

## International Accountability Platform for Belarus

### Sixth progress report to supporting States 1 October 2023 to 31 March 2024

#### *Public*

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY PLATFORM FOR BELARUS.....                    | 2  |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....                                                              | 3  |
| <i>The situation on the ground</i> .....                                            | 3  |
| <i>Key achievements</i> .....                                                       | 3  |
| A. The situation on the ground .....                                                | 5  |
| B. Fulfilling Core IAPB objectives .....                                            | 6  |
| <b>a. Objective and scope of work</b> .....                                         | 7  |
| <b>b. Collection of information and evidence</b> .....                              | 7  |
| <i>i. Collection of information from survivor-victims and other witnesses</i> ..... | 7  |
| <i>ii. Collection of open-source information</i> .....                              | 7  |
| <b>c. Assistance to accountability bodies</b> .....                                 | 8  |
| <i>i. OHCHR examination on the human rights situation in Belarus</i> .....          | 8  |
| <i>ii. Criminal justice authorities</i> .....                                       | 9  |
| <i>iii. Non-governmental organisations and lawyers</i> .....                        | 9  |
| <i>iv. Ongoing challenges</i> .....                                                 | 9  |
| <b>d. Knowledge sharing and capacity building</b> .....                             | 9  |
| <b>e. Facilitating access to mental health and psychosocial support</b> .....       | 10 |
| <b>f. IAPB Infrastructure</b> .....                                                 | 10 |
| C. The beginning of Phase III .....                                                 | 10 |

## ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY PLATFORM FOR BELARUS

The IAPB is a coalition of independent non-government organisations that have joined forces to collect, consolidate, verify, and preserve evidence of gross human rights violations constituting crimes under international law allegedly committed by Belarusian authorities and others in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and its aftermath. To this end, the IAPB builds on the ongoing efforts of Belarusian human rights organisations to collect information about human rights violations committed in Belarus. The information and evidence collected by the IAPB will assist independent and fair criminal investigations and prosecutions, carried out in accordance with international law and standards, in national or international courts or tribunals that have or may have jurisdiction over those crimes. The information and evidence also supported other mechanisms aiming to ensure accountability for crimes under international law allegedly committed in Belarus, including the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Examination of the human rights situation in Belarus.

The IAPB is composed of a Steering Committee, responsible for leading the IAPB's work, a secretariat, and an Advisory Council. The Steering Committee is composed of DIGNITY – Danish Institute against Torture (lead), Human Rights Centre “Viasna” (Viasna) (co-lead), International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus (co-lead) and REDRESS (co-lead). In addition to a number of Belarusian organisations that do not wish to be publicly listed for security reasons, the Advisory Council is composed of the following organisations: European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR); International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH); International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT); Norwegian Helsinki Committee; Physicians for Human Rights (PHR); Reporters Without Borders (RSF); and World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The work of the IAPB is carried out by a Secretariat composed of legal and medical practitioners with expertise and experience in international criminal investigations and prosecutions.

The IAPB was launched on 24 March 2021 in response to the OSCE Moscow Mechanism rapporteur's report on Belarus to the OSCE Permanent Council on 5 November 2020. Among other things, the report calls on States to hold perpetrators of torture and inhumane treatment, including sexual violence, and other gross human rights violations committed in the context of the 9 August 2020 presidential elections in Belarus to account.

The IAPB is or has been supported by a wide range of States, notably Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as well as the European Union.

The IAPB Secretariat and co-leads express deep gratitude towards all our past and present donors for their immense generosity and unwavering support towards our cause. We are hopeful to continue receiving their support in the future as we work towards the prompt implementation of objectives for Phase III.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *The situation on the ground*

The concerted campaign of violence and repression in Belarus continues, with nearly 1,402 political prisoners, including 171 women, remaining in prison. The tragic deaths of political detainees Vadzim Khrasko and Ihar Lednik in early 2024 serve as grim reminders of the harsh conditions within Belarusian prisons, where activists such as Nobel laureate Ales Bialiatski endure severe sentences. Despite widespread condemnation, Belarusian authorities persist in abusing anti-extremism laws to quash dissent and silence political opposition, as highlighted by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Belarus. The situation remains dire, with over 3,900 individuals and 191 entities labelled as extremists, while crackdowns on dissent, including arbitrary detentions and targeting of perceived opposition, continue unabated. Meanwhile, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights continued to raise concerns of potential crimes against humanity in Belarus, based on extensive evidence of persecution and human rights abuses.

