



## WIDESCALE REPRESSION CONTINUES IN BELARUS, BUT OPPORTUNITIES TOWARDS ADVANCING ACCOUNTABILITY EMERGE

**(7 November 2024)** – Widescale political repression and the suppression of dissent persist in Belarus, but new opportunities for advancing accountability for international crimes committed since 2020 have emerged, most notably with the referral by the Lithuanian government of the situation in Belarus to the International Criminal Court (ICC), notes the IAPB in its latest [progress report](#).

*“The pressing need to combat impunity for serious international crimes in Belarus remains,” said Andrea Huber, IAPB’s Head. “Lithuania’s referral of the situation in Belarus to the ICC is an important first step towards holding some perpetrators accountable for some crimes. We hope other states will support these efforts by joining this referral or undertaking their own investigations into crimes not covered by it, so that justice is served for all crimes committed. The IAPB is ready to assist with evidence adhering to criminal justice standards that we have been collecting since 2021.”*

Since 2020, the number of political prisoners has remained high, with 1,325 political prisoners in detention as of 29 September 2024, including Alex Bialiatski, the founder of Viasna, one of IAPB’s co-lead organisations. Political prisoners are reported to be subject to a punitive prison regime, held in isolation cells, deprived of access to medical care, and often held incommunicado – without access to family or lawyers. Authorities have also continued to use “anti-extremist laws” to stifle the work of human rights organisations.

Belarus’ lack of compliance with its international human rights obligations was exposed further during the reporting period, with the UN Committee against Torture finding that “torture is a systematic practice in Belarus”, and the European Parliament adopting a resolution in September expressing concern about some 300,000 individuals having been forced to leave the country since 2020 and the persecution they continue to face in exile.

Despite the stark human rights situation in Belarus, the report highlights steps taken by the IAPB to ensure that the serious international crimes committed by the Belarusian authorities are documented and that evidence is made available to investigating and prosecuting authorities, adhering to criminal justice standards.

In doing so, the IAPB has continued to grow its collection of information, evidence and analysis. From April to September 2024, it collected information from 105 survivors/witnesses, bringing the total number of interviews to 2,637 and the collection to 29,492 documents in its close-source collection.

During the reporting period, the IAPB received three further requests for assistance from state authorities for potential investigations into alleged international crimes committed in Belarus, bringing the number of requests up to eight requests from five States.

The IAPB, alongside other organisations, has encouraged other States Parties of the ICC to [join the referral](#) by the Lithuanian government of the situation in Belarus to the ICC and will provide evidence to the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC in its preliminary examination.

Given that the referral, if accepted, would only cover some of the crimes committed in Belarus (crimes against humanity, including deportation, persecution, and other inhumane acts), the IAPB has urged national prosecution authorities to continue investigating and prosecuting other international crimes committed in Belarus, such as torture, gender-based violence and unlawful detention.

The IAPB will also provide information to the UN Group of Independent Experts on the Human Rights Situation in Belarus (GIEB), a new investigative body established in April by the UN Human Rights Council.

#### **About the IAPB:**

The International Accountability Platform for Belarus (IAPB), created in March 2021, is a consortium of Belarusian and international NGOs that collects, consolidates, verifies, and preserves evidence of gross human rights violations allegedly committed by Belarusian authorities and others in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and its aftermath.

The IAPB supports investigations of national prosecutors and international accountability bodies by providing access to the collected evidence and analytical products. Since its establishment, the IAPB has received eight requests for assistance from five different states, four requests for information from the UN Examination of the human rights situation in Belarus of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), one from the OSCE Moscow Mechanism Rapporteur, as well as several requests from civil society organisations and lawyers working towards the investigation of crimes committed in Belarus.

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