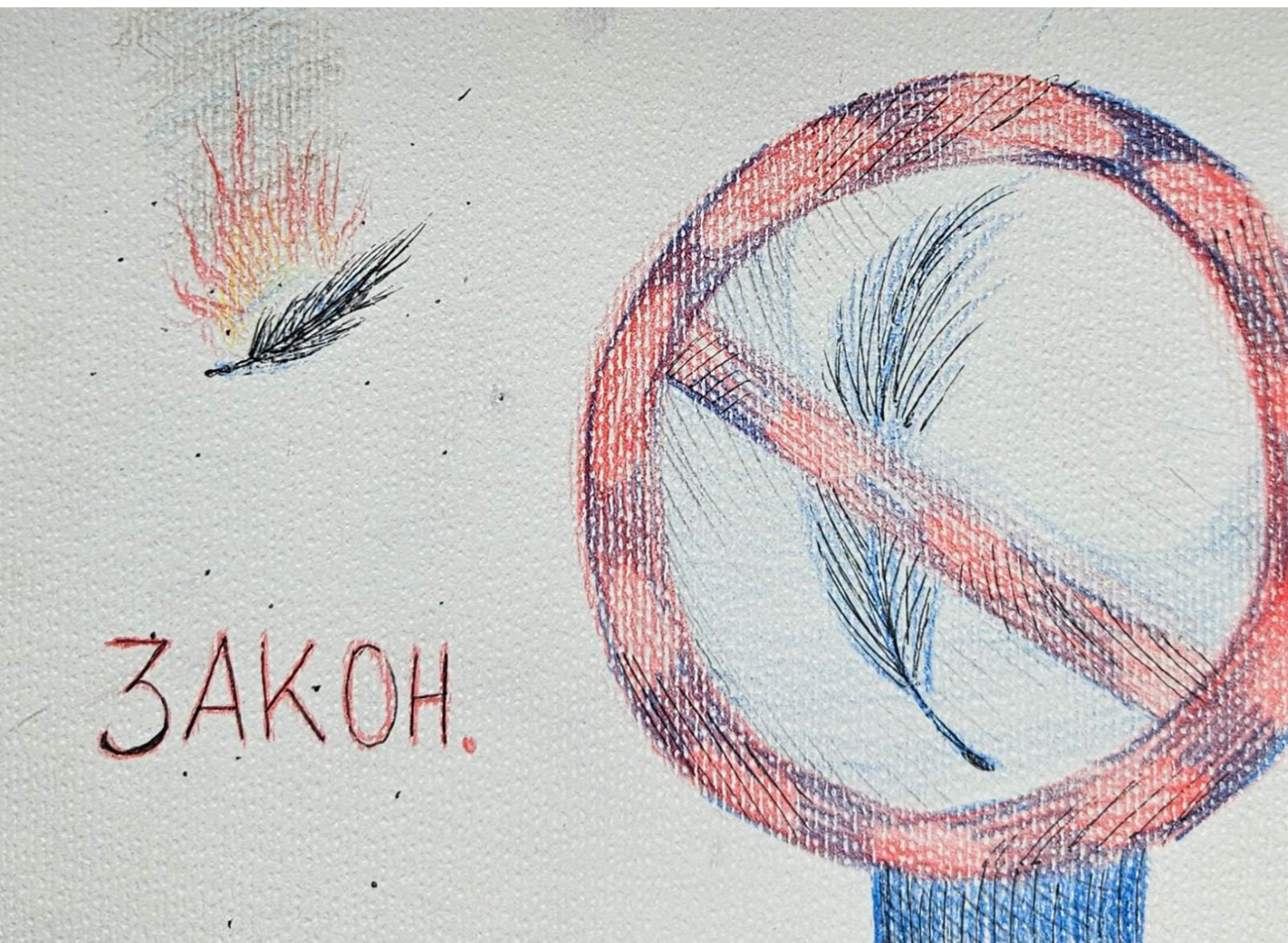


HUMAN RIGHTS IN BELARUS: THE MAIN TRENDS OF PUBLIC POLICY

GENERAL MEASURES | LAW ENFORCEMENT PRACTICE | KEY REACTIONS
OF INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURES



At the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, we try to maintain a healthy work-life balance — but under our circumstances, that is often unrealistic. Work inevitably finds its way into our homes, and our families become closely familiar with the human rights situation in Belarus.

