

Situation in Belarus

Recent developments

Crackdown on independent media

- Developments of events in Belarus in 2020/2021 was discussed on April 7
 - <https://www.desy.de/~rasp/Belarus.pdf>
- Since then a number of resonant events have happened
 - One of the most influential independent media portals www.tut.by, residing in Belarus, has been blocked and criminal case has been initiated by authorities on the ground of tax evasion
 - members of a state financial investigations has searched the apartment of editor-in-chief Marina Zolotova and several other employees
 - according to Marina, representatives of security agencies visited office of tut.by and her apartment

Forced landing of Ryanair flight in Belarus

- On 23 May 2021, while in Belarusian airspace, Ryanair flight 4978 from Athens to Vilnius was diverted by the Belarusian government to Minsk National Airport
 - the flight was escorted to Minsk by a Belarusian fighter jet, under the pretence of a bomb threat, on the orders of the President of Belarus
- Two passengers, Roman Protasevich (Belarusian journalist and activist in exile) and his girlfriend Sofia Sapega (citizen of Russia), were arrested
 - in summer 2020, Protasevich ran the Nexta Telegram channel together with its co-creator Stepan Putilo; the channel highlighted mass protests in Belarus
 - on 19 November, the Belarusian KGB put them on the "list of organizations and individuals involved in terrorist activities", for "igniting mass unrest"
 - Sofia Sapega was accused of breaking Belarusian law in August and September 2020. In a video released by Belarusian authorities she claimed that she was an editor of "Black Book", a Telegram channel which has published the personal information of security officials and that Belarus has classified as an extremist group

Protasevich and Sapega in captivity

- The day after the arrest, Belarusian state television released a video of Protasevich in which he stated that he would confess to organizing protests and that he did not have health problems
 - Protasevich's father said the video appeared forced and allies of Roman including exiled opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, said the video is “how Roman looks under physical and psychological pressure”
 - the authorities obstructed parents and a hired lawyer Inessa Olenskaya from visiting Roman and obtaining any information about his location and medical condition until 27 May
- On the evening of 27 May, Olenskaya was allowed to meet with Roman, but due to a non-disclosure agreement with authorities she was not allowed to tell the journalists his location and his legal status
- Sapega will remain in custody for at least two months. Sapega's mother was not allowed to visit her daughter in prison.
- On 3 June 2021, another video of Protasevich was aired by Belarus state media in which he, apparently being under the duress, reiterates his "confessions"
 - the video was uploaded by ONT on youtube
 - given its very disturbing content the campaign has been launched calling youtube to remove this video

Reaction of International Community

- On 26 May, the European Union and the EU Aviation Agency issued directives halting European airlines from flying over Belarusian airspace. On June 4, 2021, the European Union banned Belarus airlines from its airspace
- The EU announced also plans to impose punitive sanctions targeting key members of Lukashenko's government. The EU trade with Belarus state-owned firms may become subject to sanctions following agreement by EU leaders. Sanctions could hit state-owned or state-controlled fertilizer, steel, rail, refinery or petrochemical firms.
- On June 3 the US re-imposed "full blocking sanctions" against nine Belarusian state-owned enterprises, which are companies that had been previously granted sanctions relief by the US Treasury Department.
- The executive board of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) has voted to suspend Belarus's national broadcaster over "serious and quite exceptional concerns" that threaten freedom of expression and other "core values."
 - The group cited "particular alarm" at the recent "broadcast of interviews apparently obtained under duress", referring to videos with Protasevich issues by state TV company ONT

Repressions against students

- Since September 1st 2020 Belarusian Students' Association and Student Initiative Group have collected evidence of 480 detained and 154 expelled students in connection with mass protests against supposedly falsified presidential election and against violent suppression of protests [1].
 - at least 127 people received administrative punishment in the form of administrative arrest, and at least 71 people - in the form of fines
 - 49 people became suspects in criminal cases investigation
 - 43 people are in the list of police structures and their phone calls are recorded

[1] https://zbsunion.by/en/news/pressure_on_students

- We can support the repressed students! Below is the page with contact info of BSA

[2] <https://zbsunion.by/en/contacts>