

June 2022

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REPRESSIONS

Philosopher Uladzimir Matskevich [was convicted](#) of 5 years imprisonment in a strict regime colony. During a closed trial, Judge Siarhei Yepihau found Uladzimir guilty of organising and preparing actions that flagrantly violated public order, creating and leading an extremist formation (the [“Skhod» platform](#)) and insulting Aliaksandr Lukashenka.

A former head of HUBAZIK (The Main Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption), Aliaksandr Parshyn, known for his active participation in mass repressions against Belarusian citizens, [shot](#) a 16-year-old schoolboy in the leg with a pistol trying to get him and his company out of the entrance of an apartment building. The boy has already had two operations and a criminal case under Art. 339 of the Criminal Code (“Hooliganism”) has been initiated against him. His family and witnesses of the incident are currently under psychological pressure.

On 24 June, [the trial](#) of Danuta Perednya, a 20-year-old student of the Mahiliou State A. Kuliashou University commenced. She was detained on 28 February for reposting a publication criticising the aggressive actions of the Russian and Belarusian authorities against Ukraine and calling for street protests. This is why the KGB put Danuta on the list of “persons involved in the terrorist activities”. According to the charge, she might face up to 12 years of imprisonment. Immediately after her detention, the university administration expelled her from the university, despite her high academic performance and the positive characteristics of her professors. On 28 June, Danuta [was recognised](#) as a political prisoner.

Tatsiana Vadalazhskaya, social scientist and coordinator of the Flying University, was [sentenced](#) to 2.5 years of restricted freedom under Article 342-1 of the Criminal Code (“Organization of actions that grossly violate public order or active participation in them”) and was released in the courtroom before the sentence came into force. Tatsiana’s sentence was passed by the judge of the Zavodski district of Minsk Aleh Kaliada.

On 22–23 June, several detentions of Belarusian State University professors and staff members were reported. Among the Institute of Business professors, Maksim Maroz, a senior lecturer in the department of business administration, [was detained](#) under “Investigation of cases of extremism”, and Aliaksandr Khval, a lecturer in the department of business administration, [was detained](#) as well. Among the employees of other faculties, Dzmitry Maroz, associate professor of the Criminal Law Department of BSU Law Faculty, [was detained](#) for allegedly subscribing to the “extremist” Telegram channels. Elena Saladukha, a senior lab assistant in the Biology Department of BSU [is to be brought to administrative charges](#) for managing a Telegram chat of a local community and subscribing to “extremist” Telegram channels.

Two sisters, Yana and Tatsiana Barysevichs, were [sentenced](#) to restricted freedom for participating in protests in 2020. Yana is a student of biological faculty of Belarusian State University, Tatsiana is a student of music college. Judge of Zavadski district of Minsk Aleh Kaliada sentenced the girls to 2.5 and 3 years of restricted freedom respectively, finding them guilty of violating Article 342-1 of the Criminal Code.

School student Yelisey Kuzniatsou from the Belarusian town Zhabinka, arrested on April 20, 2020 and sentenced to 2.5 years in prison for allegedly throwing a Molotov cocktail at a police car during the 2020 protests, was [transferred](#) from an open correctional facility to a penal colony.

The court [obliged](#) the graduate of Brest professional lyceum of builders, political prisoner Yakau Shafarenka to compensate the tuition fees in the amount of 3,605 rubles (1,315 euros) since he won't be allocated to an obligatory workplace due to serving a 5.5-year term in prison for participation in the protests.

Natallia Dulina, Italian language teacher, member of the Coordination Council of Belarus and former associate professor at Minsk State Linguistic University, was [detained](#) again. She was sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest under Article 19.1 of the Code of Administrative Offenses for disorderly conduct. Since 2020, when Natallia supported the university strike, she has been detained multiple times, being sentenced each time to administrative arrest.

