



CENTER FOR NEW IDEAS

# THE BELARUS BAROMETER OF REPRESSION *FIRST QUARTER OF 2024*

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## SUMMARY

New accounts of repressive and punitive measures come out of Belarus almost every day. Because of this constant stream of information, detecting patterns and changes can be difficult without in-depth analysis.

To capture how the punitive practices of the regime are evolving — what patterns of repression are fading and emerging — the Center for New Ideas will be issuing a quarterly research-based report entitled the Belarus Barometer of Repression.

Our analysis will focus primarily on statistical, quantitative data. Qualitative data, from a wide range of open sources, will be used supplementally.

This research is not intended to replace more granular reports by human rights organizations. Instead, our objectives are more analytical and statistical in nature: we aim to provide a general overview of the repressive/punitive system of the Belarusian regime and discern chronological shifts in how it functions (broken into quarters).

This aggregation of important quantitative indicators (primarily from human rights advocates, but also drawing on official statistics) and contextualized analysis should be useful to anyone seeking to understand how the Belarusian regime goes about putting pressure on society.

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The author would like to express his sincere gratitude to Belarusian human rights advocates and organizations, especially those whose work informed this report. These include Viasna, the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Lawtrend, Human Constanta and Dissidentby.

## KEY FINDINGS

- *The situation in Belarusian prisons is getting worse, which is negatively impacting the health of prisoners (especially political ones).*
- *The government is giving more and more powers to security agencies to control and monitor Belarusians — both offline (via video surveillance) and online (by granting access to various databases without citizens' consent).*
- *The destruction of the Belarusian NGO sector continues: in the reporting period, the number of structures that were liquidated or self-liquidated exceeded last quarter's figures by 35% (in total, over 1,600 organizations have been liquidated since 2020).*
- *The Belarusian regime has been redoubling its efforts to split Belarusian society in two: both by persecuting Belarusians abroad and by eroding ties between Belarusians on opposite sides of the national border.*
- *The weaponization of anti-extremist legislation against Belarusian society continues. The number of structures deemed to be "extremist formations," the number of court cases resulting in information sources being labeled "extremist materials," and the the number of items on the "Republican list of extremist materials" are all growing.<sup>1</sup>*
- *The total number of detainees in the first quarter reached 987 people, which is 13% more than in the previous period. The main number of detentions occurred in January-February; for the first time they started punishing people for receiving «solidarity aid».*
- *The dominant trends of 2023 regarding the ratio of criminal cases to administrative cases have reversed. Whereas earlier there was a gradual increase in administrative prosecution with a decrease in criminal prosecution, in the first quarter of this year we note a trend reversal: the first quarter of 2024 brought an increase in both administrative and criminal prosecutions of Belarusians.*

The regime continues to see society as "the enemy." This is true not only for Belarusians who support democracy, but also for anyone who maintains relations with them. Control, prohibition, restrictions, monitoring, coercion, intimidation, punishment, and so on remain the main tools for repressing this part of Belarusian society. There is almost no chance that repressive pressure will subside in the near future.

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<sup>1</sup> This reporting period's indicators compared to the past.

## THE BELARUS BAROMETER OF REPRESSION, FIRST QUARTER OF 2024

The repressive punitive system built by the Lukashenka regime has many components and levels. In order to track changes to this system, we studied two main tools of repression, both of which have sufficient quantitative data for proper analysis. As in the [first edition](#) of the Barometer of Repression, these are:

- **Intimidation** – measures to instill anxiety and fear by demonstrating the omnipotence of the Belarusian security forces, designed to suppress any aspirations of freedom and self-organization in society as much as possible;
- **Detentions and arrests** – the persecution of citizens who express their disagreement with state policy in some way (against election fraud, unchecked violence, Belarus’s complicity in the Russian-Ukrainian war, etc.).

**Necessary disclaimer:** most quantitative data represent highly conservative estimates due to a) the inaccessibility of many government statistics and b) the pervasive atmosphere of fear in the country that prevents certain information about repressions from reaching human rights advocates. There is much more repression in Belarus than these numbers show.

Supplemental areas of investigation include ones where a distinct pattern emerged during the reporting period. Gaining an understanding of these areas is essential in order to properly analyze the dynamics of the repressive system. The authorities’ efforts to carry out repressive measures at different levels are not distributed evenly in time; therefore, the list of supplemental areas may change from year to year. This year, supplemental tools of repression include the following:

- **Prison facilities** – pressure on political prisoners, constant deterioration of the conditions in which they are incarcerated;
- **Control** – dismantling of freedoms and the right to self-organization, i.e., the subordination of the activities of members of society at all levels, from business and the third sector to everyday life, to the interests of the state;
- **Political segregation and persecution** – the division of the country’s population along political lines, with those who oppose or opposed the existing political regime subject to restrictions.

To understand how the situation developed in the first quarter of 2024, let’s start with these supplemental, contextual areas.

## PRISON FACILITIES

What exactly takes place in Belarusian prison facilities remains somewhat obscure to both the general public and human rights advocates. Open, public monitoring of the penitentiary system is impossible. The so-called “audits” organized by the authorities (exhibits [A](#), [B](#), and [C](#)) never record any violations. But information coming out of Belarusian prisons (from those who have served their sentences, from relatives of prisoners, and from official sources) suggests that the authorities are not reducing pressure on prisoners; on the contrary, they are actively trying to make the already torturous conditions of detainees worse.

These efforts vary widely: they include disciplinary measures (punishment cells, solitary confinement), new prison terms, denial of medical treatment, and preventing any contact with the outside world (“incommunicado mode”). Because of these practices, two political prisoners died in jail in the first three months of 2023: Vadzim Khrasko and Ihar Lednik.

