

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.

Summary: Saturday 5 June 2021 to Friday 10 June 2021

Amendments to the Criminal Code

On 8 June 2021, Alexander Lukashenko signed a law amending the provisions of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus.¹ The key changes to the Code include:

- Taking part in an “extremist group” or “aiding extremist activities” are now crimes punishable under the Code;
- A repeated violation of the procedure for holding mass public events is now punishable under the Code;
- Public insult of a state official is now punishable under the Code;
- Public calls to conduct “unauthorised public events” are now punishable under the Code;
- Resisting the actions of law enforcement officers is now punishable under the Code;
- Owners of online resources may be held criminally responsible for spreading “false information” within a year of being held responsible for spreading “false information” under the Code of Administrative Offences; and
- The punishment for killing a police officer is increased, now punishable by up to 12 years in prison.

New politically motivated sentences

Several court hearings have taken place in Belarus, involving people arrested for taking part in peaceful protests. Some of the key developments in such cases include:

- Palina Sharenda-Panasiuk, an opposition activist in Brest, was sentenced to two years in prison for using violence against police officers and insulting them, as well as for insulting the president. She has been recognised as a political prisoner;² and
- Administrators of the Telegram channel ‘Drivers 97’ and political prisoners Dzianis Hutsin, Viktoryia Kulsha, and Hanna Vishniak, who pleaded not guilty for violating public order, were sentenced to two years and six months in a medium-security prison. Another channel administrator, Tatsiana Shkrobot – who was on bail before the trial, cooperated with the investigation, and pleaded guilty – was sentenced to three years of restricted freedom (a punishment also known as “home chemistry” under Belarusian law). In March, the Telegram channel they administered was blacklisted as ‘extremist’ by Belarusian authorities.³

Allegations of ill treatment in prison

¹ <https://reform.by/231369-lukashenko-podpisal-uzhestochajushhie-popravki-v-ugolovnyi-kodeks>

² <http://spring96.org/en/news/103787>

³ <http://spring96.org/en/news/103715>

After a state TV channel aired an interview with political prisoner Raman Pratasevich, several representatives of foreign states and international organisations raised concerns about his inhumane treatment in detention and the absence of fair trial guarantees.⁴ Marie Struthers, Amnesty International's Eastern Europe and Central Asia Director, noted that the “degrading and humiliating ‘interview’, showing Raman Pratasevich to be under intolerable psychological pressure, amounts to ill treatment and those behind this travesty must be held accountable.”⁵

Public figures leave the country for fear of persecution

Belarusian political analyst Artyom Shraibman left Belarus after allegations in Raman Pratasevich's interview that he was one of the coordinators of the Belarusian protests.⁶ In a Telegram post he wrote that he suspected that his house was surveilled by Belarusian authorities.⁷

Former TV presenter Dzianis Dudinskiy and his wife Katsiaryna Rayetskaya, who openly criticised the actions of Belarusian authorities and participated in peaceful protests, left the country after their apartment was searched in connection with alleged financial crimes.⁸

Political prisoners

As of 11 June 2021, the total number of political prisoners in Belarus is 477.⁹ The number continues to grow daily.

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<https://telegra.ph/Metody-izvestnye-po-vremenam-stalinskih-repressij-Evropskie-politiki-i-pravozashchitniki-o-pokazaniyah-po-TV-priznaniyah-Protas-06-05>

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<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/belarus-raman-pratasevich-forced-televised-confession-amounts-to-ill-treatment/>

⁶ <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/shraybman-pokinul-belarus-posle-intervyu-protasevicha/31291801.html>

⁷ <https://web.telegram.org/#/im?p=@shraibman>

⁸ <https://people.onliner.by/2021/06/10/denis-dudinskiy-i-katerina-raeckaya-pokinuli-stranu>

⁹ <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en>