Since everyone is already immersed in this context, we invited our children to draw their associations with the words «freedom» and «prohibition.» In 2025, we used these drawings as covers for our trend reviews.

This cover features a drawing by N, age 12.



© Belarusian Helsinki Committee, 2025

| CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
SUMMARY	6
I. GENERAL MEASURES: LEGISLATION, STRATEGIES AND POLICIES THAT SHAPE THE CONDITIONS AND PREREQUISITES FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE COUNTRY	8
Comprehensive legislative review: positive changes accompanied by a repressive modus operandi	8
Formalisation of state ideology	10
Intensifying pressure within the administrative vertical	12
Growing securitisation	12
Changes in child protection policy enabling repressive practices	13
Addressing financial resource shortages and human capital outflow through infringement of economic and social rights	14
Adapting to repressive norm-making instituted by the state itself («the passport decree»)	16
II. LAW ENFORCEMENT PRACTICE: VIOLATIONS OF CIVIL, POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL RIGHTS	18
Restrictions on public tools for monitoring trends in law enforcement practice	18
Expansion of the application of the «high treason» criminal code article	18

| INTRODUCTION

The human rights situation in Belarus remains the subject of monitoring and analysis by both Belarusian and international NGOs and international organisations. Since 2012, the mandate of the [Special Rapporteur](#) on the situation of human rights in Belarus has been in place. Civil society's alternative reports to treaty bodies overseeing the implementation of the core UN human rights conventions, as well as in the [reports](#) of these bodies themselves, also provide reviews. In response to the unjustified use of force, torture against peaceful protesters contesting the 2020 rigged elections, and the subsequent repressions, a special [Mandate on the human rights situation in Belarus](#) was established under the auspices of the OHCHR in March 2021. In 2024, it was [changed](#) to a group of independent experts, which means more autonomy and independence for this mechanism.

Since 2019, the Belarusian Helsinki Committee has been calculating [the Belarus Human Rights Index](#), within which more than 40 Belarusian experts assess changes in each specific human right. Belarusian NGOs regularly conduct targeted human rights situation monitoring based on their areas of expertise.¹

The events of 2020, followed by the war in Ukraine and Belarus' complicity in Russia's aggression, have significantly altered the situation in the country, including its policies and practices in the realm of human rights. The situation is continually deteriorating, with daily updates on legislative changes, government initiatives,² specific violations, etc. Amidst this influx of information, **maintaining focus** and distinguishing between essential and minor aspects **becomes challenging**.

To ensure that significant events are not overlooked and to gain a better understanding of the situation in Belarus regarding the rule of law and human rights, we track **the most significant and qualitative changes in the main trends of state policy in the field of human rights**.

For this purpose, since July 2023, the Belarusian Helsinki Committee has been issuing a periodic review. Its aim is to present our expert assessments of **the most significant and qualitative changes in the trends of Belarusian state policy** in the field of human rights and the international community's reactions to it over the reporting period in three areas:

- *general measures*: systemic issues – legislation, strategies, and policies that generally shape the conditions and prerequisites for the fulfilment of human rights in the country;

¹ See, in particular, *Analytical reviews of the situation with human rights prepared by Human Rights Center «Viasna»*: <https://spring96.org/ru/publications>;
Monitoring the situation of freedom of association and civil society organizations in the Republic of Belarus by Lawtrend: <https://www.lawtrend.org/english>;
Electronic bulletins of mass media in Belarus by the Belarusian Association of Journalists: https://baj.media/en/aglyady_category/baj-monitors/ and others.

