



1.4. International sanctions and accountability

In February 2022, Belarus allowed Russia to use its territory as a staging ground for attacks into northern Ukraine¹¹² and has continued to provide the territorial access in the following years.¹¹³ Alongside military cooperation, Belarus maintains close political and economic ties with Russia.¹¹⁴ The Belarusian authorities rely on 'rhetoric about external threats' coming from neighbouring EU countries and Ukraine and, in 2024, portrayed its military forces activities (such as military drills near the Ukrainian border in February 2024¹¹⁵) as preparation for a potential military confrontation.¹¹⁶ On 1 April 2026, President Lukashenko stated that, in a wartime scenario, the country could potentially mobilise up to half a million people.¹¹⁷

Since 2020, Belarus has been subject to sanctions by the EU, UK, United States, and Canada in response to political repression by the Belarusian authorities. Further sanctions were imposed in 2022 due to Belarus' role in Russia's invasion of Ukraine.¹¹⁸ In December 2025, the European Council expanded the sanctions against Belarus¹¹⁹ to address hybrid activities affecting EU member states, including airspace violations over Lithuania.¹²⁰ This followed a sharp increase in such violations since 2024, including incursions by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and balloons incursions, as well as 'cyberattacks, state-sponsored disinformation campaigns' and the instrumentalisation of migration¹²¹ (notably in 2021¹²²). In February 2026, the EU extended sanctions linked to internal repression in Belarus and its support for Russia's war against Ukraine for one year, until 28 February 2027. ¹²³

In September 2024, Lithuania submitted a request to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to open an investigation into 'alleged crimes against humanity' committed since May 2020 by 'senior Belarusian political, law enforcement, and military leaders' against the Belarusian 'civilian population' in Belarus and Lithuania.¹²⁴ In March 2026, the ICC opened such an investigation stating that there was 'a reasonable basis to believe' that the Belarusian authorities had committed crimes against humanity - specifically 'deportation and persecution through deportation' - as part of a systematic state policy against actual or perceived political opponents.¹²⁵

In February 2025, the UN Group of Independent Experts on the Human Rights Situation in Belarus noted that, in their efforts to suppress dissent, Belarusian authorities had 'committed widespread human rights violations against the country's civilian population', with some 'amounting to crimes against humanity.'¹²⁶ In February 2026, the UN Group of Independent Experts reaffirmed these findings, citing 'crimes against humanity of persecution and imprisonment.'¹²⁷

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