

Human rights violations in Belarus 28/06-7/07

28th of June

➤ After a sitting of the political council of the United Civil Party, the police preventively detained **Mikhail Pashkevich** who has been sentenced to personal restraint within the frames of the ‘case of 14’ (the criminal case which had been brought against 14 participants of the rally of entrepreneurs held to protest against new restrictions on their work imposed by presidential decree 760). At the sitting of the political council the UCP delegated Pashkevich as its observer to the Central Electoral Commission. On 30 June Ryta Shahrai, judge of Kastychnitski district court of Minsk, considered the administrative case against Mikhail Pashkevich under article 17.1 (petty hooliganism) and sentenced him to 7 days of jail. In addition he was fined 350 000 rubles (about \$164).

➤ 3 activists of the civil campaign “European Belarus”, **Alyksandra Katok, Alyksandr Kireu and Marta Pyatrouskaya**, were detained in Hrodna.

The young people were collecting signatures in support of Belarus’ joining the EU in one of the central streets of the city, not far from the city park of Emanuel Zhyliber, where a rock-festival “Boomerang” is held.

Policemen detained activists at about 3.40 p.m. Soon after detention M. Pyatrouskaya was released, and others were taken to the police department of Leninski district of Hrodna. In a few hours they were released without a report being drawn up. The collected signatures were seized by policemen.

➤ **Yauhen Afnahel**, activist of the “European Belarus” civil campaign, one of the leaders of the Belarusian youth leaders, was sentenced to 10 days of arrest by the court of the Tsentralny district of Minsk on 28 June. Taking into account that earlier the activist had got 7 days of arrest in absentia for participating in a demonstration on 1 May, he will have to spend 17 days in a jail.

Yauhen Afnahel was detained by riot militiamen in the Minsk center on 27 June. He spent the night in the special detention center on Akrestin Street, and on 28 June judge of the Tsentralny district court of Minsk Tatsyana Paulyuchuk sentenced the activist to 10 days of arrest for “using of foul language in public”. Traditionally, this article of the Code of Administrative Offences is used to arrest oppositionists in Belarus. As usual witnesses at the trial were riot militia officers, who had detained the activist.

30th of June

➤ By its letter dated 30 June Niasvizh district executive committee prohibited the non-state newspaper *Niasvizhski Chas* to rent a premise for its correspondent station.

Bear in mind that the correspondent station has rented this office for several years. However, now the authorities start a crackdown on independent press. At first they prohibited selling *Niasvizhski Chas* at shops and newsstands. Meanwhile, the majority of the rooms in the building whether the office of the correspondent station used to be located remain empty.

➤ In the region of Kobryn in the western part of the country, **Ales Mekh**, regional chairman of the largest opposition party, the Belarusian Popular Front, was dismissed from his position at the state gas enterprise Beltransgaz.

No reasons for the dismissal were stated. Mekh worked at the enterprise as an engineer and is a candidate for the parliamentary election on the UDF ticket. Beltransgaz management had made him an offer to extend his contract should he renounce his candidacy.

➤ The journalist of Radio *Liberty* **Liubou Luniova** was fined 280 000 rubles (about 130 US dollars) for contempt of court because she had answered a telephone call during the trial of an activist of the *Young Democrats* who had been nominated to Central Election Commission by the political council of the United Civil Party.

1st of July

➤ The activist of the *Young Front* from Baranavichy **Zmitser Stankevich** was detained in the center of the city, near Lenin Square, while he was handing out leaflets with information about the political prisoner Andrei Kim. A violation report was drawn up on Stankevich. He was accused of petty hooliganism. On 1 June the activist was tried by court and sentenced to 10 days of arrest.

According to the Young Front, on 30 June four more activists of the organization were detained in Hantsavichy. **Alena Charniak and Sviatlana Zhulevich** were fined 175 000 rubles (about 82 US dollars) each. **Andrei Karavayeu and Siarhei Skipar** were sentenced to 15 days of arrest.

2nd of July

➤ **Artsyom Lastavetski**, Young Front activist from Baranavichy, who is serving 7-day arrest for handing out portraits of political prisoner Andrei Kim, was guarded to another trial from a detention center.

The court fined the Young Front activist of 40 basic unites, the young man also must compensate for damage to houses and administrative buildings. Artsyom Lastavetski was returned to the detention center after the trial, he is to be set free on 1 July, press service of the Young Front reports.

