

February 2022

REPRESSIONS

On February 27–28, at least 13 students from Minsk and Hrodna universities were detained during the anti-war protests. More information could be found in the [report](#) of Studenckaja Dumka student media, the [post](#) of Minsk State Linguistic University's telegram channel and the [post](#) of Free Professional Union of the Belarusian State University's telegram channel. It has been already known that Minsk State Linguistic University graduate Yauhen Kiyamau was [sentenced](#) to 15 days of administrative arrest.

On February 27, a reputed translator and educator, Minsk State Linguistic University graduate Volha Kalatskaya was [detained](#) in Minsk near the polling station for an anti-war poster. The court [fined](#) Volha approximately 2 thousand dollars, and she was released. Earlier, on March 24, 2021, she was sentenced to 2 years of restricted liberty (similar to house arrest) for slapping propagandist Ryhor Azaronak in the face.

On February 27, in Homiel, lecturer at Francysk Skaryna Homiel State University Ph.D. Iryna Kuchvalskaya was [sentenced](#) to 15 days of arrest for an anti-war picket.

On February 28, ex-Associate Professor at Minsk State Linguistic University, member of the Coordination Council of Bearus Natallia Dulina was [detained](#). Before she published a video with support of Ukraine. In 2020 Natallia was dismissed from the university for her protest activity.

On February 28, at least 7 students of the Belarusian State University Lyceum were detained and then released because of their minority, [Dev.by](#) reports.

Shortly before the referendum on the new Constitution the authorities initiated detentions of politically active students and professors. On February 18 riot police [detained](#) Kanstantsin Zimnitski, student of BIP (the University of Law and social-information technologies), the Free Belarusian State University Union [reported](#) the detention of Tatsiana Sinitsa, former associate professor at the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, and [Hanna Kureichyk](#), associate professor at the Faculty of Journalism (both women were sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest), security forces [searched](#) the home of Aliaksandr Aheeu, former faculty member of Mahilou State Arkadz Kuliashou University, candidate of historical

sciences, who had previously been forced to dismiss because of his civic position. Earlier, Belarusian State University's administration representatives [forced](#) students to keep a low profile during the referendum. Some students were forced to sign a document stating that they have been warned of administrative and criminal liability for participating in mass events.

On February 18, the Supreme Court [considered](#) the appeal of the political prisoner, a former student of the Belarusian State University Department of Chemistry [Artsiom Bayarski](#), against the verdict of the Minsk City Court, which sentenced him to 5 years in prison. The appeal was considered by the judicial board chaired by judge Andrei Kavalchuk who left the verdict unchanged.

Human rights defenders [recognized](#) Belarusian State Pedagogical University graduate student Anastasiya Kukharava as a political prisoner. She was detained for participating in a protest march and faced up to five years of restricted freedom or up to four years in prison.

Professor of the Department of Higher Mathematics and Mathematical Physics, member of the Expanded Coordination Council Natallia Abrashina-Zhadaeva was [dismissed](#) from Belarusian State University. The regime-controlled Belarusian State University professional union announced that the reason for the dismissal was a violation of ethics, unexcused absence at work (which happened during a KGB search at Natalya's home), and the address against the dismissals at the university. Natallia called her dismissal politically motivated and published an open [address](#) to the authorities.

Four professors of the Faculty of Law of the Belarusian State University were [dismissed](#) on political grounds: Professor Kirill Tomashevski (Doctor of Law), Associate Professor Tatyana Avdeeva (Senior Lecturer), Associate Professor Sergey Pratasavitski (Candidate of Law), Professor Yuliya Haurylchanka (Doctor of Law).

Kirill Dolgorukov, a physical education teacher who had previously served 13 days of arrest for "mentally supporting the protesters", was [forced to quit his job](#) at the Belarusian State University.

On January 19, in Masty town, solfeggio teacher Halina Tsiarentsieva [was fined](#) for reposting Belsat three years ago. Belsat media outlet has been designated as "extremist", as well as its channels in social media were recognized as "extremist formation". The security forces searched Tsiarentsieva's apartment and confiscated her computer equipment.

On February 4, philosopher Uladzimir Matskevich, who has been under arrest for more than six months on charges of “organising and preparing actions that grossly violate public order”, started a hunger strike in protest against the lawless prolonged pre-trial detention and the absence of any investigative actions against him. After 13 days of being on hunger strike Uladzimir met the investigator and noted the progress in his case. However, his demands were not fully met. The International Association of Humanities called for signing a [letter](#) to the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Republic of Belarus demanding compliance with the law in relation to Matskevich. Check the [Facebook page](#) dedicated to Uladzimir.

Belarusian State Medical University students’ telegram channel and chat [were declared](#) “extremist” upon application by the Prosecutor’s Office of the Maskouski district of Minsk.

Belarusian Students’ Association, in cooperation with the Belarusian Independent Bologna Committee, released an [annual report](#) on repressions in the Belarusian academia.

The faculty members dismissed on the KGB’s insistence [spoke](#) about layoffs at universities and their impact on the quality of education. As a rule, those subject to unfair dismissals are the best specialists whom students appreciate and love. The administration forces them to quit “voluntarily”, and in some cases, later proposes them to return but on a less transparent legal basis.

REGIME’S POLICY

On February 25, the Defense Ministry of Belarus [gathered](#) representatives of the Ministry of Education, rectors and vice-rectors of leading Belarusian universities at a military shooting range in Minsk for a weapons practice session. The participants studied small arms, as well as trained and competed in shooting.