² We consider the current authorities in Belarus as the *de facto* authorities.

- *law enforcement practices*: trends in violations of civil and political, social, economic and cultural rights;
- *key decisions and reactions of international institutions* related to the human rights situation in Belarus.

Our analytics will contribute to a better understanding of human rights trends in Belarus, aid international partners in navigating the Belarusian agenda, facilitate monitoring of systemic and qualitative changes in the situation, expand the human rights focus of analytics in related areas (political, economic, social, etc.), and serve as a useful resource for developing strategies and positions.

The analysis for 2023 is presented in 2 reviews. Issues for 2023, as well as a summary analysis of the year as an interactive presentation can be found [here](#).

In 2024, the review was published three times (covering each four-month period). The 2024 issues, as well as a summary analysis for the year, can be found [here](#).

You can subscribe to our review [here](#).



SUBSCRIBE TO THE NEXT
ISSUE OF TRENDS
[TRENDS.BELHELCOM.ORG](https://trends.belhelcom.org)

| SUMMARY

- The seventh presidential election, held in January 2025, did not result in a reduction of repressive policies in Belarus. On the contrary, the human rights situation remains consistently dire, with further qualitative deterioration observed.
- The authorities continue to pursue a **dual-track strategy**: a planned and comprehensive review of legislation involving positive changes on the one hand, and, on the other, the parallel formalisation of repressive practices. In 2025-2026, **a further expansion of legal grounds for persecution may be anticipated**, particularly in the fields of administrative liability, labour relations, healthcare, and culture. Such formalisation takes place both through the introduction of new provisions and through the codification of de facto repressive practices into law.
- The state **continues to adapt** to the post-2020 political reality by deliberately restructuring the legal system to sustain repressive practices. In addition to revising key strategic documents such as the National Security Concept and the Legal Policy Concept in 2023 and the Military Doctrine in 2024, Directive No. 12 «On the Implementation of the Fundamentals of the Ideology of the Belarusian State» was issued by A. Lukashenko in April 2025. This directive became **the first unified legal act regulating the ideological sphere**. It establishes uniform standards for organising and conducting ideological work nationwide. **In the coming year, one may expect** increased pressure in workplaces (especially in the private sector) and in the education sector.
- Through legislation, **conditions are being established to increase repressive pressure across the entire administrative hierarchy**. Directive No. 12 introduces personal accountability for managers regarding the «quality of ideological work». Another key document – Directive No. 11 «On Improving the Functioning of the System of Public Authorities and Governance and Strengthening Executive Discipline», adopted in the first quarter of 2025 – declares executive discipline a national priority. Given the language, objectives, and systemic role of both directives, increased oversight of their implementation may be expected. This pressure is likely to affect the broader repressive climate as well.
- The use of a family's classification as being in a «socially dangerous situation» (SDS) as a tool of politically motivated repression evolves. A new regulation entered into force in January 2025: firstly, the number of administrative offences that can trigger such a designation doubled (from 6 to 12); secondly, four of the newly added offences are already being used for political persecution.

- Among the key developments in the area of economic, social and cultural rights: firstly, additional restrictions were introduced targeting unemployed persons (so-called «social parasites»), violating their rights, including the right to work and social protection. Notably, the required minimum length of employment to qualify for unemployment benefits was arbitrarily increased to five years. Secondly, new provisions were adopted that unjustifiably restrict the rights of self-employed persons working in the education sector.
- At the beginning of 2025, an amendment presumably aimed at mitigating the effects of the «passport decree» came into force. The previous requirement to obtain a certificate of non-marriage from the Belarusian civil registry for those intending to marry abroad was lifted. Instead, a notarised personal declaration of no impediments to marriage is now accepted.
- The primary and most significant trend in law enforcement practice that violates human rights in the first trimester of 2025 is the restriction of tools for monitoring developments in this area: public access to the electronic schedule of court hearings has been discontinued. Combined with the termination of access to the anonymised court decision database in 2024, this development **deprives civil society – including human rights defenders – of virtually all official sources** for tracking law enforcement trends in general and politically motivated persecution in particular.

