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REPRESSIONS

On 3 October, Natalia Dulina, a former Associate Professor at Minsk State Linguistic University and a well-known teacher of the Italian language, who was previously fired from the university for taking part in the protests, [was detained](#). A criminal case under Article 342 of the Criminal Code was initiated against her for “blocking the roadway” during the 2020 protest marches, as well as for registering in [the plan “Peramoha”](#) and an interview for “Euroradio”, which is recognized as “extremist” by the Belarusian regime. It is Dulina’s sixth detention for her participation in the protests.

Anna Tukova, who [was detained](#) on 1 September at a school assembly in Novopolotsk for protesting militarism, [went on trial](#) for the third time. She was accused of posting an image of the Ukrainian flag on her closed Instagram page, which was qualified as an illegal “picketing”. The judge Zinaida Balabolova convicted Tukova for violating Article 23.34 of the Code of Administrative Offences and awarded her a fine of 100 basic units. Taking into account the previous fines awarded after her detention, the woman will have to pay a total of 7360 rubles.

In October, the KGB [included](#) a political prisoner Andrei Petrovsky in the list of persons “involved in extremist activities”. Petrovsky worked as a History and Social Science teacher in schools and the gymnasium in Smorgon. In March 2022, the man showed the 11th graders a video “The Constitution has gone into prostitution!” On the denunciation of one of the students, he was detained and subsequently convicted for violating Part 1 of Article 367 of the Criminal Code (“defamation of the president”). The judge Lyudmila Mikhnevich sentenced Petrovsky to a year and a half in a penal colony.

On 18 October, Svetlana Silova, Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor of Grodno State University, [was detained](#) in Grodno. According to [“the Christian Vision group”](#), Silova was going to be accused of “storage and distribution of extremist materials”. On 21 October, she was released, but she was fined, her

phone was confiscated. Silova is the largest Belarusian researcher in the field of confessional history of Belarus, a member of the organizing committee of the conference dedicated to the 1030th anniversary of Orthodoxy in Belarus and the 30th anniversary of the revival of the Grodno diocese, which took place on 20 October.

In late October, a political prisoner Uladzimir Matskevich [was put](#) on the list of “extremists” by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. After the Supreme Court considered his appeal and the verdict came into force, he [was transferred](#) from Mogilev prison to Shklov colony. Earlier in this colony a political prisoner Vitold Ashurok died under unclear circumstances. Matskevich is a major Belarusian philosopher, one of the founders of the “Flying University”. In June this year he was sentenced to 5 years of imprisonment in a high security colony.

Ihar Khmara, Minsk tour guide, [was prosecuted](#) under Article 342 of the Criminal Code (“organization and preparation of actions flagrantly violating public order”). Earlier he had been detained in the street during a tour which he conducted in the Belarusian language. According to witnesses, the language appeared to be the reason for his detention.

A 19-year-old student of one of the higher educational institutions in Minsk [is going to be judged](#) for “participation in an extremist formation” (Part 3 Article 361-1 of the Criminal Code) and “promotion of extremist activities” (Part 1 Article 361-4 of the Criminal Code) for sending a video of the movement of military equipment to Telegram channel that had been recognized as “extremist” by the Belarusian authorities.

A pro-government Telegram channel [published](#) a video of a freshman of the Chemistry Faculty of Belarusian State University (his name remains unknown) in which law enforcement officers claim that in 2020 the detainee allegedly “had been walking around the streets and reposting extremist materials” and was also seen to have shown an interest in the substances used to make explosives.

On 19 October, Sviatlana Volchak (Ermakovich), a former lecturer of the Faculty of Radio Physics and Computer Technologies of Belarusian State University, [was detained](#) in Minsk. The woman was detained together with her husband Mikhail, a well-known public activist and a web developer of IT solution for volunteers. The couple’s home was searched.

Artur Khlus, a student at Grodno State Medical University, [was detained](#) by force in Grodno. In a video published in one of the pro-government channels the young man addresses Aliaksandr Azarau, Representative for the Restoration of Law and Order in the United Transitional Cabinet of Belarus, and claims that he was detained because of his participation in [the plan “Peramoha”](#).

REGIME POLICY

On 6 October, the Ministry of Education published [a regulation](#) “On higher education institutions” according to which ideological education of young people will now be a priority and mandatory for higher education institutions. Now the Ministry sets this task not only for the administration of higher education institutions and their faculties, but also for the departments. Moreover, the implementation of the regulation involves the creation of special “administrations” in educational institutions that will carry out the function of ideological education.

On 22 September, the Ministry of Education [approved](#) the “Instructions on educational work by pedagogical workers during extracurricular time with students”. According to the new document, the educational work of schoolchildren and students, which is imposed on teachers in their free time, is defined primarily as “fostering among students a sense of patriotism, citizenship and respect for the memory of the defenders of the Fatherland”.

On 3 October, Alexander Lukashenko issued [an order](#) to “mobilize everyone” for the agricultural harvest work, including school and university students. According to him, the involvement of children and young people in such work is of great educational importance.

