

Opposition Activists Face Travel Restrictions – Digest of Belarusian Politics

Belarusian authorities create problems for opposition activists who are crossing Belarusian borders. Isolation of the country is increasing. Following the departure of EU ambassadors, the IMF decided not to have any resident representative in Belarus and the country's representatives were missing at an Eastern Partnership meeting in Prague.

Anatoly Lebedko not allowed to leave Belarus. On 7 March, United Civil Party leader Anatoly Lebedko [was not allowed](#) to leave the territory of the European Union on the Belarusian-Lithuanian border. According to the politician, he was detained at the border checkpoint Kamenny Loh under restriction to leave Belarus. Two other opposition leaders – Siarhei Kaliakin and Viktor Karnienka were not allowed to cross the border. They subsequently managed to get to Lithuania, presumably through Russia.

Belarusian customs detained Alexander Dobrovolsky. On 7 March, the United Civil Party member [Alexander Dobrovolsky](#) was detained at the border with Lithuania. Dobrovolsky went to Minsk from a working meeting in Vilnius. Belarusian customs invited him to a separate customs control, resulting in Dobrovolsky having to wait overnight for the next train to Minsk.

Syarhey Kavalenka set to continue his hunger strike until he is released. [Syarhey Kavalenka](#) is determined to continue his hunger strike until he is released. The opposition activist is currently in a prison hospital in Minsk, since the beginning of his hunger strike he lost 30 kilo. On 24 February, a district judge in Vitsyebsk sentenced Kavalenka to two years

and one month in a low security correctional institution on a charge of violating probation rules.

Young opposition activist Ivan Shyla to spend 22 days in jail. Young opposition activist [Ivan Shyla](#) has been placed in the detention centre on Akrestsina Street for 22 days to serve earlier imposed jail terms. The deputy chairperson of a Czech-registered youth group called Malady Front was arrested in Minsk on February 14 near the office of the Belarusian PEN Centre, where Malady Front activists were scheduled to present the "I Love Belarus" award.

BAJ urges to abolish warnings to its members. On 2 March, the Belarusian Association of Journalists [submitted](#) an official letter to the Hrodna regional prosecutor, Viktor Marozau, in which the difference between freelance journalists and foreign media journalists is explained. The reason for the letter was a series of warnings to BAJ members Mikalai Dziachenia, Aliaksandr Dzianisau, Viktor Parfionenka and Hrazhyna Shalkevich for work with foreign media without official accreditation.

Ministry of Justice refused to register BCD. Ministry of Justice took a final decision [to deny registration](#) to the Belarusian Christian Democracy party (BCD). Considering the BCD documents, the Ministry of Justice has found a number of inconsistencies and contradictions. BCD also announced that on February 17 all party [websites were blocked](#).

Foreign Affairs

Appeal to LT Foreign Minister. [VISA-FREE Coalition](#) "Go Europe! Go Belarus!" appealed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania Audronius Ažubalis to support further steps to promote people-to-people contacts and facilitation of ties between Lithuania and Belarus. The Coalition proposes to amend the legislation of Lithuania to allow the consular offices of the country to regularly issue short-term multi-entry Schengen

visas with a validity of five years, rather than one year, as is still provided. The appeal was signed by NGOs, initiatives and campaigns from Lithuania, Belarus and other countries.

U.S. supports expansion of the European Union sanctions against Belarus. This was [stated](#) by the U.S. representative to the OSCE, Ian Kelly, during a video conference on 2 March. He says that sanctions, being far not the main instrument of influence on official Minsk, should demonstrate the Belarusian authorities that they have chosen the wrong path of self-isolation.

Lukashenka warns EU of harsh response to sanctions. On 4 March, [speaking](#) on the sidelines of an annual ski race involving top government officials, Lukashenka described as "absolute hysteria" the European Union's latest move to extend the list of Belarusian citizens subject to entry bans and asset freezes. Lukashenka went so far as to apparently mock the sexuality of openly gay German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle. "It's better to be a dictator than gay," he said.

National Platform Statement. On 2 March, Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum [adopted a Statement](#) in which expressed their deep concern at the diplomatic conflict between the authorities of Belarus and the European Union. NP urged the leaders of Belarus and the European Union to hold from further conflict escalation and transforming it into an exchange of blows according to the principle "an eye for an eye".

Belarus absent at Eastern Partnership meeting in Prague. No representatives of Belarus arrived in Prague to attend a 5 March [meeting of the foreign ministers](#) of the Visegrad Group and Eastern Partnership countries. Vit Kolar, spokesman for the Czech foreign ministry, said that Belarus had been invited to send a deputy foreign minister to the meeting.

IMF Won't Replace Resident Representative in Belarus. [The](#)

[International Monetary Fund](#) will not replace its representative in Belarus after April, suggesting that having a resident in place was having little impact in the crisis-hit former Soviet republic.

KGB chairman to travel to Rome despite EU entry ban. [Vadzim Zaytsev](#), chairman of the Committee for State Security (KGB) who is subject to the European Union's entry ban, is expected to travel to Rome for an official meeting.

Belarus Digest prepared this overview on the basis of materials provided by Pact. This digest attempts to give a richer picture of the recent political and civil society events in Belarus. It often goes beyond the hot stories already available in English-language media.