

National Human Rights Index

<https://index.belhelcom.org>

2024

General Human Rights Measures

Expert Commentary

The score:	1,7	
Including scores by component:		
• State policy on human rights	1,4	
• Interaction with civil society	1,2	-0,1
• Interaction with international mechanisms	2	
• Equality and non-discrimination	2,1	-0,1

Assessing the overall human rights situation in 2024, the Index experts gave lower scores than in 2023.

Among the main features:

- expansion of the legal basis and practice of cross-border repressions
- several “waves” of pardons have not changed the overall situation of political prisoners
- the legalization of direct discrimination on the basis of SOGI
- the emergence of a practice of reviewing individual constitutional complaints by the Constitutional Court
- updating of legislation on gratuitous (sponsorship) assistance potentially expands opportunities for corporate financing of CSO activities
- Belarus' submission of periodic reports to a number of international mechanisms (UDHR, CEDAW, CRC, CAT)

• State policy on human rights

In 2024, the Belarusian authorities did not take any steps to remedy the situation of systematic and massive human rights violations. State policy is openly aimed at “legalizing” repression, i.e., giving repressive measures the appearance of legality by legislating arbitrary and discriminatory restrictions on human rights. In 2024, there was a further tightening of already stringent regulations, eliminating “loopholes” and expanding the scope of repressive legislation¹. In 2024, the grounds for criminal liability were expanded to include: unauthorized departure from country of persons with access to state

¹ BHC. HUMAN RIGHTS IN BELARUS Main trends in state policy Analysis for 2024:
<https://trends.belhelcom.org/storage/reviews/March2025/bUI7xWXSu3jFKQ1INb6U.pdf>



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secrets²; reporting on the presence/movement of Russian military equipment on the territory of Belarus; violence against the (former) president and members of his family. The list of crimes for which a person may be held extraterritorially liable has been expanded from 3 to 17.³ Now, virtually any actions of active Belarusians abroad are subject to extraterritorial prosecution, from “rehabilitation of Nazism” or “denial of the genocide of the Belarusian people” to “discrediting the Republic of Belarus” and participation in “extremist formations.” In 2024, 109 persons abroad were officially charged⁴ within “special” (in absentia) criminal proceedings.

In 2024, three strategic documents were adopted/revised: The Concept of Legal Policy⁵ (consolidating the concept of “historical and ideological foundations and ideological imperatives of legal policy,” effectively consolidating the ideologization of legislation), the National Security Concept⁶ (introducing a “subject” approach to determining the source of threats to national security) and the Military Doctrine⁷ (some forms of expression of dissent are classified as military risks and challenges).

In parallel with the introduction of new punishments, the authorities carried out a selective “softening” of criminal policy in non-political cases, but made exceptions for politically motivated cases. Thus, in 2024, some humanizing changes were announced (alternative measures of punishment, mitigation of sanctions, etc.), but they do not directly apply to so-called “extremist” crimes.

The authorities continued to actively use legislation on combating terrorism and extremism to suppress dissent.

The courts and law enforcement agencies continue to be instruments of repression, carrying out arbitrary detentions and handing down manifestly unjust sentences for political reasons. As of December 29, 2024, there were 1,265 political prisoners (1,097 men and 168 women) in Belarusian places of detention⁸. According to the Human Rights Center “Viasna,” at least 8,895 cases of repression were recorded in 2024; and at least 5,890 trials were held on political and administrative charges, which is almost 2,000 more than in 2023⁹.

2024 was also marked by several waves of pardons, during which a total of 227 political prisoners were released¹⁰.

In 2024, the practice of *in absentia* convictions continued.

² <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400022>

³ <https://trends.belhelcom.org/storage/reviews/February2025/0RniSzTA2HuMfxM5W7Eo.pdf>

⁴ <https://sk.gov.by/ru/news-ru/view/spetsialnoe-proizvodstvo-11810/>

⁵ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=P32300196>

⁶ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=P924v0005>

⁷ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P924v0006>

⁸ <https://spring96.org/ru/news/117053>

⁹ <https://spring96.org/ru/news/117084>

¹⁰ <https://spring96.org/ru/news/117053>



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None of the reports of torture, ill-treatment, or death of prisoners were effectively investigated – the authorities deny the very fact of torture, maintaining complete impunity for security forces for crimes against protesters and detainees.