### *Key achievements*

The IAPB's sixth progress report, covering the period between 1 October 2023 and 31 March 2024, highlights significant achievements in the IAPB's efforts to counteract persistent impunity in Belarus. During the reporting period, the IAPB shared extensive factual and legal analysis of evidence and other relevant information with criminal justice authorities in three states that had submitted requests for information, i.e. with four states since April 2021. Furthermore, the IAPB has supported the work of two non-governmental actors working with criminal justice authorities in two other states and is aiming to further ongoing criminal investigations or help relevant authorities to instigate them. Herewith, the IAPB contributed to ongoing criminal investigations or inquiries in four states. Additionally, the IAPB has provided evidence and information to the OHCHR examination of the human rights situation in Belarus (OEB), thereby contributing to the findings published in their recent report.

### *Collection of information and evidence*

During the reporting period, the IAPB co-leads collected information and evidence from 113 victims and other witnesses (68 men, 44 women and 1 non-binary person) regarding potential crimes under international law, including relevant documentary evidence such as medical and court records, bringing the total to around 28,498 documents. Since April 2021, the IAPB also collected over one million items from open sources, including 172,153 videos, 460,962 images and 431,162 text items from 789 sources.

### *Consolidation, preservation and analysis of information and evidence*

Since April 2021, approximately 28,498 documents relating to 2577 survivor-victims and witnesses, including witness statements, medical reports and court records, and related translations in English, have been structured for preservation and uploaded to the closed-source database. Of these, approximately 23,051 files or 80.93% of materials had been reviewed according to the IAPB's survivor-victim/witness file review strategy, screened for relevance and readability and tagged according to a custom-made coding layout by the IAPB's team of bilingual (Russian-English) reviewers.

The tailored coding layouts developed by the IAPB enable data reviewers to tag each piece of information and evidence according to identified facts (such as inter alia location, time/date, incident and state actor). This facilitates data searches in response to assistance requests from accountability bodies both now and in the future.

The IAPB also preserved and further expanded its collection of open-source intelligence in its customized digital database, ensuring it is available for accountability purposes in years to come. Discrete data collection sets, based on relevance and reliability, were created for review, tagging and analysis and, as of 31 March 2024, the IAPB had reviewed and tagged 3,846 open-source files.

### *Support to the OHCHR Examination on the human rights situation in Belarus*

During the reporting period, the IAPB continued to support the OEB as it investigated the human rights situation in Belarus by providing access to 3,027 records relating to a range of human rights violations allegedly committed in Belarus on 17 October 2023. The IAPB looks forward to similarly supporting the new investigative body to be established to advance accountability for international crimes in Belarus, Group of Independent Experts on the human rights situation in Belarus.<sup>1</sup>

### *Support to criminal justice authorities*

During the reporting period, the IAPB responded to requests for assistance from criminal justice authorities in three states, providing evidence of the violations and crimes committed within the relevant temporal and geographic scope. The submissions contain factual and legal analysis of the underlying acts and contextual elements of crimes against humanity and provide insights into the role of state structures involved in their commission. One of the submissions provides information in relation to potential victims residing on the territory of the requesting state.

### *Support to non-governmental organisations*

The IAPB supported the work of one non-governmental organisation and one independent lawyer working with criminal justice authorities in two further states (other than those that submitted the requests) and aims to further ongoing criminal investigations or help relevant authorities to instigate them.

### *Governance and knowledge sharing*

The IAPB Steering Committee continued to meet weekly to make policy and strategy decisions. Operational-level teams also continued to work in close collaboration, including through weekly meetings on operational matters and regular in-person workshops.

The IAPB met with the Advisory Council as a whole in October 2023 and in February 2024, and members bilaterally to share information about group members' work and facilitate coordination and collaboration, in particular concerning country-based working groups. In May 2024, the IAPB will conduct a workshop for partner organisations with the support of internal and external experts, focused on the crimes of deportation and sexual and gender-based conduct.