I. GENERAL MEASURES: LEGISLATION, STRATEGIES, POLICIES, THAT SHAPE THE CONDITIONS AND PREREQUISITES FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE COUNTRY

KEY POINTS:

- A qualitative shift in the formalisation of ideology: for the first time, a single comprehensive normative act has been adopted, setting out standardised criteria for the organisation and conduct of «ideological work» across the country.
- Legal conditions are being created to increase repressive pressure throughout the entire administrative vertical.
- «Political» grounds for classifying a family as being in a socially dangerous situation (SDS) have been formally codified.

COMPREHENSIVE LEGISLATIVE REVIEW: POSITIVE CHANGES ACCOMPANIED BY A REPRESSIVE MODUS OPERANDI

The central trend in state policy affecting human rights that began to take shape last year – and will continue to produce systemic and qualitative shifts in 2025 – is a two-track, parallel process in the legislative domain.

On the one hand, the state appears to function «normally» and is undertaking a large-scale, planned [legislative review](#) – an objectively necessary process that includes a number of positive changes. This revision is partly based on the latest amendments to the Constitution and is substantiated in the new Legal Policy Concept

adopted in 2023. In the fourth quarter of 2024, we addressed the comprehensive amendments to criminal legislation. In 2025, the legislative drafting plan includes similar revisions for administrative liability (is scheduled for submission to the House of Representatives in June), the Health Code (September), and the Labour Code (April 2026). Revisions are also expected in the Culture Code and a range of other legislative acts.

At the same time, these changes and the revision process itself are inseparable from the state's ongoing repressive modus operandi. In other words, any positive amendments in certain areas, introduced due to pressing necessity and genuinely serving the public interest, are inevitably paired with repressive norms in other domains – provisions establishing formal grounds for persecution and the denial of rights to dissenters.

In the case of the criminal law amendments, a number of progressive changes were introduced – yet explicitly excluded from application to persons convicted of «extremist crimes». A similar dynamic is expected in the area of administrative law. For instance, in March 2025, Prosecutor General Andrei Shved announced that work was being finalized on a draft law establishing administrative liability for «the promotion – online or otherwise – of homosexuality, gender transition, paedophilia, or childfree ideology». This marks the next step in a consistent trend that mirrors Russia's trajectory: the gradual codification of legal grounds for discrimination and direct persecution of the LGBTQ+ community. In 2023, the authorities began discussing this direction publicly; in 2024, certain provisions were adopted in sectoral legislation (in the fields of culture and child protection); in 2025, they plan to introduce formal administrative liability.

It is also expected that restrictive provisions will accompany the otherwise necessary reforms to the Labour Code and the Culture Code. In the case of the latter, for instance, officials have announced the plans to regulate «problematic issues related to the activities of private museums, unscrupulous organisers of cultural and entertainment events, and measures for state control over film production and distribution». These initiatives signal a desire to establish a legal framework for increasingly strict state regulation of the cultural sector, aimed at preventing any expressions of cultural life that fall outside the boundaries of «state ideology».

Further legislative changes are likely to address human resource shortages and the ongoing exodus of the population. Planned amendments to the Law «On Licensing» are justified, among other things, by the need to expand pre-licensing requirements

for applicants seeking authorisation to engage in overseas employment, as well as the need to create regulatory mechanisms for the optimal allocation of personnel in the health sector in line with state policy priorities, including more precise qualification requirements for healthcare workers employed in public medical institutions.

