

BelarusBrief

News from the Belarusian Diaspora in the USA, APRIL 2021 aba-together.org

April 2021 marked 9 months since the start of protests against the rigged presidential elections of August 2020.

REPRESSIONS IN BELARUS

Detained since August (out of population of 9.5mln): **>35,000**
Detained in April: **at least 304**
Politically motivated criminal trials in April: **at least 98**
'Political prisoners': **360** ([Spring96](#))

Ongoing repressions continue to rely on criminal prosecution for political reasons – along with arbitrary detentions of peaceful protesters, arrests for displaying white-red-white symbols in private homes, use of torture in prisons, and politically motivated firing of employees. (via [Spring96 report](#), [pen-center.by](#))

At least six minors faced politically motivated criminal charges and prison sentences. (via [Svaboda](#), in Belarusian)

Military and police forces flooded Minsk to prevent rallies on April 26, the 35th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear accident. (via [RFERL](#))

The authorities attempted to portray non-violent protests as **plotting a military coup and assassination** of Belarus' dictator Lukashenka. Belarusian and Russian security services detained three alleged plotters: lawyer Yuri Zyankovich, politician Ryhor Kastusiou, and political analyst and critic Aliaksandr Fiaduta. (via [Belsat](#))

The U.S. DoS denied conspiracy to eliminate Lukashenka. (via [Belsat](#))

LGBTQ+ activists took an active part in the 2020 protests. (via [Baltic Words](#))

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The U.S. Congress adopted Resolution 124, stating that the August 9, 2020 election in Belarus was neither free nor fair, and the House of Representatives does not recognize Alyaksandr Lukashenka as the country's legitimate president. (via [congress.gov](#))

The U.S. renewed sanctions against 9 Belarusian state-owned enterprises. Cooperation with these enterprises should stop in 45 days. (via [Belarusfeed](#) and [state.gov](#))

The U.S. Congress held hearings on democracy and human rights in Belarus. The hearings were organized by Representatives Christopher H. Smith and James P. McGovern. Pro-democracy leader Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya testified. (via [house.gov](#); includes written testimonies).

In a recent interview, Julie Fisher, U.S. Ambassador to Belarus, noted that "There can be no question that Alexander Lukashenko remains in power and is in control of the government in Belarus. But there is a difference between legitimacy and the exercise of power... We do not recognize that he won the election in August." (via [NPR](#))

Reporters Without Borders identified Belarus as the most dangerous country in Europe for journalists (via [Human Rights Watch](#), [Reporters without Borders](#), and [UN](#))

PEN International called for the immediate release of literary critic Aliaksandr Fiaduta. (via [PEN International](#))

BELARUSIAN DIASPORA

Thirteen Belarusian communities in the US sent a joint letter to human rights organizations on behalf of Mikita Zalatarou. [Amnesty International](#) came out with a statement asking for his release. Mikita Zalatarou, a 17-year-old teenager with epilepsy, was tortured in detention, received a 5-year sentence for participation in protests, and is currently in solitary confinement.

Project B4B Journey continues! The white-red-white Belarusian flag traveling between Belarusian communities worldwide to unite the diaspora made it to Detroit, MI, Cleveland, OH, and Pittsburgh, PA. (via [Падарожжа БЧБ Facebook](#))

Cultural events in April included lectures on art and the protests in Belarus: "Art, Memory, and Protest in Belarus" ([Havighurst Center Annual Lecture](#); read more [here](#)); "No Time for Art?" (Institute of Radical Imagination; watch [here](#)); "We Came out into the Streets!" (University of Bergen)

Timothy Snyder, the author of *Bloodlands and On Tyranny*, connects the protests in Belarus and its history: "During the Second World War, no country suffered more than Belarus." (Part [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), and [4](#)).

SUPPORT WORKERS of BelarusKali, GrodnoAzot, Naftan in their strike. (via [BelarusTogether](#)) According to [Amnesty International](#), the Belarusian authorities are ruthlessly targeting independent trade unions as part of the crackdown on the protests.

For weekly news on Belarus, visit [BelarusFF.org](#). You can [add your email](#) to receive weekly news summaries.

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In April, Belarusian Americans marked 35 years since the Chernobyl disaster with rallies and virtual panel discussions calling attention to the safety of the Belarusian Astravets nuclear power plant. Most of the fallout from the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident, the worst civil nuclear accident, covered the territory of Belarus.



The nonprofit organization Belarusians in **Chicago, IL**, along with Ukrainian and Polish communities, planted grass and trees for the conservation of the beach ground and cleaned the Sam Leone Beach Park. After hours of work, people gathered for a small picnic.



Belarusians of Western PA held in Point State Park, Pittsburgh, PA. Activists held an installation and performed a reading from *Voices of Chernobyl* by the Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich.



In **San Diego, CA**, members of the Belarusian community marched through the downtown with informative posters about the disaster and its outcomes.



Belarusians of **Boston, MA**, observed a minute of silence for all the victims. Against the background of a giant three-meter radiation sign and to the sounds of a Geiger counter, representatives of the diaspora told their stories of the tragedy.



In **New York, NY**, Belarusians from different states gathered near the UN headquarters to express solidarity with victims, clean-up workers, and those who still live in the contaminated areas.



In **Austin, TX**, Belarusians marched through the downtown. Among the attendees was an eyewitness of the events of the night of 26 April 1986 in Chernobyl.