The IAPB continued to implement referral pathways for evidence-based mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for all survivor-victims and witnesses, as well as IAPB teams. Since October 2023, 98 survivors (35 women and 63 men) have received MHPSS services.

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<sup>1</sup> [Group of Independent Experts on the Human Rights Situation in Belarus | OHCHR](#)

## A. The situation on the ground

Since May 2020, almost 3,100 people, including about 550 women, have been recognised as political prisoners in Belarus.<sup>2</sup> As of 31 March 2024, 1,402 political prisoners, including 171 women, remain in prison.<sup>3</sup>

Nobel Peace Prize winner Ales Bialiatski, Vice-president of the International Federation for Human Rights Valiantsin Stefanovic, Coordinator of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections” Uladzimir Labkovich, Viasna Volunteer Service coordinator Marfa Rabkova, Viasna volunteer Andrei Chapiuk, and Human Constanta human rights activist Nasta Loika are serving their sentences in penal colonies in Belarus.<sup>4</sup>

On the night of 8 to 9 January 2024, political prisoner Vadzim Khrasko, who in August 2023 was sentenced to three years in prison for several donations to initiatives declared extremist by the authorities, died in penal colony No. 3 in Vitsba village.<sup>5</sup> On 20 February 2024, another political prisoner Ihar Lednik, a public activist, who in September 2023 was sentenced to three years in prison for ‘slandering’ Lukashenko, died in the prison hospital in Koliadichi, where he was taken from penal colony No. 2 in Bobruisk.<sup>6</sup>

There is still no information about the fate of a number of political prisoners: Viktor Babaryka (last heard from on 6 February 2023), Mikola Statkevich (last heard from on 10 February 2023), Maria Kalesnikava (last heard from on 15 February 2023), and Ihar Losik (last heard from on 20 February 2023), and Siarhei Tsikhanouski (last heard from on 9 March 2023). Other political prisoners have been kept *incommunicado* for a long time.<sup>7</sup>

In October 2023, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus Anaïs Marin noted that “the Belarusian authorities are misusing counter-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation to further purge civic space, suppress freedom of expression and eradicate political opposition.”<sup>8</sup>

By 31 March 2024, 3,932 people were listed by the authorities on the “List of Citizens of the Republic of Belarus, Foreign Citizens or Stateless Persons Involved in Extremist Activities” for

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Center “Viasna”, Human rights situation in Belarus. March 2024, 08-Apr-2024, <https://spring96.org/en/news/114931>.

<sup>3</sup> The Human Rights Center “Viasna”, Human rights situation in Belarus. March 2024, 08-Apr-2024, <https://spring96.org/en/news/114931>. See also OHCHR, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Situation of human rights in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and in its aftermath, A/HRC/55/61, 15-Mar-2024, para. 15, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5561-situation-human-rights-belarus-run-2020-presidential-election>.

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Center “Viasna”, Human rights situation in Belarus. March 2024, 08-Apr-2024, <https://spring96.org/en/news/114931>.

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Center “Viasna”, Human rights situation in Belarus. January 2024, 04-Feb-2024, <https://spring96.org/ru/news/114233>.

<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Center “Viasna”, Human rights situation in Belarus. February 2024, 04-Mar-2024, <https://spring96.org/ru/news/114628>. See also Human Rights Center “Viasna”, Ihar Lednik, undated, <https://prisoners.spring96.org/ru/person/ihar-lednik>.

<sup>7</sup> The Human Rights Center “Viasna”, Human rights situation in Belarus. March 2024, 08-Apr-2024, <https://spring96.org/en/news/114931>. See also OHCHR, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Situation of human rights in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and in its aftermath, A/HRC/55/61, 15-Mar-2024, para. 35, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5561-situation-human-rights-belarus-run-2020-presidential-election>.

