

Arrests for Egging Lenin and the People's Assembly – Politics and Civil Society Digest

Last week Belarusian civil society and security services were preoccupied with the People's Assemblies, the progress of the Ales Bialiatski trial and a discussion about proposed legislative amendments and restricting the freedom of assembly. Public debate on the future of National Civil Society Platform and economic reforms also appeared to be gaining momentum. None of the 19 December political prisoners were released last week.

POLITICS

Participants in the 7 November anti-Communist action near Lenin monument sentenced to arrest. On 8 November “Young Front” activists Mikhail Muski, Siarhei Paval and Raman Vasiliieu, who had thrown eggs at the Lenin monument on Nezalezhnast Square in Minsk during the Bolshevik Revolution celebration, were [found guilty](#) of “disorderly conduct”. Muski and Paval were sentenced to 7 days and Vasillieu to 10 days arrest.

Detentions and trials of People's Assembly organizers. On 11 November Baranavichy city court [found](#) Viktor Myarzyak and Viktor Syritsa guilty of violating the Law On Mass Events during the People's Assembly and sentenced each of the defendants to a fine of 850,000 rubles (roughly \$100).

On 11 November a Bobruisk court [sentenced](#) Konstantin Loktev and Galina Smirnova, members of the People's Assembly organizing committee. Earlier, Yuriy Buzinayev, leader of

Bobruisk UCP chapter, was [sentenced](#) to 10 days in jail on the same charges.

Vasil Paliakou, a member of the People's Assembly in Homel, was detained on 8 November. This is considered to be a [preventive arrest](#) in view of the second People's Assembly being set to be held soon. A member of the organizing committee was given a warning regarding the violation of the Law On Mass Events.

Arrests after Dzyady rally. Yuriy Novitskiy and Uladzimir Yukho [sentenced](#) to 7 days of arrest on charges of hooliganism. The activists were detained after a commemorative procession in honor of victims of Stalin's Repressions on 7 November.

Statkevich threatened with his family's arrest. The former presidential candidate has been [threatened](#) with the imprisonment of his wife and a son if he refuses to sign a petition for pardon. Statkevich says that this is not a surprise for him and he expected such a sequence of events.

Criminal case against BPF activists reopened. The criminal case against three members of the Belarusian Popular Front (Maksim Hubarevich, Ales Kalita and Siarhei Semianiuk) has been [reopened](#). They are suspected of beating a security guard on 13 August in the building of the BFP office.

Dmitry Drozd not allowed to leave the country. A former political prisoner and activist of the European Belarus campaign has been [forbidden](#) from crossing the Belarusian-Lithuanian border and was taken off the train by border guards.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Public debate on the role of National Civil Society Platform continues. On 6 November 2011, the Chairman of the Temporary Managing Committee of the National Civil Society Platform Vladimir Matskevich [published](#) a response to the open letter

circulated last week by 13 NGO members of the platform. Mr. Matskevich welcomes the open letter and urges further dialogue to elaborate a coordinated position regarding the strategy for the development of a Civil Society Platform.

NGO Perspektyva in talks with Minsk authorities over Chervenski market closure. On 8 November, Perspektyva leaders [met](#) with the Entrepreneurship Department at the Ministry of Economy to discuss the situation regarding the ongoing controversy over the closure of the Chervenskiy market in Minsk. As a result of the meeting, the Ministry informed Perspektyva, that Minsk Mayor Mikhail Ladutko will be available for a follow-up meeting to discuss solutions.

Civic Education Conference. On 4-5 November the Association of Additional Education, the EuroBelarus Consortium and Forum Syd [held](#) a conference dedicated to civic education and civic competencies in Belarus. Conference participants, which included over 30 Belarusian NGOs and experts, developed a number of recommendations towards the expansion and improvement of the quality of civic education in Belarus.

ALDA Announces a Mini-Grant Program. ALDA and its Belarusian partners Lev Sapieha Foundation and the Belarusian Organization of Working Women [announced](#) the launch of the TAMDEM project. The project will focus on supporting civic initiatives that build sustainable relations and cooperation between civil society organizations and local authorities in 2012-2013.

“Tell the truth!” campaign reminded of Ales Byalatsky. Weekends were marked by the actions [supporting](#) the leader of human rights organization “Vyasna”. In Brest, for instance, activists distributed leaflets with the text “He has thought about you for years, think about him for at least for a minute”.

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.

The People's Assembly and Attacks Against Opposition Activists – Politics and Civil Society Digest

Last Saturday's Narodny Skhod (the People's Assembly) had been long planned as a major protest event in Belarus. Authorities warned and intimidated its organizers and prospective participants in all regions of the country well in advance. As a result of this pressure and adverse weather conditions, only around one thousand people appeared in Minsk and several hundred in other regions of Belarus. Other instances of pressure against opposition included attacks and in one instance a robbery of activists by plain clothed individuals.

Masked men attack opposition politician Ukhnaieu on his way to Minsk from Lithuania. On 1 October, masked men [attacked](#) Valery Ukhnyalyow on a road shortly after midnight as the deputy chair of the “Spravedlivy Mir” (Just World) Belarusian Party of the Left was returning to Minsk from Lithuania by car with his daughter and associate Vatslav Areshka. Masked men [stole](#) \$12,000, bags, mobile phones, two laptop computers and the keys to Ukhnyalyow's home and car. Police appeared to be committed to undertake a thorough investigation.