Six political prisoners have died since 2020, and half of these cases occurred this year. This trend is extremely worrying, especially given reports of the deteriorating health of several political prisoners with government positions (Ales Bialiatski, Alexei Ilyinchik, Maria Kalesnikava, Ryhor Kastusiou, Pavel Kuchynski, and others). In total, as of mid-April, human rights advocates are aware of more than [250 political prisoners](#) whose health is at heightened risk behind bars.

Medical care in prisons has always been cause for concern. But now the authorities are either failing to deal with this problem completely, or they are purposefully creating a critical situation with regards to hygiene and inmate medical care. This observation is illustrated by orders to selectively forbid people from [delivering vitamins](#) to prisoners, as well as a series of epidemics in Belarusian penal colonies:

- [Flu](#) - In Navapolatsk Penal Colony No. 1 (101 political prisoners are held there);
- [Scabies](#) - also in Navapolatsk Penal Colony No. 1;
- [Tuberculosis](#) - frequent cases in all penal colonies.

Even more egregious have been cases of [scurvy](#), which was contracted by Stepan Latypav, a political prisoner being held in Mahilyow Prison No. 4.

Once again, we emphasize that there is a critical lack of information about the condition of Belarusian political prisoners, but what we do know indicates that there is a willful intent to destroy them — morally, psychologically, and physically.

## CONTROL: MILITARIZATION, SURVEILLANCE, DESTRUCTION

The Belarusian regime has multiple tools for controlling and putting pressure on Belarusian society. One of these tools is the targeted destruction of third-sector structures, which are spaces for self-organization and civic self-expression. This process, which started in 2020, continues to this day. In the reporting period things have only gotten worse (compared to the last quarter).

According to data by [Lawtrend](#), in the last quarter of 2023, 68 organizations were liquidated or self-liquidated compared to 92 this year. In other words, instances of (self-)liquidation of NGOs have grown by 35%. Since 2020, Belarus has lost over 1,600 third-sector organizations.

### Monthly number of third-sector organizations, (self) liquidated during the last 15 months (according to Lawtrend)



Several other important trends should be noted.

In the first quarter of 2024, the single day of voting was one of the main focal points of the government’s efforts to exercise preemptive demonstrations of control over society<sup>2</sup>.

The authorities prepared for this event in a clearly militarized manner: in addition to the nine existing special forces units, they created a new one ([Granit](#)), they declared their readiness to involve former Wagner mercenaries to keep the [order](#), they called on the [Belarusian Women’s Union](#) to arm themselves, and they [issued](#) firearms to police patrols.

Two other instances of this militarization of control over society, which legalize the use of weapons by the security agencies against civilians, should be noted.

<sup>2</sup> On February 25, votes were held during the eighth convocation of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly and in the twenty-ninth convocation of local Councils of Deputies.

First, on January 1, [amendments](#) to the law “On state security agencies” came into force. These amendments give security agencies broader powers to use weapons against women, children, and disabled people (they also allow collections services to get involved in “counter-terrorist activities”). Second, [amendments](#) have been adopted to the Charter of the Internal Service that allow for the use of firearms, special equipment, and combat/special equipment against citizens without a warning shot and without liability for damage caused.

Another issue is control over the online activities of Belarusians, which over time will erode any notion of “privacy rights.”

Thus, new [amendments](#) to the Tax Code now oblige mobile operators to transfer subscriber databases to the tax services (twice a year) and provide tax inspectors with remote access to databases. Moreover, since March 1, the security forces have been granted round-the-clock [super-access](#) to Belarusians’ finances with broad rights to block any transactions and accounts. In addition, work is underway to grant investigators the right to access Belarusians’ personal data without their consent (including remotely). This bill was adopted in its first reading.

Likewise, the authorities have long been [exploring the possibilities](#) of developing and implementing a system for checking network packets by content in order to regulate and filter traffic to counter the use of anonymizers, VPNs, and proxy servers. The ideological “justifications” for these efforts include, among other things, declarations of [concern for children](#), which began to appear [as early as last year](#).

The authorities continue to scale-up offline surveillance systems; there are two main components to this.

First, they are expanding the Republican Public Safety Monitoring System: at least [35,000 cameras](#) are currently installed in public and industrial buildings, streets, and even [parks](#). Video surveillance systems should also be mentioned, as they are either already installed or will be soon at [enterprises](#), [educational institutions](#), and on public transport ([trains](#), [buses](#), [taxis](#)).

Apparently, many CCTV cameras are connected to a common system and feature facial recognition and vehicle identification technology.

Second, they are leveraging body cams. In addition to law enforcement officers, transport inspectors, and railway workers, who are already required to wear them, housing and communal service, forestry, and medical workers will soon be equipped with video recorders too. Officially, of course, “video recordings cannot be used for personal or other purposes unrelated to professional activities.” But recent trends in Belarusian legislation clearly prove that there are no obstacles — even on paper — preventing the security forces from obtaining any information about Belarusians. Therefore, these examples can be seen both as a means of surveillance over those wearing the video devices and a way of expanding the authorities’ visual database.

## POLITICAL SEGREGATION AND PERSECUTION

In the [last report](#), we noted that the Belarusian regime is clearly and consistently distinguishing between loyal and disloyal citizens, discriminating against the latter. As such, the security forces have been paying special attention to Belarusian citizens located abroad. The authorities clearly view this group as their enemies, leading them to pass a growing number of discriminatory legal/regulatory acts against the diaspora.

In the reporting period, a number of events allow us to conclude that the situation has gotten worse; moreover, in some specific respects, this deterioration is marked.

First, the authorities initiated a series of mass criminal cases against Belarusians who were forced to leave their homeland:

- The [Personnel Reserve](#) case;
- The [criminal case](#) against the “People’s Embassies” and “Belarusians Abroad;”
- The [Tsikhanouskaya Analysts](#) case;
- The declaration of the [Free Belarusian University](#) as an extremist entity;
- Threats from propagandists directed towards the Belarusian university in exile — [EHU](#).

Whereas earlier repressive pressure was focused more on institutionalized Belarusian political or media structures, now its scope has widened: it is increasingly oriented towards ordinary members of the Belarusian diaspora.