<sup>8</sup> The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Belarus misuses counter-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation to stifle dissent: UN expert, 26-Oct-2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/belarus-misuses-counter-terrorism-and-anti-extremism-legislation-stifle>.

participating in street protests or other perceived forms of dissent and 191 entities were recognised as extremist formations, including Human Rights Center “Viasna.”<sup>9</sup>

On 16 February 2024, the Chairman of the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Belarus, Dmitrii Gora said that over 1,310 criminal cases on extremist activities had been processed by investigative bodies in 2023.<sup>10</sup>

In January 2024, KGB officers conducted mass searches and detentions of former political prisoners and relatives of political prisoners who had received food aid through the INeedHelpBY project.<sup>11</sup> From 1 January to 31 March 2024, 987 politically motivated detentions were recorded in Belarus, of which one-third were women.<sup>12</sup>

On 20 February 2024, at a meeting with the senior staff of State bodies of the national security system, Aleksander Lukashenka stated that “tactical nuclear weapons are deployed on the country’s territory. Today it is the most important element of deterrence of any adversary.”<sup>13</sup> This statement is a continuation of his position that “Belarus is in danger due to NATO expansion,” and he, together with Vladimir Putin, is ready to fight back.<sup>14</sup>

On 20 March 2024, the Court of Justice of the European Union lifted sanctions against the Belarusian state-owned enterprise “Belshina”, imposed in December 2021 due to repression in Belarus, considering it “a significant source of income for the Lukashenko regime.”<sup>15</sup>

In its March 2024 report, based on the human rights violations described in the report, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights concluded that it “has reasonable grounds to believe that the crime against humanity of persecution may have been committed [between 1 May 2020 and 31 December 2023], along with other underlying acts, which may be established as a result of the human rights violations described.”<sup>16</sup>

## B. Fulfilling Core IAPB objectives

The IAPB continued to collect information and evidence from survivors/victims and other witnesses and open sources to establish the commission of crimes under international law

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, On measures to counter extremism and the rehabilitation of Nazism, 12-Apr-2024, <https://www.mvd.gov.by/ru/news/8642>.

<sup>10</sup> SB.BY, Gora announced the number of extremist criminal cases brought to court in 2023, 16-Feb-2024, <https://www.sb.by/articles/gora-ozvuchil-kolichestvo-ugolovnykh-del-ekstremistskoy-napravlenosti-peredannykh-v-sud-v-2023-godu.html>.

<sup>11</sup> The Human Rights Center “Viasna”, Almost a thousand people were detained in the first three months of 2024 in Belarus, 24-Apr-2024, <https://spring96.org/ru/news/115071>.

<sup>12</sup> The Human Rights Center “Viasna”, Almost a thousand people were detained in the first three months of 2024 in Belarus, 24-Apr-2024, <https://spring96.org/ru/news/115071>.

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, Meeting with the senior staff of State bodies of the national security system, 20-Feb-2024, <https://www.mvd.gov.by/ru/news/12310>.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, Meeting with the senior staff of State bodies of the national security system, 20-Feb-2024, <https://www.mvd.gov.by/ru/news/12310>.

<sup>15</sup> ECJ, Judgment of the General Court, Case T-115/22, 20-Mar-2024, <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?docid=284068&mode=lst&pageIndex=1&dir=&occ=first&part=1&text=&doclang=EN&cid=3938294>. See also Nasha Niva, European Court lifts sanctions against Belshina, 20-Mar-2024, <https://nashaniva.com/ru/338832>.

<sup>16</sup> OHCHR, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Situation of human rights in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and in its aftermath, A/HRC/55/61, 15-Mar-2024, paras. 50-52, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5561-situation-human-rights-belarus-run-2020-presidential-election>.



allegedly committed by Belarusian state authorities. This information was then shared with domestic and international accountability bodies.

### a. Objective and scope of work

The IAPB pursues the following strategic outcomes:

- Strategic Outcome 1: Consolidate the IAPB's evidence hub by continuing to expand evidentiary sources, centralise the preservation of information and evidence, and analyse crimes under international law committed in Belarus in the context of the August 2020 election and its aftermath.
- Strategic Outcome 2: Expand the range of evidentiary and analytical products, accountability processes and other actors the IAPB's work outputs will effectively serve (including the OHCHR examination, other human rights mechanisms and bodies and criminal justice authorities).
- Strategic Outcome 3: Mainstream a survivor-centred, trauma informed approach to all aspects of the IAPB's work.
- Strategic Outcome 4: Ensure creation of standing infrastructure and the sustainability of the IAPB's operations.