This duality may give the impression of a thaw or return to normalcy, as some genuinely positive developments are indeed occurring. However, this does not contribute to reducing the intensity of repressive policies; on the contrary, it reinforces the existing state of affairs and strengthens the foundations for future repression.

FORMALISATION OF STATE IDEOLOGY

In April 2025, A. Lukashenko issued [Directive No. 12](#) «On the Implementation of the Fundamentals of the Ideology of the Belarusian State». This marks yet another step in the post-2020 restructuring of the systemic foundations of state policy – following the adoption of the new National Security Concept and the Concept of Legal Policy in 2023, and the new Military Doctrine in 2024. This is the first unified and comprehensive normative act regulating ideology, repealing ten prior presidential decrees, the latest dating to 2011.

The authorities [have stated](#) that the previously adopted documents in this area had, first, become outdated and, second, were fragmented, leaving «no unified guidance for officials' actions». The directive is described as one of «the most important and long-awaited documents of our time», and as a «primer for every citizen of the country», with authorities emphasising that it has been adopted in furtherance of the National Security Concept.

The directive consists of two main components: detailed measures to improve the organisation of «ideological work,» and a separate programme document entitled «Fundamentals of the Ideology of the Belarusian State», which presents the substance of what is now officially designated as the «state ideology». [According](#) to Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration A. Pertsev, the document «emphasises the core meanings and narratives of Belarusian statehood» and is intended to establish unified standards for the organisation and conduct of «ideological work» across the country. Notably, the directive explicitly prioritises the dissemination of the state agenda **to those employed in the private sector**. A separate section is devoted to improving «ideological work» in labour collectives – a traditional and primary

tool of pressure. Among the explicitly listed forms of «ideological work» is **counter-propaganda**, and among the designated areas of activity is cooperation with religious organisations.

On the one hand, it is clear that this directive formalises a practice that is already largely in operation. On the other hand, the formalisation of any unlawful practice inevitably increases its scope and lends it added durability. Moreover, the state ideological narratives and the intensity of their dissemination – originally established in the early 2000s, when the previous set of documents was developed – have significantly intensified in the post-2020 period, especially after 2022. It is thus reasonable to expect **a further increase in workplace pressure over the coming year** – not only in the public sector, but also in the private sector (given the specific emphasis on extending ideological control to private enterprises) and **in education**.

The very appearance of this document also suggests that the authorities are struggling to maintain control over the ideological front and are seeking new instruments to do so. On the one hand, they possess few tools other than increased repression – hence the tightening of ideological oversight in long-controlled areas. On the other hand, formalised control over previously untouched spheres is being expanded, including, notably, private business. As a result, formalised control – above all over freedom of opinion – is now extending to nearly all areas of public life.

Of particular note is the choice of «directive» form, used to codify this new-old ideological framework. In the first trimester of 2025, two presidential directives were adopted (in addition to Directive No. 12 on state ideology, [Directive No. 11](#) of 11 April 2025, on executive discipline, was also issued). The 2022 constitutional amendments substantially revised the range of legal instruments available to the president, eliminating «decrees» from the list. For many years, «decree law» – effectively substituting for legislation – had served as a central instrument of Lukashenko's rule.

The return to directives, following the formal inability to issue decrees (note that the issues addressed in Directive No. 11 were previously codified in [Decree No. 5](#) of 5 December 2014), underscores the state's disregard for attempts to normalise legislative and executive authority. The primacy of presidential regulation persists – regardless of the name or form such acts may take.

INTENSIFYING PRESSURE WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATIVE VERTICAL

The adoption of Presidential Directives No. 11 and No. 12 during the first quarter of 2025 marks another trend: the creation of legal conditions for increasing repressive pressure across the entire administrative vertical.

Directive No. 12 «On the Implementation of the Fundamentals of the Ideology of the Belarusian State», discussed above, explicitly introduces **personal accountability for heads of organisations** regarding the quality of their «ideological work». It also outlines in detail the positions responsible for this «ideological work», whose appointment, dismissal, and contract renewals must be coordinated at various levels, including the Presidential Administration. The document is positioned as a new «ideological Bible», and the very process of monitoring its implementation is clearly intended to function as a tool of pressure.

