



4. Treatment of selected profiles and groups of the population

4.1. Political opponents, including perceived political opponents

Authorities initiate legal proceedings against political opponents, including those perceived as challenging ‘the conduct of the elections.’⁴³⁷ Prosecution heavily relies on criminal provisions on extremism and participation in or cooperation with organisations deemed extremist, with the situation remaining ‘essentially unchanged’ since 2020.⁴³⁸

In May 2024, the Investigative Committee initiated criminal proceedings against participants in the elections to the Coordination Council, a ‘proto-parliament’ established in 2020 and by the Belarusian opposition in exile supporting Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya as the leader of Belarusian democratic forces.⁴³⁹ All 257 participants in the elections were labelled as ‘representatives of 12 extremist formations’ and faced criminal charges, for ‘conspiracy to seize State power’, creation of an extremist formation, and aiding extremist activities.⁴⁴⁰ In January 2025, four activists associated with the election observation initiative Honest People⁴⁴¹ were sentenced *in absentia* to prison sentences ranging from eight to ten years⁴⁴² for the creation of an extremist formation, insulting the President, inciting hatred, slander, discrediting Belarus, and calling for sanctions against the authorities.⁴⁴³

The authorities punish active and public support of structured opposition and solidarity groups, including any financial support.⁴⁴⁴ Since 2021, the authorities prosecute individuals involved in the Peramoha Plan (‘Victory Plan’), a Telegram chatbot⁴⁴⁵ created to mobilise protesters by providing them with a set of actions.⁴⁴⁶ The project was designated as extremist formation in November 2021, which entails criminal liability for both its creators, who are based in exile, and participants.⁴⁴⁷

In an interview with the EUAA, a human rights specialist noted that individuals perceived as not supporting the policies of Lukashenka ‘face a serious risk of persecution.’ According to the source, the determining factor is not whether a person is objectively a political opponent, but whether they are perceived as such by the authorities. This ‘perception-based approach’ results in ‘a broad range of persons’ who may be affected by the prosecution.⁴⁴⁸ A representative from Human Constanta further noted that the authorities consider anyone who does not openly support the regime as a critic of the government: a public alignment with state policies and activities is expected, and deviation from this may trigger suspicion of being against the authorities. This includes the expected support of the war in Ukraine.⁴⁴⁹

Individuals who are neither public figures nor activists may come to the attention of authorities through relatively minor expressions of views perceived as critical. Consequently, any public statement, including comments on social media, may be sufficient to attract scrutiny.⁴⁵⁰ In November 2025, a photographer from Minsk was sentenced to two years in prison for insulting the president,⁴⁵¹ reportedly based on a single comment on social media.⁴⁵² In December 2025, the brother of the abovementioned person,⁴⁵³ an activist from Rechytsa (Rečyca) was sentenced to 10 years in prison after the court found him guilty of treason and participation in extremist activities.⁴⁵⁴

- ⁴³⁷

UN Human Rights Council, Report of Human Rights in Belarus, 22 April 2025, [url](#), para. 56

- ⁴³⁸

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

- ⁴³⁹

EP, Belarus: Sergey Tihanovski and Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya to address MEPs, 16 October 2025, [url](#)

- ⁴⁴⁰

UN Human Rights Council, Report of Human Rights in Belarus, 22 April 2025, [url](#), para. 56

- ⁴⁴¹

Initiative Honest People was created in June 2020 and was engaged in monitoring of violations during the 2020 presidential election, Honest People, What We Do, n.d., [url](#)

- ⁴⁴²

Viasna, Human rights situation in Belarus. January 2026, 4 February 2026, [url](#)

- ⁴⁴³

Viasna, До десяти лет колонии с большими штрафами: вынесен заочный приговор по делу "Честных людей" [Up to ten years in prison with large fines: a verdict in absentia handed down in the "Honest People" case], 22 January 2026, [url](#)

- ⁴⁴⁴

Human Constanta, Online interview with EUAA, 25 February 2026

- ⁴⁴⁵

Article 19 and Human Constanta, Quashing online dissent, August 2025, [url](#), p. 8; Dissidentby and Human Constanta, From streets to screens: digital repression in Belarus (2020-2025), 12 December 2025, [url](#), p. 19

- [446](#)

Human Constanta, Overview of the fight against “extremism” in Belarus in October-December 2021, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

- [447](#)

Human Constanta, Overview of the fight against “extremism” in Belarus in October-December 2021, 18 January 2022, [url](#); Article 19 and Human Constanta, Quashing online dissent, August 2025, [url](#), p. 8

- [448](#)

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

- [449](#)

Human Constanta, Online interview with EUAA, 25 February 2026

- [450](#)

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

- [451](#)

Viasna, Vadzim Zdaravennau, n.d., [url](#)

- [452](#)

Viasna, Human rights situation in Belarus. November 2025, 8 December 2025, [url](#)

- [453](#)

Viasna, Human rights situation in Belarus. November 2025, 8 December 2025, [url](#)

- [454](#)

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