

April 2022

REPRESSIONS

Human rights defenders [recognized](#) political scientist and literary scholar Aliaksandr Fiaduta as a political prisoner. He was detained on April 12, 2021, and charged under Art. 357 of the Criminal Code (Conspiracy to seize power in an unconstitutional way).

On April 12, the court in Minsk [sentenced](#) the vice-principal of a Minsk gymnasium Sviatlana Khromava and her daughter Jana to 2 years in a medium-security penal colony each. Judge Maryna Klimuk found them guilty under Art. 342 of the Criminal Code (“Organization and preparation of actions that grossly violate public order”). Sviatlana and Jana were accused of participating in three protest rallies in 2020.

Ryta Zotava, a student of Homiel State University, was [sentenced](#) to 2 years in a medium-security penal colony for distributing protest leaflets, despite significant contradictions in the prosecution’s statements and the lack of evidence. Initially, the police report on Ryta and her friends was written by their school principal Volha Tsalko.

Former teacher Iryna Abdukeryna was [detained](#) in Chojniki for sharing information about the movement of Russian troops with the BIELARUSKI HAJUN monitoring project, designated by the regime as extremist. A video recorded by the security forces and published in a pro-regime source claims that criminal cases were opened against Iryna under Art. 361-1 of the Criminal Code on promoting extremist activities and Art. 361-4 on participation in an extremist formation.

Anastasiya Navasadszkaya, a Faculty of Biology student at Belarusian State University, was [detained](#) in Minsk on April 12. In a video shared by the security forces, the girl testifies against herself, claiming that she had participated in a student protest and blocked the traffic. She is charged with Art. 342 of the Criminal Code (“Organization or active participation in group actions that grossly violate public order”).

Riot police [detained](#) Dzmitry Zhuk, a senior lecturer at the Department of Economics and Marketing at Belarusian State Technical University when he was on

his way to the university. Another person, whose identity is not known yet, was detained in BSTU during classes, allegedly on charges of terrorism financing.

Natallia Dulina, a former associate professor at Minsk State Linguistic University, a well-known teacher, and a member of the Coordination Council was detained yet again for her civic position. On April 26, the court in Minsk found her guilty of distributing extremist materials (Art. 19.11 of the Administrative Code) and [sentenced](#) her to 15 days of administrative arrest.

Aliaksandr Butenka, a surgery professor at Barysau Medical College, was [detained](#), his house was searched, and his location yet unknown. Presumably, he was detained for expressing his anti-war position and following “extremist” Telegram channels.

On March 30, a second-year student of the Faculty of Radio Engineering and Electronics was [detained](#) right during classes at Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics.

[Maryna Hlazava](#), an English and Polish teacher from Brest, convicted in the so-called “[dancing protests](#)” case, innocently [served](#) her sentence and is now free after 18 months of “home imprisonment”.

Academician Aliaksandr Lukashanets was [fired](#) from the Jakub Kolas Institute of Linguistics of the National Academy of Sciences. Aliaksandr had taken part in recording a scientists’ [video address](#) against violence following the 2020 elections.

In the National Historical Archives of Belarus, Director Dzmitry Yatsevich and deputy director for science Dzianis Liseichykau were [fired](#). Both are major specialists in Belarusian history and experienced managers. Dzmitry Yatsevich’s employment contract was not extended, Dzianis Liseichykau quit voluntarily.

Aliaksandr Danilevich, Ph.D. in Law, associate professor, was [fired](#) from Belarusian State University after 20 years of work at the Faculty of International Relations. The university did not renew his employment contract. Mr. Danilevich says the reason for his dismissal was his civic position.

Belarusian State University [dismissed](#) Siarhei Mauchan, a Belarusian-speaking instructor in the Department of Physical Education and Sports.

A teacher of Russian language and literature Aksana Chachotkina was [fired](#) from a school in Homiel after a 10-grade student reported her to the school administration for anti-war statements. The teacher was forced to quit a month before the end of the school year.

