



3.2.3. Trials in absentia

In 2022, the law was amended to allow for special proceedings enabling criminal investigations and court trials to be conducted *in absentia* against Belarusian citizens living abroad.^{[365](#)} In February 2025, further legislative amendments expanded the scope of special proceedings to include charges frequently used for political prosecutions such as ‘discrediting the Republic of Belarus’ and ‘insulting an official.’^{[366](#)} The primary legal grounds for prosecution *in absentia* is residing outside the country and allegedly evading appearance before Belarusian investigative or judicial authorities.^{[367](#)} In March 2026, Human Constanta noted that the official ‘List of persons against whom special proceedings have been initiated’ includes the names of 169 individuals.^{[368](#)}

The use of trials *in absentia* grew sharply from 18 trials in 2023 to 110 trials in 2024.^{[369](#)} In 2025, courts convicted *in absentia* at least 30 individuals.^{[370](#)} Trials *in absentia* are frequently used to prosecute opposition politicians and activists, human rights defenders, and journalists in exile.^{[371](#)} While trials *in absentia* are most actively used against high-profile opposition figures and activists – including Belarusian volunteers in Ukraine and representatives of solidarity funds – their application against non-public persons, who either participated in protests or posted critical comments online, has increased.^{[372](#)} The main charges for trials *in absentia* are usually related to extremism.^{[373](#)}

According to Viasna, the authorities appear to strategically select certain cases for trials *in absentia* to create a deterrent effect, with factors such as property confiscation and financial penalties potentially influencing case selection.^{[374](#)} As further noted by the human rights specialist, the public mainly becomes aware of high-profile cases, as the authorities themselves publicise such cases, which does not exclude the possibility that less visible proceedings may also take place without wider public knowledge.^{[375](#)}

Individuals tried *in absentia* are often not informed about the trial^{[376](#)} or proceedings and learn of charges only through human rights organisations or public sources,^{[377](#)} including public press releases from the KGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Moreover, they are also not informed about the investigation of their cases and have no access to the case file.^{[378](#)} Law enforcement authorities may send case materials to a person’s registered address in Belarus or question their family residing at this address. Notification may also be delivered via a Belarusian phone number, via personal social media accounts, such as Instagram,^{[379](#)} or messaging applications such as Viber. However, such communication is ‘irregular and informal.’^{[380](#)} In addition, the Investigative Committee uses its official Telegram channels to announce such trials, which have become a primary source of this type of information since 2025.^{[381](#)}

For court trials *in absentia*, defence lawyers are appointed by the state; however, in practice, such lawyers are prevented from contacting their clients. As a result, persons tried *in absentia* are unable to participate in a meaningful way in the proceedings against them.³⁸² Trials *in absentia* generally take place behind closed doors.³⁸³ Convictions in criminal court cases tried *in absentia* are conducted in violation of basic fair trial guarantees³⁸⁴ and often result in heavy prison sentences and include seizure of property.³⁸⁵ Furthermore, these proceedings can facilitate the revocation of citizenship of persons in exile.³⁸⁶ At the same time, courts reject ‘attempts to contest those moves.’³⁸⁷

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UN Human Rights Council, Report of Human Rights in Belarus, 22 April 2025, [url](#), para. 42

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HRW, Belarus – Events of 2025, 4 February 2026, [url](#)

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Human Constanta, Email correspondence with EUAA, 13 March 2026

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Human Constanta, Email correspondence with EUAA, 13 March 2026. For information on individuals subject to on investigations and trials in absentia, see Belarus, Спеціальное производство. Офіційно [Special proceedings. Officially], Telegram, [url](#)

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UN Human Rights Council, Report of Human Rights in Belarus, 22 April 2025, [url](#), para. 43

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Viasna, At least 1,254 people convicted in 2025: the results of criminal prosecution, 29 December 2025, [url](#)

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UN Human Rights Council, Report of Human Rights in Belarus, 22 April 2025, [url](#), para. 43; AP, Prisoners freed by Belarus say their passports are taken away in a final ‘dirty trick’ by officials, 20 December 2025, [url](#)

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Human Constanta, Email correspondence with EUAA, 13 March 2026

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Viasna Human Rights Center, Online interview with EUAA, 12 March 2026; Human rights specialist, Online interview with EUAA, 20 March 2026

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Viasna Human Rights Center, Online interview with EUAA, 12 March 2026

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Human rights specialist, Online interview with EUAA, 20 March 2026

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UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Belarus, Report of the Group of Independent Experts on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus, 6 February 2026, [url](#), para. 75

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Viasna Human Rights Center, Online interview with EUAA, 12 March 2026

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Human rights specialist, Online interview with EUAA, 20 March 2026

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Human Constanta, Email correspondence with EUAA, 13 March 2026

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Viasna Human Rights Center, Online interview with EUAA, 12 March 2026

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Human Constanta, Email correspondence with EUAA, 13 March 2026

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Human rights specialist, Online interview with EUAA, 20 March 2026

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Viasna Human Rights Center, Online interview with EUAA, 12 March 2026

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HRW, Belarus – Events of 2024, 16 January 2025, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of Human Rights in Belarus, 22 April 2025, [url](#), para. 42

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UN Human Rights Council, Report of Human Rights in Belarus, 22 April 2025, [url](#), para. 3; AP, Prisoners freed by Belarus say their passports are taken away in a final ‘dirty trick’ by officials, 20 December 2025, [url](#)

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Human Constanta, Email correspondence with EUAA, 13 March 2026

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AP, Prisoners freed by Belarus say their passports are taken away in a final 'dirty trick' by officials, 20 December 2025, [url](#)

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