The authorities continue to deny the existence of human rights problems. In 2024, they continued to promote the narrative that there are no political prisoners in the country, while actively using the concept of “extremist crimes” to adopt discriminatory measures.

In 2024, a practice¹¹ of implementing the constitutional complaint right emerged: in two cases, the Court refused to initiate proceedings. So far, the issues¹² considered by the Constitutional Court are difficult to classify as fundamental human rights.

Human rights education should be part of legal education, but the relevant action plan for 2024 – 2029¹³ does not contain the words “human rights” at all, although it does provide for measures relating to the rights of specific groups (children’s rights, women’s rights, consumer rights).

Human rights education is largely provided through informal education mechanisms and the initiative of active teachers in formal education. 2024 is marked by a number of campaigns of persecution and arbitrary use of anti-extremism legislation against teachers and educational initiatives¹⁴.

In August 2024, the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, published its first joint report on the human rights situation in selected countries, criticizing Western countries and glossing over problems in Belarus (and Russia)¹⁵. The report was presented at the side-event of the 56th session of the UN Human Rights Council at a conference entitled “The universality and indivisibility of human rights for all: State practice,”¹⁶ thus clearly demonstrating the manipulation of human rights rhetoric.

● Interaction with civil society

In 2024, the process of “bringing the founding documents into line with the new requirements” (which is effectively equivalent to re-registration) for a number of categories of public associations (republican and international) was to be completed. This process began in 2023 in connection with amendments to the law on public associations¹⁷ (see commentary on the right to freedom of association).

In 2024, the first sentence was handed down under the revived Article 193-1¹⁸.

¹¹ http://kc.gov.by/Акты_Конституционного_Суда/2024

¹² <https://pravo.by/novosti/obshchestvenno-politicheskie-i-v-oblasti-prava/2024/september/78646/>

¹³ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=C22400024>

¹⁴ Thus, in the fall of 2024, the online project “Adukavanka,” which provides methodological assistance to teachers, was recognized as an “extremist formation” <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/78658.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.mfa.gov.by/publication/reports/c1c49e0436e62aba.html>

¹⁶ Side-event “Universality and Indivisibility of Human Rights for All: States Practices”

¹⁷ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12300251>

¹⁸ <https://spring96.org/ru/news/115909>



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Persecution for horizontal organization, solidarity, and mutual assistance continues. 2024 began with a mass raid by the KGB on relatives and friends of political prisoners who received food aid from the *INeedHelpBY* initiative, which the authorities recognized as an “extremist formation”; As a result, more than 150 persons were fined heavily and forced to pay compensation equal to the amount of the “foreign” payment.¹⁹

Dialogue between state authorities and civil society (even as represented by GONGOs) is negligible. There is no information about discussions with civil society on the UPR report. The activity of the Sustainable Development Partnership Group has significantly decreased.²⁰

Mechanisms for civil society participation in the discussion of draft legislation, programs, and policies in the field of human rights are still limited to a legal forum where drafts can be posted for discussion. Experts noted the extension of the discussion period for the Health Code at the request of the public²¹, which is unprecedented (the 10-day period established by law was usually observed).

In 2024, when two election cycles took place in quick succession (the “single voting day” and most of the stages of the presidential election*), civil society organizations (BRYU, FTU, Belaya Rus, etc.) played an important role.

From the point of view of civil society activities, experts noted an important positive step: the new version of Decree No. 300 “On the provision and use of gratuitous (sponsorship) assistance,” adopted in 2024²², expands the possibilities for corporate financing of CSO activities²³. Experts agreed that this instrument is theoretical if a CSO has human rights activities among its objectives in its charter and decides to implement them, which is unlikely in repressive conditions. The practical implementation of these provisions is still not very noticeable.

Experts also noted the retention in the new procedural legislation²⁴ of the figure of the public representative, which was not included in the initial draft but was successfully re-introduced²⁵ as a result of public discussions at a legal forum.

