

# Sannikov Released, Kavalenka Stops Hunger Strike – Politics and Civil Society Digest

Yesterday Andrei Sannikov, a 2010 presidential candidate, was released after almost sixteen months in prison.

Belarusian authorities prepare for the next [warming up cycle](#) in their relations with the West where political prisoners, Western pressure and Russian subsidies (or absence thereof) play a prominent role.

Earlier this week Lukashenka announced that he would be willing to release those who asked for a pardon. Mikola Statkevich, another 2010 presidential candidate, and over ten other political prisoners are still serving their sentences.

**Court orders psychiatric evaluation of Syarhey Kavalenka.** On 10 April, a panel of the Vitsyebsk Regional Court placed [Syarhey Kavalenka](#), who is widely regarded as political prisoner, in a psychiatric hospital for a comprehensive evaluation, while simultaneously postponing a hearing on the hunger-striking opposition activist's appeal against his prison sentence until the examination's findings are published. Later Kavalenka was put in the Navinki psychiatric hospital in Minsk where [he reportedly stopped his hunger strike](#) voluntarily.

**Review-Chronicle of Human Rights Violations in Belarus. March 2012.** The Human Rights Center Viasna has released its [review of human rights violations](#) in Belarus for March 2012. In particular, the experts note that during the reporting month,

the human rights situation is strongly dependent on foreign policy volatility. The unresolved issue of political prisoners deepened the crisis between the Belarusian authorities and the EU.

**Police takes away passport from BISS Director.** On 6 April, Academic Director of the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies [Alexei Pikulik](#) was detained by the police and had his passport and iPad seized. So far Pikulik has not been provided with any information about the timing of the return of the seized items.

**Former Prosecutor General on EuroRadio.** Former Prosecutor General and ex-Chair of the Constitutional Court Griroriy Vasilevich gave an [extensive interview to Euroradio](#), in which he suggests that the death penalty could be abolished in Belarus without a referendum. The lawyer called for the Chair of the Supreme Court of Belarus to “stop hiding behind the backs of subordinates” and comment on the death penalty verdict for Kovolev. He also suggested that the constitution and major international human rights instruments should become a “pocket book” for every public official in Belarus.

**A debate on journalism ethics in Belarus.** A heated debate on journalism ethics appeared among Belarusian media professionals following a publication on the website of Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) by [Tatiana Bublikava](#). The author raises the wide-spread problem of “copy-pasting” materials produced by others without references to the original sources.

Bublikava particularly examines the case of Belaruspartisan and Charter97 publishing a report titled “Three days with the mother of the executed,” initially produced by Polish TNV channel, the link to which the author placed on Facebook, without making any direct link to the Facebook or the initial source. The article resulted in a lively several-day long [debate](#) on Facebook and publications by activists, such as [Olga](#)

[Karach](#), and further publications by [Tatiana Bublikava](#) on Facebook and [Yanina Melnikava](#) on BAJ website.

Authorities

**Makey: Belarus is ready for dialogue with EU.** The Belarusian authorities are ready for the resumption of dialogue with the European Union, but their further steps will depend on what decisions the European Union's Council makes at its coming meeting later this month, [Uladzimir Makey](#), head of the Presidential Administration, said on 6 April. [Video](#)

**Lukashenka asks Catholic church to help mend Belarus' ties with West.** The Roman Catholic Church should help Belarus improve its relations with Western Europe, [Alexander Lukashenka](#) said while meeting with the outgoing ambassador of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to Belarus, Paul Friedrich von Fuhrherr, in Minsk on 9 April.

**Social contracting in the House of Representatives.** On 12 April, at its 10th session the House of Representatives [adopted](#) on first reading the draft law On Social Services. The new law introduces a mechanism of social state contracting, which provides funding for organizations of different ownership, including CSOs, from the state budget. 97 deputies voted in favour; 3 abstained.

April 11 Bombing

**Memorial unveiled in Minsk on subway bombing anniversary.** On 11 April, a [memorial was unveiled](#) at an entrance to the Kastychnitskaya station in Minsk to pay tribute to the victims of the 11 April 2011 subway bombing. More than 200 people gathered at the site to attend the event.

**State and independent TV produced films about the Minsk subway bombing.** On 11 April, by the anniversary of the blast in the Minsk subway state Belarusian TV showed the documentary film [Metro](#), a Poland-based TV channel Belsat released its film [Fear](#)

[of the Country of Peace.](#)

**Belarusian National Platform has adopted a statement condemning the executions.** On 11 April, the Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum has issued a [statement condemning the death penalty](#) in Belarus on the anniversary of the explosion in Minsk subway. In particular, the signers urged the authorities of Belarus to establish a moratorium on the death penalty.

*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.*