Three students of Minsk College of Architecture and Construction were [detained](#) because of the “opposition” videos they had recorded and published on TikTok. Security forces published a video featuring one of the girls “apologizing” for the TikTok post and claimed that the girls had participated in the 2020 protests. They were released.

The court in Minsk recognized the Telegram channel of Belarus State Economic University activists as [extremist](#).

REGIME'S POLICY

At a meeting with the government, Lukashenka [demanded](#) strict discipline in the education system. He urged the Minister of Education to redo the textbooks for school students. One of his orders was to toughen the regulations for teachers and fire those who are not willing to take on extra responsibilities beyond teaching: “Make them understand what school is all about”.

The General Prosecutor's Office, after a special inspection, [reported](#) a number of violations in the content of school textbooks: “The texts in some textbooks are overloaded with excessive scientific information. Errors and misprints are not corrected”.

The authorities are planning to broaden patriotic education at schools by repurposing school time on Saturdays. Earlier, Saturday was a 6th, additional school day, intended for a “creative group work”. Now, the Ministry of Education of Belarus is going to “revise” this approach, Education Minister Andrei Ivanets [announced](#).

The new school year will mark Lithuanian-language teaching [discontinued](#) in Lithuanian schools in Belarus as all national minority schools will have to switch to Russian or Belarusian according to the newly amended Law on Education. Lithuanian diplomats notified the Belarusian government about the unacceptability of the decision, as it violates bilateral agreements and violates the right of the Lithuanians of Belarus to study in their native language. However, the Belarusian

side said it will not change the decision, after which the Lithuanian authorities requested a transitional period.

The school administration of Hrodna and Vaukavysk Polish schools informed the students' parents that the [learning](#) from the next academic year will be in Russian or Belarusian according to the new Law on Education.

The Belarusian State University Faculty of Journalism [will not enroll](#) for fee-based studies in television, print, and web journalism this year. These majors are strongly linked to state propaganda. Students' enrollment will be paid from the state budget, which means they will have to work for a state institution for at least two years after graduation. The dean's office refused to explain the reasons for the changes.

Belarusian State University [lost](#) 30 positions in the 2022-23 ranking of the world's best universities compiled by the Center for World University Ranking (CWUR) and now takes only the 811th place. The ranking evaluates universities on such [indicators](#) as the quality of education, employment of graduates, quality of staff, and research performance.

The Law Faculty of Belarusian State University [organized](#) a meeting for students timed to the Day of Unity of the Peoples of Belarus and Russia. The event was hosted by Hanna Bakun, deputy dean for educational work, known for her active participation in repressions against students involved in social activism.

A school in the Belarusian town Vierchniadvinsk held a Career Day event, at which riot police officers showed a [performance](#) for the students, demonstrating hand-to-hand combat techniques and team physical exercises, teaching the children to handle weapons, and singing guitar-strumming songs. After the performance, some students expressed their desire to pursue a career in the police.

Police officers [visited](#) a Homiel school to teach junior students to hold police batons and shields.

Students of a school and a kindergarten in the Homiel Region were [used](#) to record propaganda videos for the Day of Unity of the Peoples of Belarus and Russia. Children in light clothing were forced to wave flags in the middle of a plain in cold weather, utter memorized ideological cliches, and participate in a photoshoot with militaristic attributes.

Iryna Drozd, the principal of a school in Minsk, previously caught in election fraud, [held](#) an ideological talk with the school students. Following the talk, the children were forced to watch a Russian military film. Ms. Drozd told the children about nazism and genocide in the modern world, “the holiday of unity of the peoples of Belarus and Russia”, and the activities of the Peace Foundation. The latter is a pro-regime organization engaged in forced fundraising from the workers of Belarusian enterprises.

Belarusian parents shared how teachers at schools try to [shape](#) their children’s perception of the war in Ukraine. Teachers “emphasize the similarities between Nazi Germany and today’s Ukraine”, claim that “they have to check the students’ social media accounts”, and say that “Ukraine attacked itself”.