Second, attacks and provocations against the most active active part of the Belarusian diaspora continue. Last quarter, there were [cyberattacks](#) against the internet resources of the Belarusian democratic forces, as well as provocations against Belarusians inside the country meant to frame diaspora organizations (“[Time is Up!](#)”, “[The Tsikhanouskaya Appeal](#)”, “[Peramoha Plan 2.0](#)” and others). The confrontation against the independent media has also intensified (via [attacks](#), [complaints](#), and [information stuffing](#)).

But the main blow has been dealt not so much to the diaspora as to the communication channels between Belarusians abroad and Belarusians within Belarus.

The biggest attack came at the end of January, when almost [300](#) people were subjected to searches, interrogations, and arrests (at least 146 people received administrative penalties and 31 face criminal charges; the total number of people caught in this raid may amount to [700](#)). These were mostly relatives and close ones of political prisoners, as well as former political prisoners who had been released from prison but remain in the country. The primary targets were people who received humanitarian aid from the INeedHelpBy initiative, which assists the families of political prisoners, for which it was labeled an extremist organization. Even people who did nothing more than write letters to political prisoners have faced persecution.

People affected by this raid were charged with “connections to extremists” (Articles 361-1, 361-2, and 361-4 of the Criminal Code, among others) and “using foreign gratuitous aid to carry out terrorist and other extremist activities or other actions prohibited by law” (24.15 of the Administrative Code). The last charge, which is now being raised against [100](#) people, had [not been used](#) in repressive practice before.



Perhaps less prominent, but no less important, was the March wave of repression against activists, who were accused of cooperating with human rights advocates for providing them with information on court hearings in Belarus. It does not matter here whether these people actually transmitted any information (especially given that sharing such information is not illegal). The government's signals are clear — any contact with the enemies of the Lukashenka regime is punishable.

This pattern of persecution for maintaining contacts with Belarusian structures abroad is illustrated by yet another phenomenon. The authorities have begun to probe the possibility of persecuting various media outlets and bloggers when the independent media abroad cites their material. So far, repressions in this area have been [ad hoc](#), but the implications have been understood: some media outlets have begun issuing statements [prohibiting](#) the independent media from using their materials.

Finally, we recall the persisting detentions at the border upon re-entry to Belarus (or within Belarus for those who [returned](#) relatively recently), as well as [KGB reports](#) on those who have left the country (or whose relatives have), and attempts to [recruit](#) members of the diaspora and their relatives. These processes are part of a broader pattern of criminalization of contacts with the independent media and persecution for “solidarity donations.” This clearly points to a new phase in the struggle between the Lukashenka regime and the cross-border system of Belarusian solidarity.

## INTIMIDATION: “EXTREMISM,” “TERRORISM,” AND POLICE RAIDS

The labels “extremist,” “terrorist,” and “extremist materials,” which the authorities apply arbitrarily<sup>3</sup> to their enemies and the opposition's information products, does more than punish those who disagree with the regime's policies: criminalization of any contact with obvious or potential opponents of the government is aimed at intimidating society, thereby depoliticizing and demotivating it.

The Lukashenka regime's active use of “anti-extremist” legislation to put pressure on Belarusian society, which began several years ago, has not abated. Above, we described how in the last quarter, the security forces targeted Belarusians' international solidarity networks under the pretext of extremist and terrorist threats. But this is not the only way anti-extremist legislation is being weaponized.

In the first quarter of 2024, both “extremist” and “terrorist” legislation was actively being applied against Belarusians, albeit unevenly.

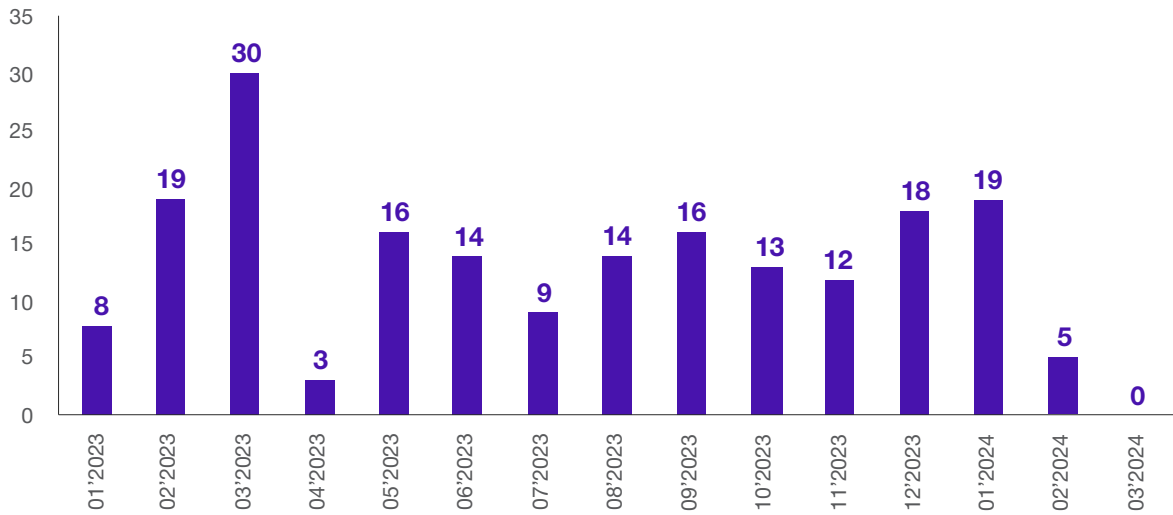
For example, no new terrorist formations have been designated, at least according to official data. The corresponding KGB lists have not been updated for more than a year now.

Likewise, Belarusians are being added to the so-called “terrorist list” less intensively: whereas 43 new people were added last quarter, only 24 people were included in it during the reporting period (this is a new low for at least the last five quarters). There is no information about any new additions to this list in March. As a result, we see a negative trend: the growth rate has decreased by 44%.