On 23 June, a former teacher Elena Putsykovich [was detained](#) in Ivanava. She had previously been sentenced to two years of house arrest for reposting information about the police officers. Contact with her was lost after she went to register herself at the police department.

On 7–22 June (the date is being specified), Aliaksandr Harhun, a student of the computer systems and networks department of Belarusian State University, [was detained](#). It is known that he is a second-year student in the Computer Machines, Systems and Networks Department. The security forces [detained](#) an underage high school student and forced him to record a so-called “penitential video”. It is alleged that he wrote 604 insulting comments and will be interrogated on 25 August in several criminal cases related to insults and incitement of hatred.

On 13 June Aliena Zubrova, a school history teacher from Navapolatsk, was [detained](#). According to human rights activists, the reason for the detention was a repost on social networks. The court [sentenced](#) the woman to a 15-day arrest under Article 19.11 of the Code of Administrative Offences (distribution of extremist materials).

Palina Shynkevich, a 21-year-old law student at Belarusian State University, was [detained](#), presumably on 1 June. Pro-regime Telegram channels accused her of signing up for the [Peramoga Plan](#) and participating in a protest in 2020. The student [was sentenced](#) to 13 days of administrative detention and [released](#) after serving her sentence.

Presumably, on 20 June, Pavel Pahoski, a Belarusian State Technological University student [was detained](#) for posting a video of a “suspicious nature” on the Internet. Pavel is known to have been posting videos on Tik-Tok.

The first of the defendants in the “[students’ case](#)”, Hleb Fitzner, was [released](#). He became the first political prisoner in the case and was illegally sentenced to 2 years imprisonment under Article 342 of the Criminal Code (“Organization of actions that grossly violate public order or active participation in them”). Hleb was detained on November 12, 2020.

It [has been informed](#) about one more dismissal at the Academy of Sciences of Belarus. The director of the Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences, Doctor of History Aliaksandr Hrusha, has been dismissed since 1 July. He is fired despite a new contract signed six months ago. Archaeologists Mikalai Plavinski and Vadzim Koshman are also likely to be dismissed.

The court of the Central district of Minsk [recognised](#) the [Solidarity of BSPU](#) (Belarusian State Pedagogical University) Telegram channel as extremist.

Belarusian human rights defenders [recognized](#) Ivan Ibrahimau, a fourth-year student of the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics, as a political prisoner. The young man was detained on April 28, 2022 as part of a criminal case on group actions grossly violating public order (Article 342 of the Criminal Code).

On May 21, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention sent to the Belarusian authorities its [opinion](#) on the complaint filed by the lawyers of the renowned lawyer and lecturer at the Law Faculty of Belarusian State University Maksim Znak: the detention and custody of Maksim Znak had no legal grounds, and he must be immediately released.

REGIME'S POLICY

[New curriculum](#) for schools will now have to be approved by eight agencies (previously by two), six of which are state security, defense and law enforcement structures: the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Emergency Situations, Investigative Committee, State Border Committee, and State Forensic Examinations Committee. The 2022 curriculum approved according to this procedure includes some changes, such as a reduction in the number of hours for foreign language studies in the upper grades.

According to a new statement by minister of education Andrei Ivanets, a number of new measures to enhance control over children and their “patriotic education” [will soon be applied](#) in Belarusian schools and kindergartens, such as regular compulsory rallies with solemn carrying out of the red-green flag and listening to the national anthem, compulsory uniform of an established pattern, and ban on the use of mobile phones. The official said the anthem will also be compulsorily played in summer recreation camps.

The Ministry of Education has published [regulations](#) on the teachers’ ethics in schools that mandate the exploitation of the educational process for political purposes and violate the constitutional right to freedom of conscience. The rules “to implement state policy in education” and “to be honest, sincere and fair” contradict each other.

The administration of Vicebsk State Medical University [did not answer](#) journalists’ questions about the proceedings against a professor who, according to testimonies

of female students, was engaged in sexual harassment. Therefore, it remains unknown whether he will be suspended from conducting lectures or will continue working at the university.