Directive No. 11 «On Improving the Functioning of the System of Public Authorities and Governance and Strengthening Executive Discipline», on the one hand, refers to genuinely necessary and overdue reforms, including reducing bureaucratic inefficiency, eliminating unnecessary formalism, duplication, and the imitation of activity in administrative processes. On the other hand, however, it is clear that the majority of its provisions create space for excessive oversight, pressure, and the enforcement of «ideological correctness» among personnel. **A high level of executive discipline is declared a priority of state policy** – a phrase which, in the Belarusian context, unmistakably signals the document's instrumental, repressive purpose.

This approach increasingly evokes the administrative culture of the Soviet period, which under present circumstances is shedding even the appearance of a modern democratic framework. Given the language, goals, and systemic significance of both directives, one can anticipate a period of active enforcement monitoring, and consequently, a further consolidation of the repressive vertical of power. This will inevitably contribute to a broader climate of repression.

GROWING SECURITISATION

In March 2025, **amendments** were introduced to the Presidential Decree «On Measures to Improve Security Services». The decree is said to aim at «increasing the effectiveness of measures to ensure public order and safety in places of mass gatherings, including during cultural, sports, and other entertainment events».

Among other changes, **the decree expands the range of institutions where personal searches and inspections of items, documents, and vehicles are permitted.** It now includes entities that regularly host discos, nightclubs with their own security units, shopping centres, and facilities within cultural venues or institutions.

While these provisions are framed as enhancing public safety – and do indeed contain practical elements to that effect – within the current context of the Belarusian state, they are likely to serve a dual function. Any expansion of powers for law enforcement and quasi-law enforcement structures, in a setting where the private sphere has already been eroded to near non-existence, increases both the risk and likelihood of new forms of intrusion into private life.

CHANGES IN CHILD PROTECTION POLICY ENABLING REPRESSIVE PRACTICES

The trend of using the status of a family being in a «socially dangerous situation» (SDS) as a tool of political repression continues to evolve. This mechanism **is actively employed** by the state to exert pressure on both children and their parents, primarily through the education system. In the second half of 2023, a broadening of the grounds for placing families with SDS status was **observed**. However, at that time, no explicitly «political» grounds had been formally codified.

As of January 2025, a **new Regulation «On Recognising Children as Being in a Socially Dangerous Situation and in Need of State Protection»** came into effect. The increasingly repressive nature of this policy is evident in two key developments. Firstly, the number of administrative offences that can trigger a family's classification as SDS has **doubled**, from six to twelve. Secondly, among the newly added grounds are **four provisions** that are routinely used in politically motivated prosecutions:

- Article 19.4 (Involving a minor in antisocial behaviour), which, since amendments in 2021, includes involving a minor in participation in a gathering, rally, street procession, demonstration, picketing, or any other mass event held in violation of established procedures;
- Article 19.10 (Promotion or public display, production, or distribution of Nazi symbols or emblems), which was also expanded in 2021 to include, inter alia, national Belarusian symbols, particularly the white-red-white flag;

- Article 19.11 (Distribution, production, storing, or transporting informational materials containing calls for or promoting extremist activity);
- Article 19.8 (Distribution of works promoting the cult of violence and cruelty).

It is important to note that, in practice, parents charged under several of these articles were already sometimes having their families placed under SDS status. The new formalised and expanded list of offences will only further entrench this practice and generate new grounds for doing so. For instance, with respect to Article 19.11, the broad and arbitrary designation of materials as «extremist» – including neutral or apolitical content on independent media platforms, blogs, or social networks (such as posts about nature, health issues, weather, or cooking) – means that even an accidental repost may now serve as a formal basis for assigning a family SDS status.