SANCTIONS IMPOSED ON BELARUS

The European Higher Education Area representatives [urged](#) all the Bologna Process member states to suspend communication and cooperation with state institutions in Russia and “all other countries that actively support the Russian invasion of Ukraine”. Ukrainian Education Minister Serhiy Shkarlet [claims](#) the statement also applies to Belarus. However, Maksim Zafranski, a representative of the Belarusian Students’ Association, [commenting](#) on the decision, stressed that “suspend communication and cooperation” does not equal exclusion of Belarus from the Bologna Process: “For Belarusian students and teachers, the situation has not changed at all”.

The Ukrainian government [denounced](#) the agreements with Belarus on mutual recognition and equivalence of documents on education and academic titles, as well as on cooperation in attestation of top-qualification scientific and pedagogical personnel. The countries’ agreement on cooperation in science and technology was also denounced.

The US imposed [visa restrictions](#) on 17 Belarusian individuals responsible for repressions in Belarus. Their names are not disclosed, though the State Department announced that specific individuals include officials from universities responsible for the expulsion of students who took part in peaceful pro-democracy protests.

The European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) [suspends](#) cooperation with research centers in Belarus and Russia in view of Russia’s military aggression against

Ukraine. CERN will not conclude new contracts with representatives of scientific institutions in these countries.

Tallinn University [refused](#) to accept students from Russia and Belarus in the new academic year, except for those with a residence permit, long-term visa, or refugee status granted by an EU member state. Prior to that, two other Estonian universities, the University of Tartu and Tallinn Technical University, made similar decisions.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

In view of the coming trial of philosopher Uladzimir Matskevich, the academic community made an [appeal](#) to the Supreme Court and Minsk City Court. The appeal stresses the contradictions in charges, seen in the public records on Matskevich's case, and notes that the trial must be open and fair. You can [sign](#) the appeal. Belarusian activists launched a [Telegram channel](#) to share study abroad opportunities: scholarships, internships, grants, contests, and much more.

The Belarusian Helsinki Committee, liquidated by the regime, [launched](#) an anonymous survey for school students and their parents to collect data on violations of children's rights in Belarus.

Belarusian Independent Bologna Committee [assessed](#) the project on the modernization of higher education in Belarus, implemented by the Ministry of Education using the funds of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (100 million euros). The experts noted insufficient transparency of the project for the general public and the delay in the project implementation. Stakeholders are selectively involved in decision-making, with deans participating but faculty members and students not. The discussions are one-sided in nature, as only certain elements of the project are tabled for discussion. The project lacks transparent reporting, and public participation is limited to receiving updates on the implementation.

On April 8, scholars in the humanities and social sciences launched the [anti-war marathon](#) "What should we talk about to end the war in Ukraine?". The marathon is a series of online discussions with civic activists, politicians, and journalists from different countries. The [first discussion](#) was held at the European Humanities University, the [second](#) at Stony Brook University.

The Dzikaje Paliavanne YouTube channel released an [investigation](#) into the activities and evil methods of several KGB-linked pro-rectors and members of staff at the largest Belarusian universities: Dzmitry Sinelnikau (Belarusian State Medical University), Andrei Basko (Brest State Technical University), Aliaksei Biazzubik (Hrodna State University), Yaraslau Cherkassky (Belarusian State University), Henadz Seleikovich (Minsk State Linguistic University), Aleh Laurenka (Belarus State Economic University), Ihar Azarau (Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics).

Tatiana Shchytsova, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's Representative on Education and Science, joined a Euroradio live stream to [speak](#) on repressions in Belarusian universities and the anti-war marathon launched by scientists from around the globe.

Tamara Matskevich, a representative of the Belarusian School Association liquidated by the regime, [spoke](#) on the need for a deep revision of teaching Russian literature in Belarusian schools with regard to the events in Ukraine: "A teacher or parents should ask children: Why is a fictitious character an invader?".

Roza Turarbekava, a former assistant professor at the Faculty of International Relations who had worked at Belarusian State University for more than 20 years, [commented](#) on the new wave of dismissals and pressure on staff at her Faculty. She said the administration is ruining the Belarusian school of international affairs, hereby destroying Belarus' sovereignty and independence. "This is treason, that's what it is".