During his visit to Polatsk, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia [claimed](#) that the Church has to cooperate more closely with the education system, since children are now under the influence of an aggressive flow of information.

After conducting “n-depth research”, the Prosecutor General’s Office and the Ministry of Education [have discussed](#) the possibility of adding a new course in universities covering the Genocide of the Belarusian People during the Great Patriotic War.

During a visit to the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences, Prime Minister Raman Halouchanka [demanded](#) that Belarusian academics find the historical location of ancient Minsk in order to immortalize the site ahead of the city’s “imminent anniversary” in 2067.

Officials of Republic Gymnasium-College at the Belarusian State Academy of Music [massively dismiss](#) highly qualified teachers, such as Uladzimir Perlin, Alla Mazurova, Siarhei Tumarkin, and others. All in all, they plan to fire more than 20 teachers due to their “reaching the retirement age” or the employer’s unwillingness to prolong the contracts.

During a public demonstrational conversation with an employee of the “Yubileyny” agricultural factory in the Orsha region about the price, availability and the range of school uniforms designed by the government, Aliaksandr Lukashenka promised “a great variety” and that he will personally take up this issue.

The head of the Prosecutor General’s Office, Andrei Shved, [shared](#) how prosecutors visited kindergartens to initiate ceremonies celebrating the national flag and anthem, and announced that following the initiative of the Prosecutor’s Office, children will start wearing school uniforms: “We raise even the issues that may not be directly related to prosecutorial matters”.

Preschool children from kindergarten No. 3 in the town Ashmiany [were involved](#) in the production of a “patriotic” choreographic show, which, as reflected by the [song](#) used for the show, tells about the sending of Jews to a concentration camp.

A “patriotic flash mob” [was held](#) in kindergarten No. 1 in Dobrush: a group of children was forced to walk through the kindergarten with a red and green cloth representing the national flag.

In Dobrush, during the holidays, pupils from school No. 2 [visited](#) the local police department as part of the “Police – closer to children” campaign to try on police uniforms, including shields and batons.

On 16 June, at a meeting with the Minister of Education Andrei Ivanets and the Minister of Health Dzmitry Pinevich, the rector of the Belarusian State University Andrei Karol and the dean of the Faculty of Biology of Belarusian State University Vadzim Dziamidchyk in the Independence Palace, Aliaksandr Lukashenka [expressed](#) his concern about the way the Centralized Testing functions today and suggested that it would be necessary to reform it: “Something should be cooked by the end of the year”. It was also recommended to set up a special small group of researchers in biology and medicine formed from the selected students. It is known that his son, Mikalai Lukashenka is among potential current applicants at Belarusian State University.

Telegram channels shared [evidence](#) of forced labor of underage students in the Rechytsa agrarian lyceum, conducted in violation of safety rules, as well as of the lack of proper training in the special field at this educational institution.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs [stated](#) that police and emergency response teams will be on duty during graduation night in the schools and their surroundings, and all attendees will be subjected to the belongings inspection. All places of entertainment working during this night will also be subject to intensified surveillance.

Two graduates – a journalist and an IT student – shared their [stories](#) of refusing compulsory postgraduate work assignments and dealing with universities that demanded tuition fees: one said “you shouldn’t pay such big money to the state now”, and the other said her family is struggling to save about 30% of their income to pay.

SANCTIONS

The [suspension](#) of Belarus’ participation in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has come into effect: the organizers notified the Belarusian side

about the cancellation of previously planned tests of Belarusian schoolchildren. Belarusian teachers assessed the consequences for Belarusian secondary education of cancelling the tests and, in general, participation in the program. They said that now, having no access to testing at all, the Ministry of Education can only make decisions like the infamous one of introducing the post of a deputy principal on patriotic education.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

A man in St. Petersburg [held](#) a solitary picket near the Belarusian embassy in support of Sofia Sapega, a European Humanities University student and companion of Raman Pratasevich, who was detained with him and sentenced to six years in prison.