➤ **Pavel Yukhnevich**, activist of the *European Belarus* civil campaign started serve his 7-day arrest in the jail on Akrestin Street in Minsk.

The Pershamaiski district court sentenced Mr. Yukhnevich in absentia to 7-day of arrest for participation in an official demonstration of trade unions on 1 May. After the court decision was delivered, a district police officer visited Yukhnevich's apartment several times. The youth activist decided to come to the Pershamaiski district court on his own will in order he wouldn't be caught by riot police in the street, as it happened with *European Belarus* activist Yauhen Afnahel. (The youth leader was arrested for 17 days. Judge Tatsiana Pauliuchuk added 10 day of arrest for allegedly 'using of foul language' to 7 days of arrest for participation in the action on May. Traditionally, riot policemen were witnesses at the trial).

➤ Activist of the youth organisation “Civil Forum” **Artsyom Zabaryn** was taken to the Minsk mental hospital for examination after he had refused to answer questions of the KGB offices.

As Artsyom Zabaryn told to “Narodnaya Volya” , he as called to a military enlistment office to have a test there, but he was met by KGB officers in the office. “During the “test” officers asked him about my trip to Georgia, about organisations I belong to, about Kalinouski education programme... They suggested to answer their questions, in return they promised to say a commissar I didn’t study in Belarus, and so I wouldn’t be drafted,” Artsyom Zabaryn says.

According to the boy, he had been sent to have a medical examination after he refused to answer the questions. Later he was sent to a mental hospital, where a doctor asked him the same questions as KGB officers.

6 of July

➤ **Alesia Yasiuk**, activist of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party from Barysau, stated about a fact of torture towards her from the side of Minsk police. On 6 July she was detained in Bahdanovich Street in Minsk. The policemen searched her handbag and found there several stickers calling to boycott the parliamentary elections.

Then Yasiuk was taken to Tsentralny district police department of Minsk. Two persons in civvies came to the room where she was kept and brought a video camera with them. One of them tore the hair-slide out of her hair and threw her spectacles to the ground.

According to Alesia, everything was directed by the police major Anatol Shytyka. The other tore into pieces the cover of her mobile phone and scratched her right palm to blood.

Then a female police officer came to the room and started undressing Alesia. This was shot on video by the present policemen. The activist demanded that they left the room, but they ignored her words. When the three hours of legal detention were over, she demanded that she be let go. Instead the policemen started intimidating her. They said they would take her to the prison in Akrestsin Street and put in the same cell with tramps. Alesia Yasiuk was let go after six hours of detention, only when she said that she would complain to the procuracy against the unlawful actions of the police.

Tsentralny district police department of Minsk confirmed that the activist was detained on 6 July, but did not tell anything about the reasons and details. The duty policeman refused to comment on Yasiuk’s statement about tortures. He said that major Shytyka was on a short rest and would come to work only on Wednesday.

7th of July

➤ Recently the *Young Front* activist **Artsiom Lastavetski** has been informed about his expulsion from the second year of the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radio Electronics.

‘The rector, M.Batura, only said about my expulsion, there is no official order yet’, says Artsiom. ‘The formal reason for the expulsion is poor academic progress. It is quite strange, but the rector says that I am expelled because of some problems with education, which I had during the first year of study.’

Meanwhile, Mr. Lastavetski managed to pass all exams and was transferred to the second year before being informed about expulsion from the first year. The activist is sure that such repressive step of the university administration is connected to his political activities.

Bear in mind that at the end of June Artsiom was punished with 7 days of jail and fined for distributing information about the political prisoner Andrei Kim in Baranavichy.- The Tsentralny district court of Minsk found activist of the “European Belarus” civil campaign Palina Kuryanovich guilty with “hooliganism”. Militia detained her because she had a EU flag in her bag.

➤ **Palina Kuryanovich**, the activist of the “European Belarus” was detained on 3 July about 8.00 in the evening in the Minsk center by unknown people in civvies. They said they were militia officers and searched Palina’s personal belongings. Some EU flags were found in Palina Kuryanovich’s bag. The activist of the “European Belarus” was guarded to the Tsentralny district militia department and then to the jail on Akrestin Street.

On 7 of July judge Tatsyana Paulyuchuk found her guilty with “using of foul language” and sentenced her to 5 days of arrest. The judge refused to hear witnesses for the defence, based her judgement on evidence of a militiaman.

Militia officers didn’t gave any information about location of Palina. Time of a trial and an article, the activist was going to be accused of, were kept secret before the trial.