The regime [adopted](#) a new edition of the Education Code. The [amendments](#) include compulsory secondary education for all; new rules for admission to institutions of higher and secondary specialised education; more places for students whose education is financed by future employers, as well as exemption from entry exams for some of these students; education for children in pre-trial detention centres. Experts [say](#) the new edition of the Code makes the education system even less practical and effective.

On February 10, a new Minister of Education [was appointed](#). Now, the position is held by Doctor of Chemical Sciences, Associate Professor Andrei Ivanets, who has been a member of the Council of the Republic since 2019, holding the position of Deputy Chairman of the Standing Committee for Education, Science, Culture and Social Development. Mr. Ivanets was also a representative of Lukashenka for the 2020 election.

In Belarus, under the Presidential Administration, the [Republican Council for Historical Policy is being created](#) – a permanent body that will “give recommendations on preventing and suppressing violations in the field of preserving historical memory”.

The Belarusian Students’ Association released [infographics](#) on the regime’s discrimination of the Belarusian language in education.

The state used medical students to make up for the lack of personnel for the last wave of the pandemic. Interns and students of almost all specialties were summoned to work in the health centres. Some students [were offered](#) to volunteer in medical institutions instead of working off the missed lectures. At the same time numerous educational institutions [were still ignoring](#) the epidemiological measures: mass events, mostly with people not wearing masks and keeping social distance, were held in schools in Minsk, Hrodna, Homiel, Mazyr.

The authorities are [preparing](#) a draft resolution to reform payroll calculation for music and physical education teachers in kindergartens. The resolution proposes to calculate wages based on the number of groups instead of children, which will reduce salaries and increase the workload. Teachers collect signatures against this decision and send joint letters to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, as well as to the Union of Education and Science Workers.

The Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 29 of January 17, 2022, [increased](#) prices for food in preschool and school institutions in Belarus. On average, the cost of lunches and daily meals will increase by 13%.

Astrophysicist, senior researcher at the Institute of Physics and Mathematics of the National Academy of Sciences Ivan Siutsou [described](#) the state of Belarusian science and scientific institutes. He said science is “in a coma with life support turned off”. Science workers get ridiculously low wages, with only those developing the state ideology fairly paid. Unique specialists quit, and their scientific directions in Belarus cease to exist.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

The Belarusian Students' Association strongly condemned the Russian aggression in Ukraine on behalf of the Belarusian students' community. "We express solidarity with Ukrainian students, soldiers, and volunteers. We urge all Belarusians, as well as other student unions, to show solidarity with Ukraine", the Association's statement [says](#).

The 10th [International Congress of Belarusian Studies](#), which will be held in Kaunas (Lithuania), has announced the call for fully-formed panels. Panels are intended to generate lively discussions on specific research problems or present findings within specific disciplines or research fields. The committee welcomes submissions from individuals and organisations. Applications are accepted until March 20, 2022.

The annual [London Conference on Belarusian Studies](#) took place on February 18–19. The conference serves as a multidisciplinary forum of Belarusian studies in the West and offers a rare networking opportunity for researchers of Belarus.

On February 21, the opposition leader Pavel Latushka held a nationwide [dictation](#) in Belarusian dedicated to International Mother Language Day. On the same occasion the Volnaja Mova initiative held the MOVA24 [marathon](#) of speaking in Belarusian with 58 presenters and 1000 participants from many countries.

Belarusian Students' Association and Youth Bloc announced a course of [zoom-lectures on the Belarusian language](#) for everyone, "8 steps to promote Belarusian!". The lectures will be given by graduates of the Belarusian State University Faculty of Philology of Belarusian State University Ales Minau and Liliya Gusarava.

You can now [subscribe](#) to "A Short History of Belarus" by Doctor of Historical Sciences Ales Krautsevich. "The book was written <...> to let every Belarusian clearly and logically retell our great and glorious history in 10 minutes", notes one of the initiators of the subscription, Hleb Labadzenka.

The Flying University has [released a video course](#), «PR: how to build communication in public space». The course is designed by Iryna Sidorskaya, Doctor of Philology, teacher, and expert in the field of strategic communications. The course aims to help people promote their ideas and projects, introduce them to the audience, media, partners, and sponsors.

Teacher Siarhei Alsheuski [reviewed](#) the inconsistencies in the new edition of the Education Code. Siarhei is known as the author of the “People’s Textbook” project and the former director of the “Press Club Belarus”. In 2020–2021, he spent more than six months under arrest on charges of “tax evasion”.

Viktar Malyshts, a teacher of astronomy and physics who works with students participating in competitions, [shared](#) his impressions of the mood among the talented Belarusian students. He said they follow the competitions in Russia, know the details of admission and study in Poland, learn the Czech language, and send motivational letters to American universities. Almost none of them even think about staying in Belarus.

EDUCATIONAL REFORM DEVELOPMENT

On February 10, the Office of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, in cooperation with the platform of the Belarusian expert community «Ideas Bank», held a discussion in Vilnius at the site of the European Humanities University on the topic of the [post-Soviet education system and its possible alternatives](#). Head of the Division for Strategic Programs of the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science Ričardas Ališauskas and education consultant, researcher, teacher Eglė Pranckūnienė shared their country’s experience in reforming higher and secondary education.

On February 17, the “Belarusian Education on the Path of Change” program held an online [meeting](#) on educational inequality in Belarus. The meeting was joined by Master of Pedagogy and author of educational projects Dzmitry Makarchuk, a specialist on educational inequality in the international organisation “Teach for All” Anastasiya Baicharava, and mathematics teacher Tatsiana Karpynevich.

The “Belarusian Education on the Way of Change” project held a discussion on Business Education. Businessman Aliaksandr Knyrovich and expert in education management Sviatlana Matskevich joined it. The [video](#) of the discussion could be found on the youtube-channel of the project.