On 16–17 June at the European Humanities University (Vilnius), a [conference](#) “Towards Education Reform in the New Belarus” was held, organised by the Office of Sviatlana Tikhanouskaya, the Belarusian Education on the Path of Change program and the Ideas Bank, a Belarusian expert community platform. Within the framework of the conference, the following experts in the field of education and entrepreneurship presented their vision of the current state of the Belarusian educational system and necessary reforms: Roza Turarbekava, PhD. in History, representative of the Free Trade Union of Belarusian State University; Pavel Teriashkovich, PhD. in History, expert of the Belarusian Independent Bologna Committee; Maksim Bahratsou, IT-entrepreneur; Siarhei Khareuski, art critic and European Humanities University lecturer; Sviatlana Matskevich, independent expert on education, representative of the Belarusian Education on the Path of Change program. The recordings of the speeches from the [first](#) and [second](#) days of the conference are published on the channel “Ideas Bank. Reforms for Belarus”.

The “Flying University” [invites](#) all whose right to work has been violated for political reasons in any form: dismissal, disbarment, loss of job due to the liquidation of the organisation to take part in the study and fill in an anonymous questionnaire. The research aims to record as thoroughly as possible the scale and conditions of politically motivated dismissals in Belarus.

The New Belarus public platform [shared](#) the results of the study “Institutional Autonomy and Self-Governance in Educational Institutions of Belarus, Russia and European Countries”. The experts assessed the level of autonomy of Belarusian

secondary and higher education institutions based on the analysis of the current regulations, including the new version of the Education Code. The study points out that the vague wording of the current regulatory documents does not promote understanding of the real picture of the institutions' management. However, when analyzed, it becomes clear that the staff of secondary education institutions and parent committees do not participate in electing their own management, while candidates for the position of principal are reviewed by the Department of Internal Affairs. Staff participation in their institutions' decision-making is also limited in such areas as: issuing orders and signing contracts, selecting uniforms and methods of teaching and education, using the money earned by employees through provision of paid services by the institution. All this turns school management into an "exclusively state prerogative", giving self-governance a "solely declarative nature". In higher education institutions, there are restrictions on the participation of the staff in deciding on the duration of the contract to be signed with the workers, the launch of new and the content of already functioning educational programs, the establishment of the language of instruction, the admission plans for students, and the choice of an agency to control the quality of education.

Natalia Dulina, a well-known Italian language lecturer and former associate professor at the Minsk State Linguistic University, was released after another administrative detention and [talked](#) in an interview about the weakness of law enforcers, the power of irony, details of her latest arrest and the reason why she is not leaving Belarus: "I think it is their problem — they ill-behave in an unscrupulous way".

Tatsiana Vadalazhskaya, a social scientist and coordinator of "Flying University", spoke in [an interview](#) about the conditions in which she spent several months in pre-trial detention, her reaction to the sentence and the political prisoners' attitude: "many of those who joined the protest movement in 2020 thought it would be easier".

Historian, anthropologist and expert on education Pavel Tserashkovich discussed in an [interview](#) the education in modern Belarus: "Uniforms, the introduction of military training in schools – all this shows that militarization is the main stake. We know that to kill another human you first have to kill a human in yourself. The education system teaches you to do that".

Tatiana Shchytsova, a philosopher and Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's Representative on Education and Science, [explained](#) the threats behind the Education Minister's

decision to introduce regular playing of the national anthem and raising of the flag at schools: “An instrument of manipulation aimed at making people show commitment to a very particular state order”.

Pavel Barkouski, a former lecturer of Belarusian State University, commented in an [interview](#) on the exclusion of Belarus from the Bologna Process: “This is an expected result of the chosen strategy in the sphere of education that we have been observing for the last 20 years. The Belarusian educational space is totally dependent on the government”.