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<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the report “[Global Terrorism Index 2024](#)”, which assesses terrorist threat levels for 163 countries around the world, is particularly indicative. In it, Belarus is a country that has not had to deal with any real terrorism in the last five years (the time period covered by this report).

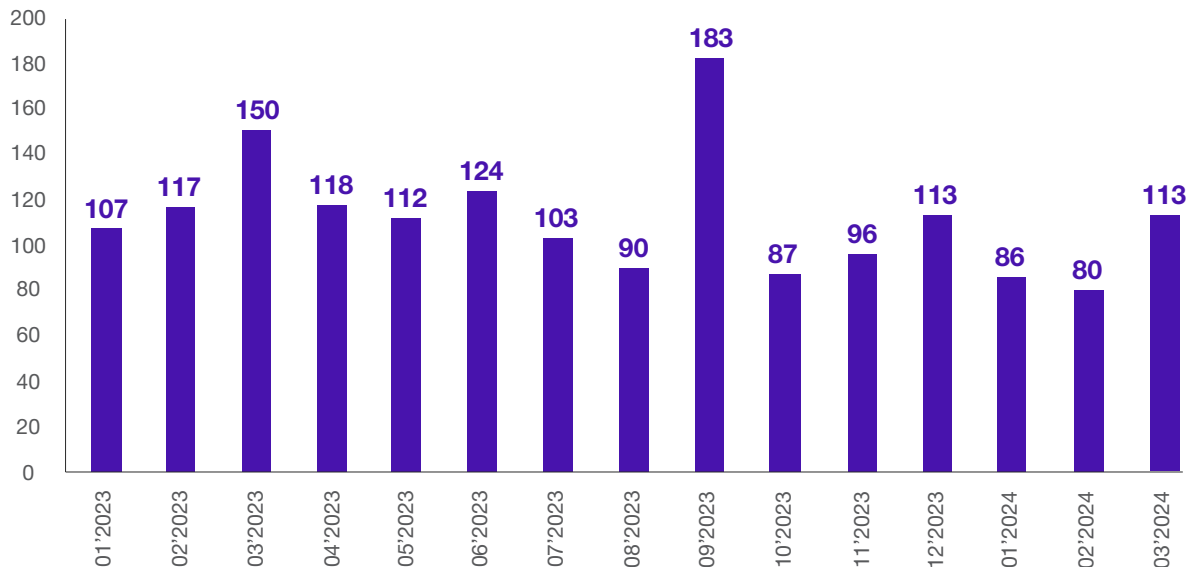
**The monthly number of people included on the “terrorist list” during the last 15 months**  
(according to official KGB lists)



As of the end of March, the list comprised 1,141 people in total, 412 of them Belarusians.

Belarusians are being added to the “list of extremists” at a much less intensive rate as well. Whereas 296 new names were added in the last quarter, only 279 were added this quarter. This slowdown is small, representing only a 6% downturn, but this is the second quarterly decline in a row.

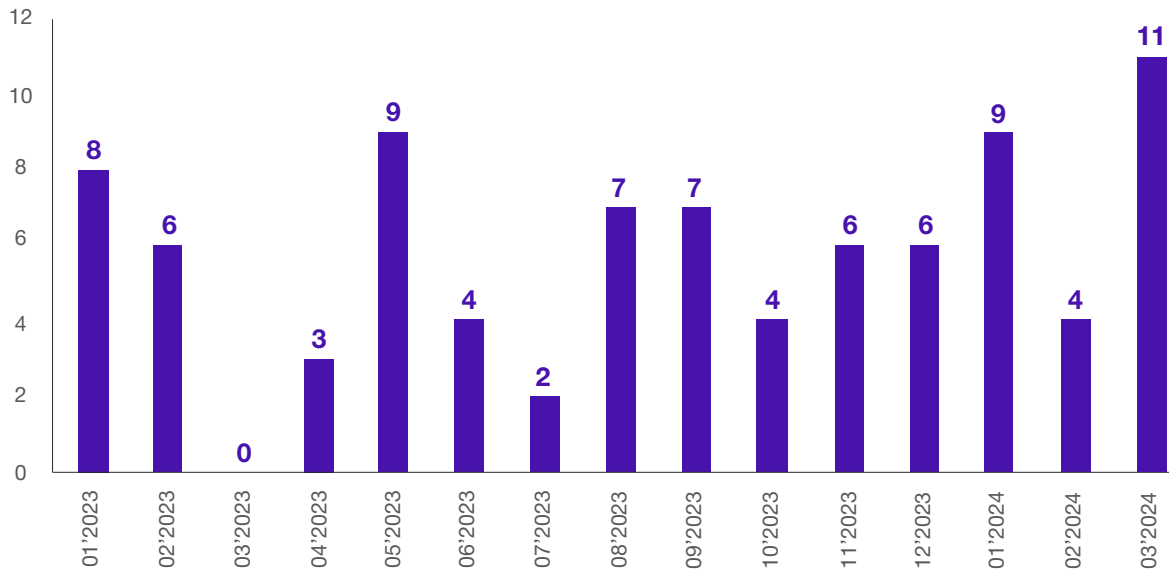
**The monthly number of people included on the “list of extremists” during the last 15 months**  
(according to official lists by the Ministry of Internal Affairs)



As of the end of March, the list comprised 3,932 people in total.

Unfortunately, other indicators show that repressive pressure is growing. Thus, the rate at which various structures are being labeled “extremist formations” has increased by 50%. In the last quarter of 2023, 16 structures were recognized as extremist formations; in the reporting quarter 24 were. In terms of monthly averages for the quarter, this is a five-quarter high.