● Interaction with international mechanisms

In 2024, Belarus selectively interacted with international human rights mechanisms, which was dictated by the political situation. In general, the authorities maintained minimal contact (not to mention good-faith cooperation) with UN bodies and other structures, as described in the report of the

¹⁹ <https://spring96.org/ru/news/117084>

²⁰ <https://sdqs.by/architecture/partnerskaya-gruppa-ustojchivogo-razvitiya/>

²¹ <https://pravo.by/novosti/novosti-pravo-by/2024/december/79829/>

²² <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P32400112>

²³ <https://belhumanrights.house/news/analiz-lawtrend-bezvozmездnaya-sponsorskaya-pomosh-osnovnye-izmeneniya-zakonodatelstva>

²⁴ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=Hk2400359>

²⁵ [2024 CSO Meter Belarus Country Report_0.pdf](#), p.74



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UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus²⁶. Experts noted that in 2024, Belarus responded somewhat more actively to communications²⁷ from special procedures, which some experts linked to reporting under the UPR. The lack of good-faith cooperation on the part of Belarus was also noted by the Committee against Torture, which conducted an investigation²⁸ into Belarus under Article 20 of the CAT; in 2023, Belarus expressed its disagreement with the Committee's conclusions, and in February and May 2024, Belarus stated²⁹ that it did not consent to the publication of the report on the results of the investigation.

On April 4, 2024, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the situation in Belarus³⁰, extending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and establishing a new international mechanism to investigate human rights violations in Belarus: a standing *group of independent experts* to document serious violations and possible crimes against humanity in Belarus.

In 2024, Lithuania referred crimes against humanity in Belarus related to post-election torture to the ICC³¹.

In 2024, Belarus' periodic reports were reviewed by a number of international monitoring mechanisms: the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)³², the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination³³ and, for the first time, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities³⁴. Belarus prepared its reports on time and participated in all established procedures. No information on public participation in the preparation of these reports is available.

There was virtually no interaction with OSCE and Council of Europe institutions in 2024. The ODIHR mission was not invited to observe the 2024 elections³⁵. In 2024, the OSCE Vienna Mechanism was initiated³⁶, but Belarus ignored the questions raised in it about political prisoners.

²⁶ A/79/201 (2024) <https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/201>

²⁷ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TmSearch/Results>

²⁸ <https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=UUaqXALHw1G4p6ioqTCBeNoWCP TH2eKdwaWUeGxEynomXozY%2BEu1NLiUD5LM%2FSHHpGMDBoxUyOXwAe4qVMvHd%2FA%3D%3D>

²⁹ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCA T%2FITB%2FBLR%2F10040&Lang=en

³⁰ A/HRC/RES/55/27 <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/RES/55/27>

³¹ <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2024/10/1456941>

³² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/concluding-observations/cedawcblrco9-concluding-observations-ninth-periodic-report>

³³ <https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=wFGolIHLYtM235gMrKl6rNAr5vvFLXteqVm Y9VMFNP1pALXUW0HggF9KSUxyQajalBjfbCzTanL3EIL7UuYOC5%2FKA7jUS66RRqITP4FWDL8%3D>

³⁴ <https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=Ag4fZOjp0jW5XNCI3lKrWhASleNWYEVK01 HmWQ5MGTnPHjPuD18vvqxBitzDQWAop7HkUENJR7vAb33VwlhDiO%3D%3D>

³⁵ <https://www.oscepa.org/ru/novosti-i-multimedia/press-relizy/2024/reshenie-ne-priglasht-nablyudatelej-obse-na-parlamentskie-vybory-protivorechit-mezhdunarodnym-obyazatelstvam-belarusi>

³⁶ [Joint Statement on Behalf of 38 OSCE States to Invoke the Vienna Human Dimension Mechanism on Political Prisoners in Belarus - U.S. Embassy in Belarus](https://www.oscepa.org/ru/novosti-i-multimedia/press-relizy/2024/reshenie-ne-priglasht-nablyudatelej-obse-na-parlamentskie-vybory-protivorechit-mezhdunarodnym-obyazatelstvam-belarusi)



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In 2024, Belarus joined the SCO (which may affect cross-border persecution for “extremism”)³⁷. A number of acts adopted within the framework of the Union State contain human rights rhetoric³⁸, but do not actually serve as instruments for their protection and promotion.

Amendments³⁹ to the Law on International Treaties of the Republic of Belarus extend the requirement of mandatory ratification to treaties concerning fundamental human and civil rights and freedoms. Experts noted the positive nature of this reference to human rights. This provision should ensure better public access, as Parliamentary debates are generally supposed to be public.

● Equality and non-discrimination

In 2024, the situation regarding equality and non-discrimination in Belarus remained unsatisfactory. Not only did the state fail to adopt new measures to protect vulnerable groups, but it also expanded discriminatory practices against certain categories of citizens. Discrimination can be observed both de jure (in legislation) and de facto (in the everyday practices of the authorities).

