yet the amnesty should not apply to people included in the lists of “extremists” or “terrorists,” as well as those convicted under a number of “political” articles, *i.e.* formally, this amnesty should not have applied to political prisoners. At the same time, human rights activists know the names of at least 18 political prisoners who were released. It is reported that 4 women and 14 men were released, including Grigory Kostusev, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Some people were released under the amnesty, some – by the personal pardon of Lukashenko.

The Council of the EU adopted another package of sanctions against Belarus

On 29 June 2024, The Council of the European Union adopted [restrictive measures](#) targeting the Belarusian economy, “in view of the regime’s involvement in Russia’s illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine.” The new sanctions [concern](#) trade, services and transport, as well as the evasion of previously imposed sanctions. The ban on the export of dual-use goods and technologies has been extended, and additional restrictions have been introduced on the export of goods that contribute to strengthening the industrial potential of Belarus, the export of goods and technologies for maritime shipping, and luxury goods. In addition, the import of gold, diamonds, helium, coal and crude oil from Belarus is prohibited. The provision of accounting, auditing, consulting, architectural and engineering services to the authorities and state institutions of Belarus is prohibited. Services in the field of IT, law, advertising, and sociological research are also prohibited. At the same time, the ban on the transportation of goods on vehicles with Belarusian license plates has been expanded.

Increase in the number of *in absentia* sentences

On 1 July 2024, the Minsk Regional Court [handed down *in absentia* verdicts](#) against 20 representatives of Belarusian civil society, who were called “Tsikhanouskaya’ analysts” in government reports: analysts Ryhor Astapena and Lesya Rudnik, political scientists Pavel Usov and Andrei Kazakevich, politicians Aleksandr Dobrovolsky and Anna Krasulina, journalists Yury Drakokhrust and Anna Lyubakova, as well as a number of other activists. They were sentenced to imprisonment from 10 to 11.5 years on charges of “inciting enmity,” “conspiracy,” “calls to harm national security,” “joining an extremist formation” under Articles 130, 357, 361, and 361-1 of the Criminal Code.

On 8 July 2024, Brest Regional Court [sentenced](#) activists Olga Karach, Vadim Dmitrenok, politicians Veronika Tsepka, Anatoly Kotov, and Yevgeny Vilsky to 12 years in prison *in absentia* on charges of “conspiracy,” “leading an extremist formation,” and “aiding extremist activity” under Articles 357, 361-1, and 361-4 of the Criminal Code. They were also given fines totaling about \$650,000 as additional punishment.

Arrests for communicating with Belarusian units fighting in Ukraine

During the analyzed period, there has been an increase in the number of cases of using Article 361-3 of the Criminal Code (“participation in an armed conflict on the territory of a foreign state or preparation of persons for such participation”) to prosecute people accused of communications with the Kalinovsky Regiment and other Belarusian units that are part of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). Criminal cases have been initiated in this context against police cadet [Ilya Naryshkin](#), Mogilev blogger [Ales Sobolevsky](#), and [journalist Yevgeny Glushkov](#). Detentions for material donations to the AFU and Belarusian units that are part of them also [continue](#).

Mass punishments of political prisoners for “malicious disobedience”

The practice of punishing political prisoners under Article 411 of the Criminal Code (“malicious disobedience to the requirements of the administration of a correctional institution”) is expanding. The article is commonly used to put pressure on political prisoners, tighten the conditions in places of detention, and lengthen prison sentences. During the analyzed period, information surfaced that a third in a row criminal case has been initiated under this article against political prisoners [Nikita Zolotarev](#) and [Timur Rizapur](#). Moreover, political activist [Eduard Babariko's](#) prison term was extended by 1.5 years under this article.

Foreigners continue to be tried for “intelligence activities”

On 8 July 2024, information surfaced that the Brest Regional Court sentenced Polish citizen [Tomasz Beroz](#) to 14 years in prison on charges of “espionage” and “intelligence activities” under Articles 358 and 358-1 of the Criminal Code. Traditionally, such cases are heard behind closed doors, which is why the essence of the charges remains unknown. Human rights activists know of three Polish citizens convicted in Belarus on politically motivated charges.

Criminal prosecution for transfers to political prisoners

Security forces continue their campaign of mass persecution of people who support political prisoners or collaborate with human rights organizations in the Brest region. On 2 July 2024, information surfaced that Brest resident [Irina Bondarenko](#) was accused of “aiding extremist activity” under Article 361-4 of the Criminal Code for transferring small amounts of money to political prisoners and carrying packages to Brest Pretrial Detention Center No. 7. It is the [second criminal case](#) for supporting political prisoners with money transfers documented recently. At the same time, money transfers to prisoners remain completely legal under Belarusian legislation.

Political prisoners

The total number of political prisoners in Belarus is [1403](#). The number continues to grow daily. As of 12 July 2024, our colleague [Nasta Lojka](#) has been in custody [for 653 days](#).