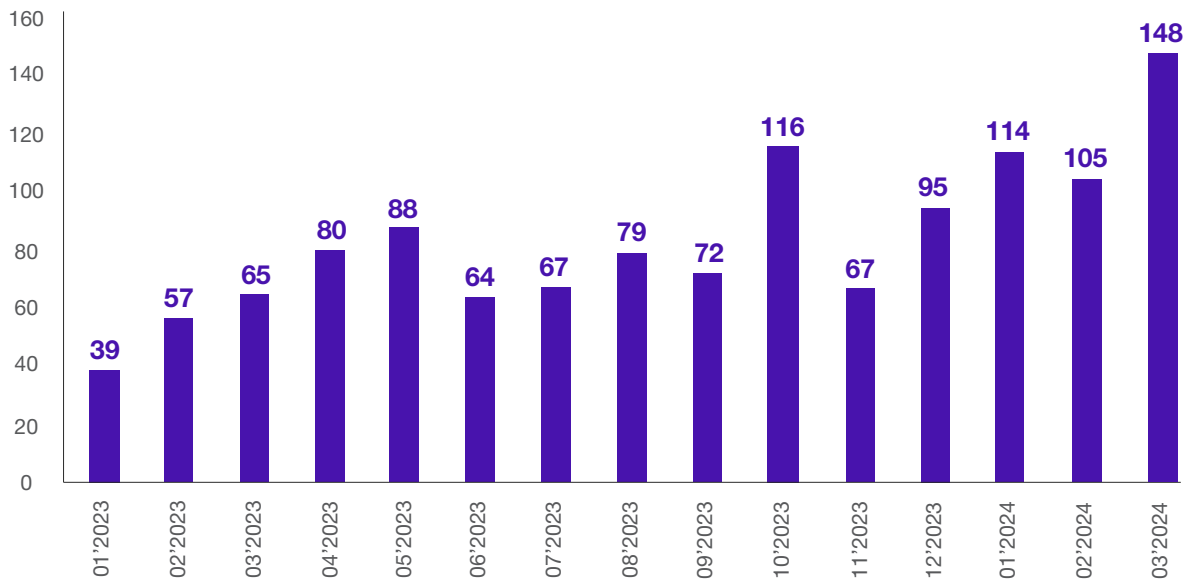
**Monthly number of organizations deemed to be extremist formations**  
(according to official KGB lists)



As of the end of March, there were 191 structures on the list (you can read about changes to these structures in the article [“The media is as dangerous as forceful resistance, but local communities are the biggest threat”](#)).

As with the previous indicator, the number of court hearings that resulted in information sources being recognized as extremist materials has increased, representing 24% growth on last quarter. The monthly average for the quarter was 122 court sessions, which is the maximum in the last five quarters. Similarly, the number of court sessions that resulted in an expansion of the list of extremist materials has grown for the second quarter in a row.

**The monthly number of trials that resulted in materials being deemed extremist during the last 15 months** (according to official lists of the Ministry of Information)



The growth rate of the number of items included on the “Republican list of extremist materials” has been increasing for five consecutive quarters. In the first quarter of 2024, their number reached 685, which is 27% more than in the previous period. The total number of materials on this list now exceeds 4,200 (you can read about the changing nature of the structures on this list in the article [“Has Telegram ceased to be the main social network for extremists?”](#)).

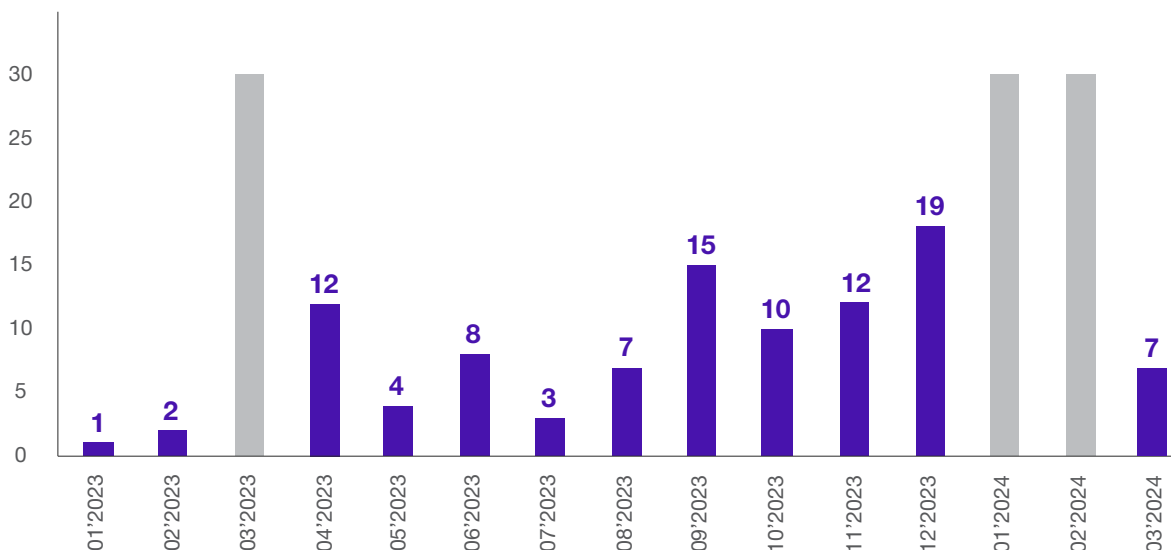
The final indicator discussed in this section pertains to police raids.<sup>4</sup> In our report for the last quarter of 2023, we observed an increase in this indicator, a trend that has persisted into the current quarter.

The security forces organized raids all over Belarus for various reasons:

- In January, 12 people were detained in the Drahichyn District as a result of a raid [“for providing assistance to Ukraine”](#);
- The day before the single voting day, the security forces conducted a series of so-called “preventive raids.” Their targets were former [election observers](#), members of the liquidated [BSDP](#), and a number of other categories of [“unreliable”](#) citizens;
- Also in February, a [raid of architects](#) victimized about 70 people (some were released, some were convicted in administrative cases, some were convicted in criminal cases);
- That same February saw a police raid of [lawyers](#) where at least 12 people were detained;
- In March, a massive raid took place in the Brest region — a total of about 40 people who had recently [returned](#) from abroad were detained;
- Also in April, there were mass arrests of [Young Front](#) members and at least 18 people were detained.