Attempt to capture Anatol Liabedzka by plain-clothed men. The leader of United Civil Party was also attacked by people dressed in civilian clothing on 1 October. Several people twisted his arms and tried to push him into the car in the courtyard of the house where he lives. Intervention by his wife and neighbors allowed him not to be captured. Police were not interested in investigating the incident and instead questioned Liabedzka about his old passport, which allowed him to freely travel abroad.

Oleg Manaev detained by the police to keep out a briefing for diplomats. On 6 October, a founder of the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) Oleg Manaev was [detained](#) in Minsk by police officers. He was held by the police for about three hours. His detention, Oleg Manaev explains, was due to the desire of the authorities to disrupt his speech at a briefing to diplomats.

Fines and Arrests for preparation to the People's Assembly. On 4 October, Liavontsi Chypurnykh from Brest was [sentenced](#) to 5 days of arrest for handing out invitations to the People's Assembly. On 6 October, Yan Melnikau from Minsk was [sentenced](#) to 5 days for handing out leaflets with invitations to the People's Assembly at the check-point of the Minsk Automobile Plant.

Uladzimir Neklaev and Nasta Palazhanka officially warned. Former presidential candidate Neklaev was officially [warned](#) for making a foreign trip last week despite being banned from leaving Belarus. Along with several other opposition politicians, Nyaklyayew stayed in Warsaw between September 27 and 30 to take part in a series of meetings with high-ranking foreign officials on the sidelines of the Eastern Partnership Summit. Palazhanka was [warned](#) about her activity in Belarus.

Court Fined Picket Participants in Central Minsk. On 3 October, the central district court of Minsk [fined](#) detainees participating in a picket at Peramoha Square in the amount of 10-30 base units (Br350 thousand – Br1.05 million). They were accused of administrative violations under Art. 23.34 of the Administrative Code of Belarus (violation of order or organization of mass action or picketing). Lawyer Tamara

Sergei got the maximum penalty.

Utility Services Going up in Price in Belarus. In Belarus, housing and communal services [rise](#) in price from 1 October. For example, tariffs for electricity go 15% up, tariffs for thermal energy for heating and hot water – 3.2%, maintenance of residential buildings – 3%. The corresponding decree № 1300 was adopted by the Council of Ministers of Belarus on September 28.

Petrol Goes up in Price for Eighth Time this Year in Belarus. On 1 October, fuel retail prices [go up](#) by 5% in Belarus. It's going to be the eighth price increase since the beginning of the year. The scheduled protest actions were [not held](#).

Belarus Still Participating in Eastern Partnership. On 3 October, Foreign Minister of Belarus Syarhei Martynau [said](#) that Belarus will retain its part in the EU program Eastern Partnership: "We've not participated in the summit in Warsaw, but Belarus will continue participating in the Eastern Partnership."

CIVIL SOCIETY

Committee to Honor 4 Journalists for Courage. On 5 October the Committee to Protect Journalists said it has chosen four journalists for its 2011 International Press Freedom Awards in New York, an annual recognition of courageous journalism. Awarded journalists [included](#) Natalya Radina, of Charter 97 website in Belarus. The awards will be presented at the committee's annual awards ceremony in New York on 22 November.

Call for positions of coordinator and local consultants. The Office for Democratic Belarus (Brussels) [announces](#) a call for coordinator and local consultants to work in a joint initiative of the European Union and Belarus *Clearing House*. The initiative was established by the Office for Democratic

Belarus (Brussels), in partnership with EuroBelarus, Forum Syd (Sweden) and Pact. It aims at strengthening the capacity of Belarusian NGOs, promoting their cooperation with the EU and its Member States, as well as improving communication and cooperation between the Belarusian CSOs, the EU, donors and international implementers.

Gay Pride in Minsk. Minsk Gay Pride-2011 will [take place](#) from 11- 23 October. The organizer is a human rights project "GayBelarus" and its chairman Sergei Androsenka.

Alexei Pikulik Elected BISS Academic Director. BISS completes its search for a new academic director. BISS's new Academic Director [is](#) Alexei Pikulik, who previously worked for BISS as a senior analyst.

New project for youth. Youth Education Centre *Fialta* launched a project '[Catch the present](#)'. Over nine months 25 young people will participate in trainings, master classes, as well as implementing their own ideas in various areas of life (culture, sports, literature, science, IT, entertainment, education, etc.).

Survey about people with disabilities. Under the survey conducted by IISEPS in September 2011, the Office of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has [initiated](#) a series of issues concerning people with disabilities, as well as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In particular, the data shows that there is no noticeable improvement in the attitude towards people with disabilities in Belarusian society.

The fourth call for proposals under the program "Meeting Place is a Dialogue." International NGO "Understanding" ("Ponimaniye") together with the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" (Germany) [announced](#) a call for proposals. The program provides funds to organizations and institutions that create the conditions for realizing the

potential of older people and establishing a productive dialogue between the generations.

Child Fund International calls for proposals [aimed](#) at preventing child abandonment and institutionalization of children. The competition is held under the program direction "Development of services targeted at the prevention of institutionalization of orphans in the community." The maximum amount of funding per project is \$ 10 000.

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