



## 4.6. Relatives of activists and (former) political prisoners

Family members of activists living in exile and former political prisoners face persistent pressure,[576](#) harassment, and intimidation by security forces in Belarus.[577](#) Law enforcement agencies reportedly conduct visits to relatives of former political prisoners living in exile, including those who were expelled from Belarus;[578](#) in some cases, they state that the purpose of such visits is to locate the expelled person[579](#) or to pressure the family to influence the person to return to Belarus.[580](#) In several cases, the authorities have confiscated or forcibly sold the property of the convicted individuals, effectively extending the punishment to the entire family.[581](#) Some individuals have also faced dismissal from employment due to family members residing in 'unfriendly' countries.[582](#)

Repression against family members of political prisoners intensified in January 2024 and October/November 2024.[583](#) In January 2024, KGB officers conducted raids, interrogations and detentions affecting nearly 300 families of political prisoners and those who had received support from the INeedHelpBY initiative,[584](#) an NGO which supports political prisoners by providing food, which was designated as an extremist organisation in January 2024.[585](#) This resulted in hundreds of prosecutions of relatives of political prisoners under administrative charges for the 'use of foreign donations to carry out extremist activities' (Article 24.15 of the Code of Administrative Offences), leading to arrests, fines, and short-term prison sentences, with women being affected the most.[586](#) In November 2024, KGB officers conducted another wave of raids on homes of political prisoners, including searches for alleged receipt of assistance from INeedHelpBY, as well as arrests and detentions of their relatives.[587](#)

Pressure against family members of exiled activists and political prisoners continued throughout 2025. For example, in January 2025, police conducted unscheduled home visits and summoned former detainees and their relatives for 'preventive conversations.'[588](#) In October 2025, law enforcement officials reportedly visited the homes of relatives of exiled activists to conduct searches and interviews.[589](#) The same month, dozens of relatives of political prisoners and persons supporting them were reportedly detained, with the Belarusian media outlet Nasha Niva comparing these raids to the mass raids carried out in 2024.[590](#) In February 2026, several relatives of activists in exile were reportedly summoned to the KGB office in the Homiel Region (Gomel oblast).[591](#)

In March 2026, the Central District Court of Minsk designated the Telegram channel 'Pretrial Detention Centre No. 1 In Kolyadichi' – reportedly the largest group supporting relatives of detainees, with approximately 1 800 members – as extremist material. The chat has been

reportedly used by relatives of detainees to share practical information, including on sending parcels and queuing procedures at the detention facility.[592](#)

As noted by Human Constanta, publicly active relatives of political prisoners, particularly those giving interviews or speaking about the cases of their relatives, can face prosecution by the authorities.[593](#) Criminal cases against relatives of political prisoners are frequently based on interviews given to media outlets designated as extremist formations and often involve retroactive prosecution.[594](#) For example, in February 2025, two women were sentenced to three years and three years and three months, respectively, for interviews given to Belsat TV between 2020 and 2022, in which they publicly supported their sons, one of whom is in exile and the other had been sentenced to 18 years in prison.[595](#) Human Constanta noted that they have documented at least five cases in which people were prosecuted after actively helping their imprisoned relatives or giving interviews. The organisation also noted that even the relatives who are not publicly active may be subjected to home searches by law enforcement, although those who are not critical of the authorities are less likely to face prosecution.[596](#)

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