### Monthly number of police raids during the last 15 months

(according to open sources)



<sup>4</sup> By police raids, we mean simultaneous, relatively large-scale repressive measures (searches, detentions, arrests) carried out mostly in a single geographic location. (although this concept isn't clearly defined, the methodology for gathering data has not changed during the year, allowing us to draw such conclusions).

The most extensive and egregious raid was conducted by security forces against “INeedHelpBY.” Belarusians, including former political prisoners, were detained for either receiving assistance or for aiding the families of political prisoners. According to Volha Zazulinskaya of the Country for Life foundation, up to 700 people may have fallen victim. The estimates of human rights advocates are twice as low, but in any case, in January-February we recorded an exceptional number of raids in Belarus, comparable to or even greater than in March of last year, following the sabotage of the Machulishchy air base.

## A PEAK OF REPRESSION: DETENTIONS, COURT CASES, POLITICAL PRISONERS

Regarding detentions, trends established at least in 2022 persist. These include repressions for participating in the events of 2020, supporting Ukraine in one way or another, or expressing disapproval of the actions of the Belarusian regime or the Russian military. The forms that repressions take remain largely unchanged. These include persecution of relatives of high-profile figures, arrests of entire families, public arrests, and so-called “video confessions,” as well as “carousels” of detentions and sentences.<sup>5</sup>

In this reporting quarter, the particularly large number of mass punitive measures like group arrests (see “*Intimidation...*”) and collective cases (see “*Political discrimination...*”) is noteworthy. Another conspicuous event in the first quarter of 2024 was the arrests made for “offensive” comments regarding the Crocus City Hall incident near Moscow (see examples [here](#), [here](#) or [here](#); up till now, there have apparently not been any arrests in Belarus for comments on events in Russia).

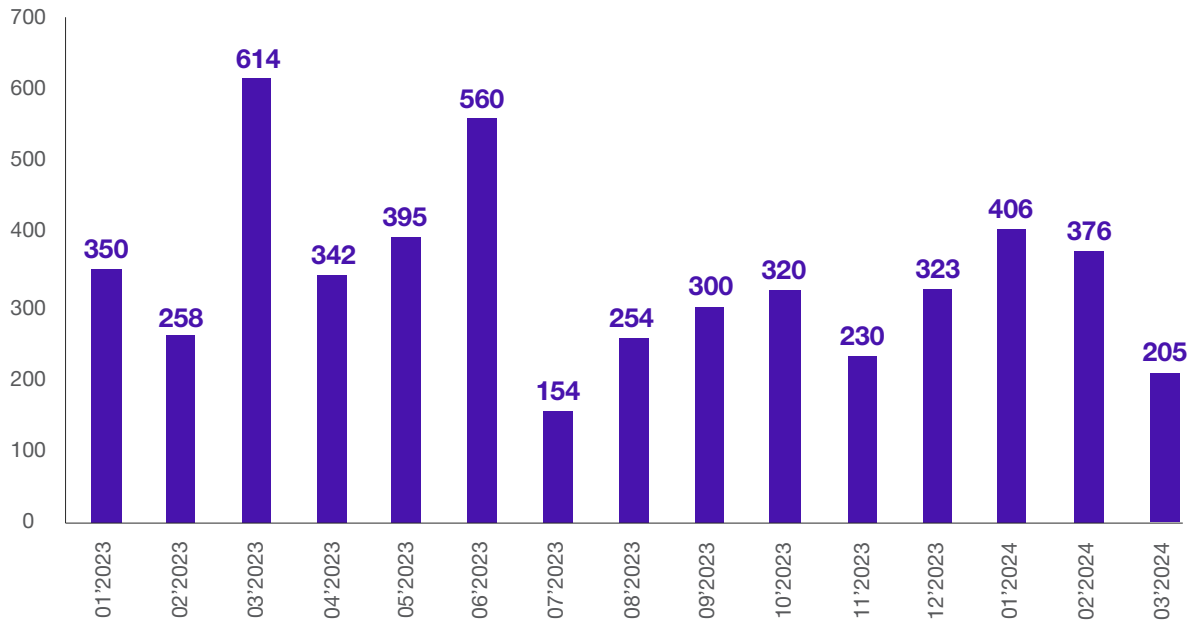
In the latter case, an alarming tendency is emerging. There are cases when security forces have been detaining Belarusians with more than the usual cruelty – especially for comments about the events at Crocus City Hall. At the same time, they have been commenting ironically that the suspect “[started having problems with his ear](#)”, clearly hinting at the acts of torture committed by their Russian counterparts.

According to human rights [activists](#), the total number of detainees for the first quarter was 987. As can be noted, the main number of arrests occurred in January-February, when the security forces organized a large-scale «detention for solidarity» (for using the help of the INeedHelpBY initiative).

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<sup>5</sup> Prisoners who are already in prison are arbitrarily having their sentences extended under Article 411 of the Criminal Code: “Malicious disobedience to the requirements of the administration of a correctional institution.”