Owing to its overall objective the IAPB consolidates and preserves information and evidence to support factual and legal research and analysis on three pillars relevant to the alleged commission of crimes in Belarus:

- a. The **crime base**, namely underlying acts of crimes against humanity such as persecution, torture, sexual and gender-based violence, deportation, imprisonment and murder/extrajudicial killings;
- b. The **contextual elements of crimes against humanity**, namely the existence of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, pursuant to or in furtherance of a Belarusian state policy; and
- c. Perpetrator **linkage** to the underlying criminal acts, including physical perpetrators as well as those otherwise responsible due to their roles within command structures.

### b. Collection of information and evidence

The IAPB continued to collect information and evidence from survivor-victims and witnesses and open sources that may provide evidence of crimes under international law committed by Belarusian State authorities.

#### *i. Collection of information from survivor-victims and other witnesses*

During the reporting period, IAPB collected information and evidence from 113 victims and other witnesses (68 men, 44 women, and 1 non-binary person) concerning alleged crimes under international law. Cumulatively since April 2021, information and evidence were gathered from 1,286 witnesses (856 male, 429 female, and 1 non-binary person) bringing the total number of witnesses in the database to 2,577. This included relevant documentary evidence such as medical and court records, resulting in a total of around 28,498 documents. These records continue to be translated into English where appropriate and structured for preservation and analysis in the closed-source database. By 31 March 2024, 23,051 files or 80.93% of all materials had been reviewed and tagged according to the IAPB's coding layout by a team of dedicated bilingual (Russian-English) reviewers.

#### *ii. Collection of open-source information*

In parallel, the IAPB continued to collect open-source intelligence, its collection now reaching one million items from open sources, which are preserved and being analysed in the IAPB's open-source

digital archive. To review open-source material and tag it, the IAPB uses various search terms and techniques to locate relevant materials, which are then organized into thematic groups aligned with investigative and analytical goals and requests. As of April 2024, the IAPB had reviewed and tagged 3,846 open-source files, including videos of protests, arrests and other incidents, according to the IAPB's tailor-made coding layout.

Furthermore, now IAPB is using a function for generating transcripts for the visual materials that have been archived and uploaded to the interactive platform. Currently, transcripts are available for 150,259 video records. This enables the team to conduct textual searches within the visual materials and quickly identify the relevant visual content.

### **c. Assistance to accountability bodies**

The IAPB continued to engage with and support accountability bodies, including the OEB and various national criminal justice authorities.

#### ***i. OHCHR examination on the human rights situation in Belarus***

During the reporting period, the IAPB continued to support the OEB by responding to its request for assistance and providing access to 3,027 records relating to a range of human rights violations allegedly committed in Belarus on 17 October 2023. These records have contributed to the findings published in the OHCHR report dated 15 March 2024, in particular, that the:

"OHCHR has reasonable grounds to conclude that the Government has implemented an organized, continuing and systematic campaign of violence, repression and punishment, pursuant to or in furtherance of a policy to attack a civilian population, specifically defined and delineated by its real or perceived opposition to the Government, for the purpose of silencing, suppressing, discouraging and deterring such opposition or further manifestation of it, whether in public space or privately<sup>17</sup>."

The OEB further found that the:

"OHCHR has reasonable grounds to believe that the crime against humanity of persecution may have been committed, along with other underlying acts which may be established as a result of the human rights violations described<sup>18</sup>."

These and other findings in the OHCHR report are instrumental in instigating or strengthening investigations into the gross human rights violations constituting crimes under international law allegedly committed by Belarusian authorities in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and its aftermath.

The IAPB also continues to closely cooperate with members of the OEB team, meeting regularly to discuss technical matters on cross-cutting areas of work. For example, in October 2023, the IAPB provided briefing to the OEB's Gender expert sharing its analytical observations regarding patterns of gendered harm and facilitated connections between the Gender expert and several intermediaries and potential interviewees.