2024 was marked by an intensification of homophobic initiatives by the state: at the legislative level, the list of information that could be harmful to the health and development of children was expanded to include information “aimed at promoting homosexual relations, gender reassignment, pedophilia, and childlessness.”⁴⁰ A resolution by the Ministry of Culture⁴¹ amended the definition of pornography to explicitly list queer practices and trans status as “non-traditional sexual relations”⁴². Thus, a qualitatively new situation can be observed: the formalization of direct legislative discrimination on the basis of SOGI. Direct persecution of the LGBTQ+ community (detentions, arrests) has also intensified⁴³.

Discrimination against Belarusian-speaking citizens within Belarus itself continues⁴⁴. The number of children receiving education in the Belarusian language continues to decline⁴⁵.

Gender equality and women's rights were examined by the CEDAW, which once again noted the absence of a law on gender equality, insufficient legal protection for women against discrimination, as

³⁷ <https://president.gov.by/ru/belarus/economics/integracija/shos>

³⁸ <https://pravo.by/novosti/obshchestvenno-politicheskie-i-v-oblasti-prava/2024/december/79844/>

³⁹ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400028>

⁴⁰ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3941&p0=2024069001>

⁴¹ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22441365>

⁴² <https://belhelcom.org/ru/news/bezopasno-li-teper-imet-akkaunt-s-ukazaniem-seksualnoy-orientacii-v-prilozhenii-dlya-znakomstv>

⁴³ <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/79335.html>

⁴⁴ <https://spring96.org/ru/news/117475>

⁴⁵ <https://pozirk.online/ru/news/137901/>



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well as the difficult situation of women political prisoners and reports of serious repression against women's rights defenders.⁴⁶

Discrimination on the basis of political beliefs remains widespread, with persecution affecting all aspects of life. Politically motivated dismissals continue in labor relations⁴⁷, as do ideological restrictions on a number of professions (in 2024 introduced for tour guides and interpreters⁴⁸, notaries⁴⁹). Discriminatory violations of cultural rights continue in the cultural sphere⁵⁰. In places of detention, political prisoners are subjected to particularly cruel treatment compared to ordinary prisoners, including the practice of *incommunicado* detention⁵¹.

The arbitrary application of anti-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation continues and is expanding for the purpose of persecuting people for their political views⁵². In 2024, the human rights center Viasna recorded 1,721 convictions under "extremist" criminal articles⁵³. In 2024, 2,424 information products were recognized as "extremist materials," including 479 Telegram resources; the list of organizations, groups, and individual entrepreneurs involved in extremist activities was expanded to include 87 new "extremist formations"⁵⁴.

In 2024, the Concept of Migration Policy of the Republic of Belarus for 2024–2028 was approved⁵⁵, which lists among the fundamental principles of migration policy "the prevention of discrimination against migrants on the basis of age, gender, race, language, religious, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, property status, place of residence or other circumstances." At the same time, the Concept uses a somewhat xenophobic definition of "persons who share spiritual values similar to those of the Belarusian people and wish to integrate into Belarusian society," who are equated with Belarusians abroad for the purposes of potential resettlement in Belarus.

Among the positive developments is the adoption in October 2024 of amendments to social security legislation⁵⁶, which restore equality between working and non-working pensioners: from January 1, 2025, restrictions on the size of pensions for working pensioners will be abolished.

⁴⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/concluding-observations/cedawcblrco9-concluding-observations-ninth-periodic-report>

⁴⁷ <https://www.dw.com/ru/neblagonadezen-kogo-v-belarusi-teper-ne-vozmuet-na-rabotu/a-68734245> ; <https://nashaniva.com/ru/333385>

⁴⁸ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=C22200582&p1=1&p5=0>

⁴⁹ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22441757>

⁵⁰ <https://penbelarus.org/2025/02/20/manitoryng-parushennyau-kulturnyh-pravou-i-pravou-chalaveka-u-dachynenni-da-dzeyachau-kultury-belarus-2024-god.html>

⁵¹ <https://spring96.org/ru/news/117053>

⁵² <https://humanconstantia.org/itogi-borby-s-ekstremizmom-v-belarusi-za-2024-god/>

⁵³ <https://spring96.org/be/news/117166>

⁵⁴ <https://humanconstantia.org/itogi-borby-s-ekstremizmom-v-belarusi-za-2024-god/>

⁵⁵ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=C22400048>

⁵⁶ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P32400402>



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