**Monthly number of people detained for political reasons during the last 15 months**  
(according to data from Viasna)

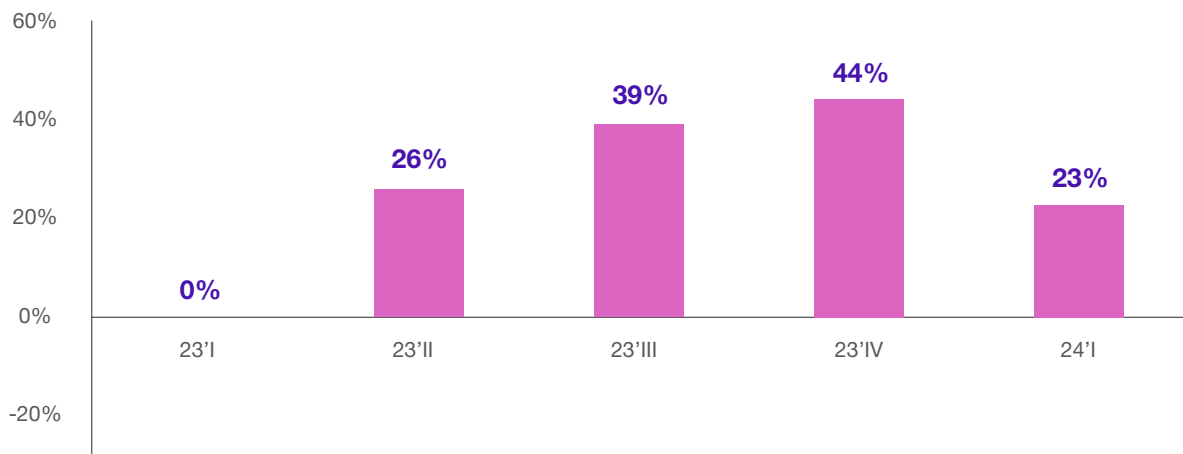


It's worth reminding that many of those detained in this case are charged with Article 24.15 of the Code of Administrative Offenses - «use of foreign aid to carry out extremist activities.» Previously, this article was not used in the repressive practices of the regime.

Human rights activists [point out](#) that by far the most common pretext for politically motivated administrative convictions is the dissemination of “extremist” information materials. For example, in February 416 cases resulting in administrative convictions were recorded.

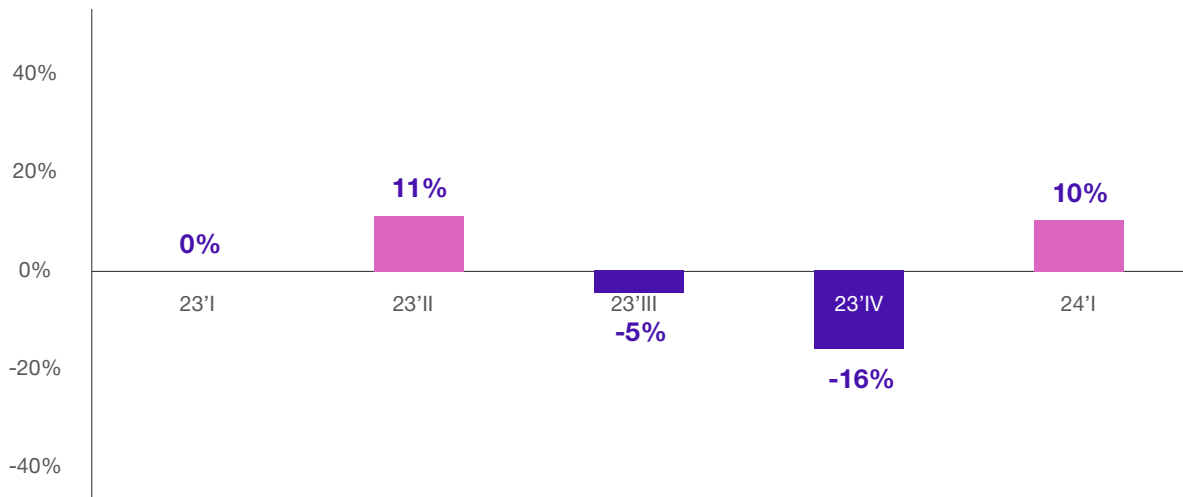
When it comes specifically to administrative persecution, its level in the first quarter of 2024 increased by 23% compared to the previous one. While in the last quarter of 2023 there were a total of 1307 such court proceedings, in the reporting period it reached 1602.

**Quarterly dynamics of the average monthly number of persons subjected to administrative persecution based on political motives over the last 5 quarters**  
(according to data from Viasna)



The opposite is true for criminal cases: since the second quarter of 2023, the number of politicized criminal cases had been decreasing from quarter to quarter (from 466 in the second quarter to 445 in the third and 375 in the fourth); however, in the first quarter of 2024 they began to increase again. The total number of criminal trials for political reasons amounted to 414 cases.

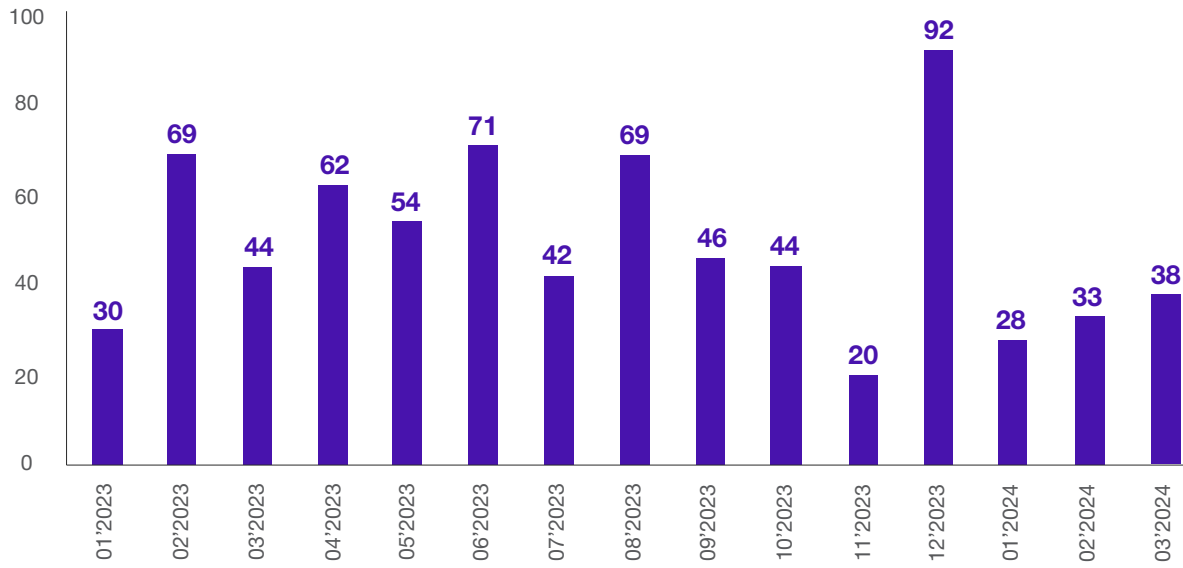
**Quarterly dynamics of the average monthly number of persons convicted under criminal articles over the last 5 quarters** (according to data from Viasna)