The IAPB will continue to cooperate closely with the Group of Independent Experts on the human rights situation in Belarus<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> [a-hrc-55-61-auv.docx \(live.com\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Group of Independent Experts on the Human Rights Situation in Belarus | OHCHR established by the Human Rights Council on through resolution A/HRC/RES/55/27 of 4 April 2024



## ***ii. Criminal justice authorities***

Since April 2021, the IAPB has received and responded to requests for access to information, evidence and analytical briefs from criminal justice authorities in four European states in total.

During the reporting period, the IAPB responded to requests for assistance from criminal justice authorities in three states, providing evidence of the violations and crimes committed within the relevant temporal and geographic scope. The submissions contain factual and legal analysis of the underlying acts and contextual elements of crimes against humanity and provide insights into the role of state structures involved in their commission. For some authorities, the response included guidance on the application of domestic criminal law in light of international criminal law, providing the IAPB with the opportunity to develop the application of domestic law consistently with States' obligations under international criminal law.

Having submitted the reports, the IAPB has been in close contact with the authorities regarding the shared materials and potential additional investigative needs. Upon an additional request, the IAPB has provided a translation of the submission into the official language of the requesting state.

Further analytical products will be identified and prepared in consultation with national criminal justice authorities, as well as any other accountability bodies or processes with which the IAPB may engage.

## ***iii. Non-governmental organisations and lawyers***

During the reporting period, the IAPB has provided support to one non-governmental organization and an independent lawyer who sought IAPB's assistance. These entities collaborate with criminal justice authorities in two states, aside from those that submitted the requests, regarding human rights violations and crimes committed in Belarus since May 2020. They have sought to ascertain whether the IAPB's collection contains relevant data concerning specific locations and state officials and to determine the volume of the relevant data. They aim to utilize the IAPB's response to bolster their efforts toward accountability with domestic authorities.

In line with GDPR-compliant informed consent from IAPB's interviewees, the IAPB shared only an overview and statistical information regarding the volume of relevant data, refraining from disclosing any personal information. Moreover, it encouraged criminal justice authorities to reach out to IAPB directly to request access to the underlying data.

## ***iv. Ongoing challenges***

One of the challenges for the IAPB's work arises in relation to perpetrator identification and tracking. Often, survivor/victims do not specifically name a perpetrator in their accounts of what happened to them, presenting a gap for domestic prosecutors. In anticipation of a scenario where a perpetrator travels out of Belarus, it is essential to foster coordination between migration authorities, responsible for monitoring movements across borders, and prosecution authorities tasked with bringing perpetrators to justice. The IAPB plans to foster relationships with non-governmental bodies focused on perpetrator tracking, and to continue its analytical work on linkage and individual responsibility.

## **d. Knowledge sharing and capacity building**

The IAPB's structure ensures close collaboration among the lead, co-lead and secretariat teams. The Steering Committee met on a weekly and *ad hoc* basis to make decisions regarding policy and the strategic direction of the IAPB's work, and jointly participated in events and stakeholder meetings, both public and confidential throughout the October 2023 - March 2024 period. The IAPB secretariat continued to work in close collaboration with the lead and co-leads'

documentation teams, including through weekly meetings on operational matters and regular in-person workshops. This unique structure enables the exchange of knowledge on matters relevant to the work, including international criminal law and standards and the Belarusian context, as well as to identify needs or gaps in capacity.

As part of this engagement, the IAPB holds dedicated workshops and trainings on relevant topics, which are carried out with the support of the IAPB's expert advisors. These include trainings on:

- Deportation as a crime against humanity
- Sexual and gender-based conduct as crimes against humanity
- Preservation and authentication of open-source material
- Interview techniques and approaches

The IAPB evaluates and assesses all training to improve its quality, including through follow-up meetings, and to ensure new knowledge can be effectively integrated into the work.

#### **e. Facilitating access to mental health and psychosocial support**

As part of its survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach to pursuing accountability for crimes under international law committed in Belarus, the IAPB is committed to ensuring that survivors receive evidence-based mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). The IAPB continued to implement referral pathways for MHPSS and its unified clinical monitoring and evaluation system, which includes the collection of data on stress, depression, sleep and well-being. Since October 2023, 98 survivors (63 women and 35 men) received MHPSS services.

