

National Human Rights Index<http://index.belhelcom.org>**2024****Right of Peaceful Assembly**

Expert Commentary

The score:	1,1
<i>Including scores by component:</i>	
• General principles	1
• Procedural issues regarding the organization and conduct of assemblies	1,4
• Holding of assemblies	1

The situation with freedom of peaceful assembly in 2024 has not changed fundamentally compared to 2023: experts have not recorded any significant changes in either legislation or practice. In the context of a continuing repressive environment and the virtual absence of opportunities for both spontaneous and pre-planned assemblies initiated by citizens, it is impossible to objectively assess the implementation of this right in practice. The assessment of the right to peaceful assembly in 2024 is similar to that in 2023, including all its components.

• General principles

Legislation still does not include a presumption of freedom of assembly and contains excessive restrictions and requirements, including the payment of costs. In practice, the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and non-discrimination are not observed, and attempts to obtain permission for peaceful assembly remain unsafe due to the risk of political persecution.

• Procedural issues regarding the organization and conduct of assemblies

In 2024, the regulation of assemblies remained unchanged: the notification procedure for the authorities remains burdensome and unsafe, and the right to appeal bans is not guaranteed. The increasing ideologization of state bodies, the dependence of the judiciary, and the arbitrary application of legislation continue to exacerbate the situation. Spontaneous, simultaneous assemblies and counter-demonstrations remain prohibited.

• Holding of assemblies¹

In 2024, there were no independent peaceful assemblies, but arrests and criminal prosecutions for the 2020 protests continued. During the year, at least 1,721 persons were convicted under Article 342 of

¹ <https://spring96.org/ru/news/117167>



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the Criminal Code, with courts often imposing the maximum penalty of imprisonment, even though the article provides for milder penalties such as arrest or restriction of liberty.

On July 24, under Article 342 in the “circle dance case” sentenced were G. Klimashevich² (to one year of imprisonment in a general regime correctional colony) and K. Solovyova³ (to one and a half years’ imprisonment with a suspended sentence).

In 2024, the criminal prosecution of citizens returning from abroad continued. On July 31, the Oktyabrsky District Court of Grodno considered a case under Article 342 of the Criminal Code against D. Glushchenko, who was detained shortly after returning from Poland.⁴

Under Article 342 entire families or groups of relatives are often subjected to politically motivated criminal prosecution. On October 25, two families were brought to criminal responsibility in the Frunzensky District Court of Minsk for participating in protests: Larisa and Oleg Petrashkevich, Sergei and Yulia Kuprienko. In the Baranovichi District Court, as part of a large group case related to the events of 2020, the case against Vadim and Oleg Khilchuk was heard. In the Leninsky District Court of Brest, the case against Yakov and Pavel Deneyko was heard as part of the same group case. In the Dzerzhinsky District Court, the case against Ekaterina and Ivan Byvaltsev was heard.

In 2024, the practice of repeated criminal prosecution of those convicted on political grounds continued. Dmitry Knyazev and Dmitry Androsiuk⁵, defendants in the case of mass disorders in Brest, who were convicted in 2021, were again sentenced in December under Article 342 of the Criminal Code.

Independent coverage and in-person monitoring of peaceful assemblies, where they take place, is not possible in the situation of mass repression. In 2024, Belarus remains the most dangerous country in Europe for journalists, ranking 167th in the RSF press freedom index. As of December 2024, 45 media representatives (BAJ) and 19 bloggers (Viasna) were deprived of their liberty. Repression continues: searches, detentions, recognition of media as extremist groups/materials, criminal prosecution, and blocking of resources are intensifying control over the information space.

² <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en/person/hennadz-klimaszevich>

³ <https://prisoners.spring96.org/ru/person/kryscina-salauiova>

⁴ <https://t.me/viasna96/26992>

⁵ <https://prisoners.spring96.org/ru/person/dzmitryi-vasilyevich-androsjuk>



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