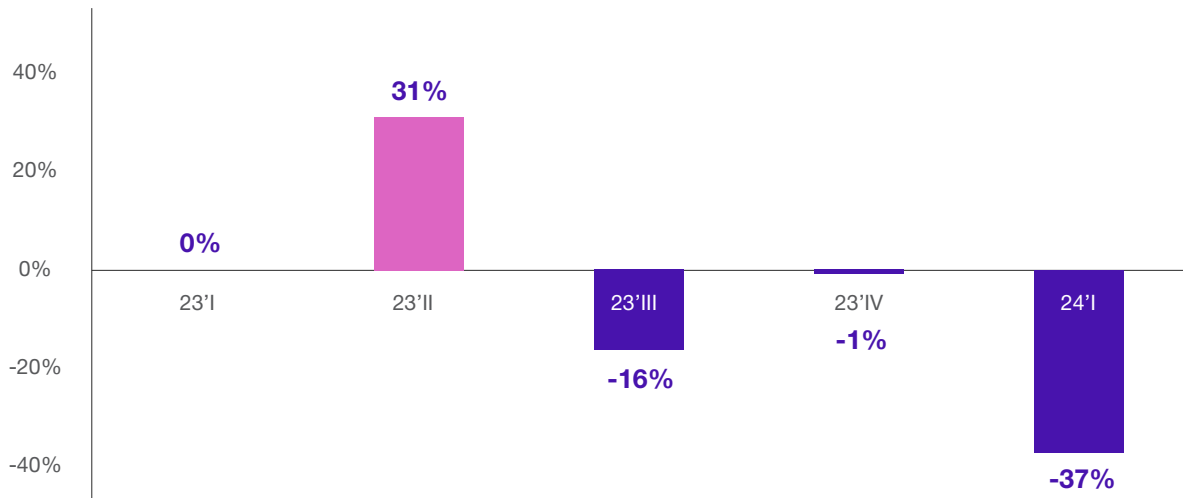
As a result, we see a certain correction to the trend we observed in 2023. Then, we recorded a gradual decrease in criminal prosecution in favor of administrative penalties. Now, unfortunately, this is no longer the case: “criminal” pressure has not been replaced by “administrative” pressure.

With this in mind, and taking into account the number of arrests in the first quarter of this year, we should anticipate an increase in the number of political prisoners during the second quarter. After all, it takes some time (sometimes a long time) following detentions and trials for individuals to be declared political prisoners. So far this quarter, this indicator has exhibited an inertial, gradual decrease.

**Monthly number of people who received politically motivated criminal convictions**  
(according to Viasna)



**Quarterly dynamics of the average monthly number of prisoners recognized as political prisoners over the last 5 quarters** (according to Viasna)





## CONCLUSIONS

To detect emerging patterns, we have summarized the trends in all our indicators by compiling data from this quarter and comparing it to previous periods in a single table. We have also calculated the average quarterly rate of change for each indicator.

	23'I	23'II	23'III	23'IV	24'I
Police raids	0%	-27%	4%	60%	65%
Extremist formations	0%	14%	0%	0%	50%
Liquidation of NGOs	0%	16%	18%	-35%	35%
Court cases for extremist materials	0%	44%	-6%	28%	32%
Number of materials deemed extremist	0%	24%	25%	17%	27%
Politicized arrests	0%	6%	-45%	23%	13%
Politicized criminal cases	0%	11%	-5%	-16%	10%
Politicized administrative cases	0%	26%	39%	44%	1%
“List of extremists”	0%	-5%	6%	-21%	-6%
Number of political prisoners	0%	31%	-16%	-1%	-37%
“List of terrorists”	0%	-42%	18%	10%	-44%
<b>Quarterly average</b>	0%	9%	3%	10%	15%

Our findings indicate that the rate of repression has been increasing in scope and intensity for the second quarter in a row. In other words, any hope that repressions might diminish (if not disappear entirely) has proved unjustified.

Given that repression began to intensify in the last quarter of 2023 (and considering additional qualitative data) this trend appears to be linked to the upcoming large-scale election campaign in Belarus. As such, it is highly probable that the intensification of repressive measures against Belarusian society will persist at least until the conclusion of the 2025 campaign.

In conclusion, the regime continues to view society as the “enemy.” The regime is transparently and consistently segments the citizens of Belarus, dividing them into loyal and clearly hostile groups. Regarding the latter, more and more targeted discrimination is being carried out, more and more severe repressive pressure is being put (especially concerning those who are in prisons). The core of the hostile part of society, from the point of view of the authorities, consists of everyone who expresses or has previously expressed discontent with at least some part of state policy.

There is a growing trend to criminalize any relations with such Belarusians (people, initiatives, organizations). Control, prohibition, restrictions, supervision, coercion, intimidation, punishment, and so on remain the main tools of interaction with protest sympathizers. Unfortunately, the chances that repressive pressure will diminish in the near future are negligible.

*We would like to note once again that almost all the quantitative information contained in the report should be interpreted as highly conservative. In reality, repression figures in Belarus will be significantly higher.*

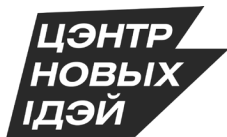
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