This practice is manifestly disproportionate and clearly inadequate as a measure of child protection, violating basic principles of reasonableness and justice.

ADDRESSING FINANCIAL RESOURCE SHORTAGES AND HUMAN CAPITAL OUTFLOW THROUGH INFRINGEMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

1. As of 1 January 2025, the new version of the Law on Employment of the Population has come into force, introducing further restrictions on the rights of non-working individuals. This continues the revival of a Soviet-era practice of de facto forced labour through the creation of specific discriminatory conditions for the so-called «social parasites». This concept was formally reintroduced into Belarusian legislation in 2017, sparking public outrage and a wave of protests. Pursuant to the new provisions, unemployment benefits may be granted solely to persons who, for a minimum of five years prior to their registration as unemployed, were either employed under an employment contract or performed work under civil-law agreements, provided that mandatory insurance contributions were made to the Social Protection Fund of the Republic of Belarus.

This requirement does not comply with international standards on the right to work and social protection, as it **imposes excessive and unjustified barriers to access unemployment benefits**. International practice generally requires six months to one

year of work or insurance contributions within the past few years. In particular, ILO Convention No. 168 on Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment allows for a qualifying insurance period but stipulates (see Article 17) that such requirements must not exceed what is necessary to prevent abuse. Though Belarus is not a party to this Convention, the latter outlines the general rationale for designing eligibility criteria. This logic is echoed in [General Comment No. 19](#) to Article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states that eligibility requirements must be reasonable, proportionate, and transparent.

A number of exceptions to the five-year rule have been established. Unemployment benefits will be granted to graduates of vocational, specialised secondary, and higher education institutions; unemployed persons under 21 seeking employment for the first time; those who have ceased caring for a child under three, a child with a disability under 18, an HIV-positive child under 18, a person with a Group I disability, or an elderly person over 80 – provided they register with the employment authority **within one month** of ending such care; and individuals discharged from military service due to health reasons or family relocation, or upon completion of mandatory or alternative service.

Despite these exceptions, the five-year minimum insurance period remains an evidently discriminatory rule. It arbitrarily excludes individuals who do not fall within the exception categories but may lack the required employment record for objective reasons – for instance, young adults over 21 seeking employment for the first time (who would have had to begin working at 17 to meet the five-year requirement by age 22), or those who are re-entering the labour market, may fall into objectively possible circumstances that remain in a legal grey area. As a result, the state effectively **coerces all individuals not covered by the listed exceptions into maintaining formal employment for a minimum period set without clear or reasonable justification** – and those who fail to meet this threshold are left without assistance

2. In March 2025, the Ministry of Education submitted for public consultation a [draft Council of Ministers Regulation](#) «On the Procedure for Conducting Independent Professional Educational Activity». The proposed regulations would **impose severe and unjustified limitations on self-employed individuals working in the education sector (e.g. tutors, club leaders, studio instructors)**. The draft proposes, inter alia, to require all remote teaching to be conducted exclusively via national internet infrastructure registered in Belarus (effectively banning the use of mainstream platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.); to allow educational activities in IT

and the arts only for adult learners, and only individually or in groups of no more than four participants; to ensure that private tutoring content aligns with formal education curricula.

These provisions are at odds, at the very least, with international standards relating to the right to work (in the case of tutors), the right to freedom of artistic expression (both for tutors and service users), and the right to education (for service users). They impose disproportionate and unjustified limitations on the freedom of tutors to choose their form of employment and on learners to choose their form of knowledge acquisition. Furthermore, the requirement to align private tutoring content with state curricula effectively introduces ideological control into informal and independent educational activities.