According to the information-analytical portal [banki24.by](#), within 8 months of 2022 the difference between the number of dismissed employees of educational institutions in Belarus and the number of those hired [was](#) 17 thousand, which indicates an unprecedented large outflow of personnel in the field of education.

In Minsk, more than three dozen private schools (i.e. almost all) [have been closed down](#) following the [incident](#) near the “Smart School” and Alexander Lukashenko’s [accusations](#) against private schools. Only three private schools are still operating, the founders of at least two of them are Lukashenko’s close associates. As a result of the school closures, about two thousand children in Minsk face an urgent need

to find a new place of study. The administrations of the capital's public schools [were forced](#) to work on weekends to enroll children.

At the beginning of October, it became known that the Belarusian authorities [closed down](#) the Christian social center "The Charitable Mission Of The Good Samaritan", in which a school for children had been operating since 2018. The center and the school were institutions of the Roman Catholic Church of Belarus.

Ruslan Abramchik, a head of the Main Department of Education of Grodno Regional Executive Committee, [called](#) the actions of parents who do not want to enroll their children in public schools because of the closure of Grodno private school "an obstacle to the education of children". According to the official, this is a reason to put a family on the register of socially dangerous position.

A memorial stand of the Russian soldier Alexander Krynin, who participated in military operations against Ukraine and died on its territory in March 2022, [appeared](#) in the Children's Health Center "Zubrenok". The reason for installing the stand was that Krynin had previously rested in this camp. It is noteworthy that the stand was made according to the model and installed next to the memorial stand of Nikita Kulkonenko, the Hero of Belarus, a Belarusian pilot who died in 2021, diverting a falling plane from the residential areas of Baranovichi.

On 25 October, Belarus [suspended](#) the intergovernmental agreement with Poland on mutual recognition of equivalence of higher education diplomas, academic degrees, and degrees in art. The corresponding decree was signed by the Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko. The agreement had been in force since 2005.

On 12 October, the draft law, which among other things, reduces the grounds for deferment of military conscription for students, [was adopted](#) in its first reading. After the law enters into force, the deferment will be granted to "citizens who study abroad on a full-time basis only upon a referral from republican state administration bodies or state organizations," Hennadiy Kazakevich, the Deputy Minister of the Interior, said. According to him, the purpose of such an innovation is, among other things, "to increase the competitiveness of national education".

Two private schools in Minsk [have suspended](#) their work: "Green Hill Gymnasium" under the decision of Minsk Economic Court after the appeal of Pervomaisky District Department of Emergency Situations of Minsk City Department of Emergency Situations, and "Stembridge High School", against which the employees of Soviet

District Department of Emergency Situations of Minsk City Department of Emergency Situations had claims (their appeal was also sent to court, but the school management decided to suspend its activity independently).

The Belarusian authorities are going [to abolish](#) the charitable foundation “Viartanne”. Court proceedings will take place in Minsk City Court on 25 October. Over the years, the foundation has contributed to major cultural, scientific, educational events and the publication of the Belarusian and world literature works.

In the [Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023](#), Belarusian State University, the flagship of the Belarusian public education, was not ranked in any particular place, but together with three hundred other universities in the general category of “1500+” institutions, i.e. those ranked from 1500 to 1800.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

Alina Koushyk, the United Transitional Cabinet Representative for National Revival, and Tatiana Shchytsova, Representative on Education and Science of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office, issued a joint [statement](#) in response to [the regulation](#) “On higher education institutions” published by the Ministry of Education. The statement says that it is impossible to develop citizenship and patriotism in young people on the basis of “the ideology promoted by Lukashenko and his propagandists” and calls on teachers to limit the influence of the state ideology on students.

The European Humanities University press service [reported](#) that this year the university accepted twice as many students as last year, 70% of whom were Belarusians. It is noteworthy that the most in-demand specialty turned out to be Informatics, which was opened this year in partnership with the Belarusian IT company EPAM.

Deutsche Welle [told](#) the story of the Belarusian youth club “Supolka” in Poland, which organizes regular integration meetings for Belarusians aged 16-25. The publication also told the stories of three participants of the meetings, the Belarusian students who had left Belarus for political reasons, and whether they intended to return home.

[Free Belarusian University](#) and the Centre for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of Poland, invite students to the course “Conflicts in Eurasia: Theory and Applied Analysis”, which teaches skills in the analysis of protest movements, armed conflicts and political confrontation in the post-Soviet space, and how to work with information on the subject and conduct expert discussion. The course is taught by Roza Turarbekova, Associate Professor, PhD in History. To enroll in the course, you need [to apply](#).

Tatiana Shchytsova, Dr. habil in Philosophy, Representative on Education and Science of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office, [published](#) an author’s column about the real reasons for the conflict between private schools and Lukashenko’s regime. According to the author, relations in independent communities of private schools are built on trust and mutual support, schools cultivate “intellectual freedom, creative self-expression, open non-hierarchical communication” — everything that the regime ideologically does not accept.