The IAPB also ensures its teams have access to MHPSS and prioritises improving the capacity of all teams involved in the work to manage secondary trauma and stress. Referral pathways for access to MHPSS provided by Russian/Belarusian and English language specialists were established for all IAPB teams and utilized.

Drawing from the IAPB's experience working with survivors and consultations with external experts, the IAPB developed a guide addressing key principles in adopting a survivor-centred approach. The guide demonstrates how these principles can be implemented at various stages in the documentation process, including reaching out to survivors, identifying and responding to their needs, shaping the methodology of documentation around survivors, and addressing secondary trauma. The guide identifies areas in which the IAPB could further strengthen its approach, from which related practical recommendations will be finalised in a consultative process and implemented during Phase III.

#### **f. IAPB Infrastructure**

The IAPB secretariat team consists of several members, including the Head, Project Manager, Project Officer, Senior Legal Advisor, Analyst, Open-Source Investigator, Data Systems Manager, four Junior Analysts, and one Data Reviewer. On 30 June 2024, the Head of IAPB Kate Vigneswaran stepped down after having worked for the IAPB since 20 September 2021 and having led the platform since 1 January 2022. The IAPB wishes to express its sincere gratitude to Ms Vigneswaran for her visionary and committed leadership. Starting from 15 August 2024, Ms. Andrea Huber will take over as the new head of the International Accountability Platform for Belarus. Andrea is an experienced international human rights lawyer with over 25 years of experience in human rights, criminal justice and leadership. She has previously held a number of leadership positions with renowned international human rights and criminal justice organizations, including Amnesty International and Penal Reform International. The past 4 years, Andrea has been the Head of the Human Rights Department of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the OSCE, leading some 35 staff.

### C. The beginning of Phase III

The IAPB has secured some funding, and received a set of pledges which would enable it to continue its work until September 2026.

While significant progress has been made to ensure accountability for the crimes committed in Belarus, further work now needs to be done to ensure that viable criminal cases are brought in the future. Building on the intensive work and lessons of Phases I and II, efforts are now focused on further enhancing and developing accountability in a proactive and dynamic manner.

The IAPB is continuing to collect, verify and analyse information and evidence of crimes under international law from survivor-victims and witnesses inside and outside Belarus. The IAPB is applying strategic approaches to bolster its collection of information and evidence and related analysis of sexual and gender-based crimes (the work for which commenced in Phase II); the persecution of persons based on other characteristics or identities; deportation as a crime against humanity; and state structures, chain of command and perpetrator linkage. Building on the work carried out in Phases I and II, the IAPB will also seek to preserve the original source of priority open-source intelligence files to facilitate the verification of authenticity in the future.

Adopting a proactive and expansive approach to encouraging more investigations and prosecutions of crimes under international law, in particular in reaction to the decreased international attention to human rights violations in Belarus in light of other crises situations such as the war in Ukraine. To this end, the IAPB continues to strengthen existing relations with criminal justice authorities and will proactively seek requests from others, including by the establishment of country-based working groups to develop strategies for tailored prosecutions. The IAPB is also developing a perpetrator-tracking approach and, where appropriate, will aim to share information with prosecuting authorities. The IAPB supported the OHCHR Examination of the human rights situation in Belarus (OEB), and will in future support the Group of Independent Experts on the human rights situation in Belarus, established A/HRC/RES/55/27 on 4 April 2024, and, where relevant, other human rights bodies; as well as assist in the preparation of individual complaints and other submissions to criminal justice authorities and human rights bodies.

Committed to a survivor-centred, trauma informed approach, the IAPB will continue to implement recommendations from its internal Phase II review, in order to ensure that survivor- victims, witnesses and all who engage with the IAPB benefit from these approaches. This will include mapping referral pathways to ensure that survivors have access to support for diverse needs, including mental health and psychosocial support; continued training, mentoring and knowledge sharing between the IAPB teams and organisations on interviews; and collaboration with Advisory Council members with a view to furthering of individual liability for core international crimes committed in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and its aftermath.

Moreover, the IAPB is beginning to prepare procedures, tools, and infrastructures for the maintenance of the IAPB's digital archives and related prosecutorial support structures.