The rationale for adopting the regulation **refers** to the National Security Concept, citing among other things that the patriotic upbringing of citizens is considered a strategic national interest of the Republic of Belarus. The absence of legal regulation of independent professional teaching activities, it argues, may result in «negative social consequences», including, in particular, the dissemination of destructive content through services rendered, or the teaching of knowledge, skills, and abilities that contradict the traditional values of the Belarusian people. In essence, the proposed measures **seek to establish strict ideological control over unstructured (i.e., individually delivered) non-formal education and instruction.**

Notably, following the public consultation process, some of the restrictions **were lifted** – including the ban on using foreign online platforms and the prohibition on teaching minors. Nevertheless, the arbitrary nature of the remaining limitations, along with the stated rationale for the regulation, remain incompatible with human rights standards.

ADAPTING TO REPRESSIVE NORM-MAKING INSTITUTED BY THE STATE ITSELF («THE PASSPORT DECREE»)

In mid-2024, we **observed** – still at the draft law stage – an attempt by the authorities to legislatively remedy the systemic disruptions to the legal framework and public administration caused by the voluntarist adoption of the so-called «passport decree». Specifically, this concerns the introduction of a legal obligation for citizens to submit information on civil status acts registered abroad to the Belarusian civil registry

offices within six months from the date of registration. The «passport decree» has created administrative complications even for the state itself, notably impeding its ability to access certain information about its nationals. In December 2024, the Council of Ministers adopted Regulation No. 944, which lays out the procedure for submitting such information – either in person, by mail, or via a consular post (in the case of persons permanently residing abroad).

As of 1 January 2025, another provision entered into force – [Article 19-1](#) of the Code on Marriage and Family: «Document Confirming the Absence of Impediments to Entering into Marriage Abroad». Belarusian citizens wishing to marry outside the Republic of Belarus are no longer required to apply to the domestic civil registry office for a certificate confirming the absence of another valid marriage. Instead, a personal declaration made by the citizen, stating the absence of such impediments, and bearing a notarised or otherwise duly certified signature, shall suffice. The article sets out the formal requirements for such declarations.

This amendment appears to be an effort to address barriers to registering marriages abroad and to introduce a procedure that circumvents the involvement of Belarusian diplomatic missions that were stripped of the relevant authority under earlier changes.

II. LAW ENFORCEMENT PRACTICE: VIOLATIONS OF CIVIL, POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

RESTRICTIONS ON PUBLIC TOOLS FOR MONITORING TRENDS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT PRACTICE

As of March 2025, public access to the electronic schedule of court hearings **has been discontinued**. This move significantly hampers the possibility of monitoring judicial processes in general and, in particular, politically motivated prosecutions. Considering that public access to the database of anonymised court decisions was suspended in 2024, the closure of the hearing schedule further deprives civil society, including human rights defenders, of key official channels of information. Overall, the state is eliminating avenues for tracking enforcement trends and analysing institutional practices.

In addition to making it impossible to access a realistic picture of the scale of human rights violations, this measure also has another effect: it lowers the number of officially verifiable repression cases in human rights reporting, thereby **potentially creating** a misleading appearance of a reduced repressive climate.

EXPANSION OF THE APPLICATION OF THE «HIGH TREASON» CRIMINAL CODE ARTICLE

In April, **it became known** that the actions of three experts who **conducted sociological research** for foreign organisations were treated as «high treason» – one study related to public health policies in the context of COVID-19, and the other to the country's development through interaction with the European Union.

The use of Article 356 of the Criminal Code («High Treason») in politically motivated prosecutions continues to expand, both quantitatively and in terms of the range of actions being classified under this provision. In 2022, **there were** 12 convictions under this article; **by February 2024 – 55**; and **by November 2024 – 88**. A wide range of individuals have been prosecuted under this provision, including representatives of democratic forces, BLPOL members, former and current military personnel,

journalists, trade union activists, IT specialists, businesspeople, and others. However, based on publicly available information, this appears to be the first time that conducting sociological research has been classified as an act of high treason.



WE WILL BE GRATEFUL

FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

EMAIL US OFFICE@BELHEL.COM