

BelarusBrief

News from the Belarusian Diaspora in the USA, DECEMBER 2022 aba-together.org

In 2022, Belarusian society continued to live under the conditions of ongoing repressions that followed the 2020 post-elections protests. Arrests and mass firing of people not loyal to the regime continued during the year. The Belarusian autocrat Aliaksandr Lukashenka is under increasing pressure from Russia's government to join the war in Ukraine in exchange for support.

Starting in February, the Belarusian autocrat Aliaksandr Lukashenka allowed Belarus to serve as a launchpad for Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Belarusian "railroad partisans" worked to sabotage Russian railroad supply lines in Belarus. The regime responded with harsh sentences (via [Atlantic Council](#), [RadioFree Europe/RadioLiberty](#)).

Belarusian volunteers have been helping defend Ukraine, including as the Kastuś Kalinoŭski Regiment (via [Atlantic Council](#), [NPR](#), [New York Times](#)). The Kalinoŭski Regiment recently started working with the Belarusian hacktivist group Cyber Partisans, who also seek to oppose the regime and Russian invasion (via [Washington Post](#)).

Belarusian pro-democracy leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya **prioritized support for Ukraine and emphasized that Lukashenka's regime and its actions are not representative of the will of the Belarusian people** (via [RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty](#), [Tsikhanouskaya](#)).

Ukraine had been home to many thousands of political refugees from Belarus. As citizens of the co-aggressor state, many of them have had problems with their legal residence in Ukraine – yet chose to stay and volunteer (via [Svaboda](#)).

Political repression in Belarus became routine and systemic in 2022. The authorities made new arrests at the rate of 17 people a day throughout the year (via [Viasna](#)). Hundreds of thousands of Belarusians have fled the country, escaping persecution (via [UN OHCHR](#)). The regime opened thousands of politically motivated criminal cases and listed many hundreds of activists as "extremists" (via [Viasna](#), [Viasna](#), [Reform.by](#)). Activities of independent labor unions and civil society organizations have been criminalized. Independent labor union leaders are among **1448 recognized "political prisoners"** (via [Viasna](#), [Atlantic Council](#), [International Trade Union Confederation](#), [IndustriALL Global Union](#)).

The actual number of political prisoners is likely much higher since being identified as a "political prisoner" aggravates already torturous conditions of detention of former protesters and activists (via [Viasna](#), [Amnesty International](#), [Viasna](#)).

Pro-democracy leader **Maria Kalesnikova** was rushed to intensive care after being placed in a solitary "punishment cell" and long periods in solitary confinement (via [The Guardian](#), [CNN](#), [Washington Post](#)).

Political prisoner and founder of the human rights organization Viasna **Ales Bialiatski received the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize**, along with human rights organizations in Ukraine and Russia (via [Nobel Prize Committee](#), [NPR](#), [New York Times](#)). Nearly all documentation of repression by the Belarusian regime comes from the human rights organization [Viasna](#), or Spring, established by Bialiatski. "Despite tremendous personal hardship, Mr. Bialiatski has not yielded an inch in his fight for human rights and democracy in Belarus," said the Nobel Committee ([CNN](#), [Viasna](#)).

Belarusian pro-democracy leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya established the United Transitional Cabinet, indicating new strategies for opposing Lukashenka's regime and responding to Russia's aggression (via [Atlantic Council](#), [Tsikhanouskaya](#)).

Platform "New Belarus" (also known as Digital Belarus) was launched to unite Belarusians and provide opportunities for mutual support (via [Belsat](#), [Kyiv Independent](#)). The platform was immediately labeled "extremist" by the regime.

Donate to [INeedHelpBY](#) to provide emergency food assistance for Belarusian political prisoners and their families.

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Since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Belarusian American communities have organized or joined **hundreds of rallies** supporting Ukraine. Hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of **humanitarian aid** were collected. Collections were processed through the Belarusian American Association's (BAZA) [humanitarian aid center](#) in Brooklyn, New York. They benefitted [the Kastus Kalinoŭski Regiment](#), Nikolai Pirogov First Volunteer Mobile Hospital (PDMSH), and other volunteers and causes in Ukraine.

ABA co-signed **petitions to support Ukraine** (via [ABA](#), [Belarus Freedom Forum](#)) and became part of [the American Coalition for Ukraine](#).

ABA also organized or served as a partner for a series of **cultural events that raised funds for Ukraine**. These cultural events included tours of Belarusian musicians Margarita Levchuk, Lavon Volski and Vladimir Pugach with bands [Volski & J:Mors](#), [Sergey Mikhhalok's Lyapis Trubetskoy](#).



Since the 2020 elections, August 9th has been commemorated as the **Day of Dignity** by Belarusian diasporas.



Belarus Freedom - Philadelphia on behalf of VESNATICKETS.com donated \$10,000 of the proceeds from Volski & J: Mors's concert to the Ukrainian Federation of America in support of Ukraine.



The "Sport Solidarity in the US" event with two ultra relays (200 miles) was organized to raise funds for causes in Belarus and Ukraine.



The white-red-white flag was raised on March 25 outside **Philadelphia City Hall** as "[the only flag of a free Belarus](#)" and "our symbol of unity with Ukraine."



In July, an event with Margarita Levchuk (Soprano), accompanied by Lyena Atonyicq (Piano), took place in Noe Valley Ministry, San Francisco, CA



In September, BAZA held [the 34th Conference of Belarusians of North America](#). ABA was represented by activists from five major Belarusian-American communities.