



Belarussian
PEN
Centre

Cultural Resistance in Belarus

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It's been the seventh month of the Belarusian people's battle for their right to be heard and respected in their own country. Along with the other spheres of life, culture resists, and its power is that it creates rather than destroys. We all want to return to our theaters, publish books and read them in the squares, play music in the yards, do exhibitions, tell the truth – with no fear of repression. This aspiration is our guiding star.

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1. ARRESTS, CONVICTIONS, PROSECUTION

Viktar Taŭhieŭ from Maładziečna, who was holding a speaker at a local rally on August 9, was sentenced to 2 years in prison on February 22.



Photo: spring96.org



Zaryna Šaŭko from the band Luty Taler was detained on February 22 and although there was no proof of her participating in any mass event,

Alaksandr Vasilevič, co-founder of Minsk Ź Gallery and media platforms The Village Belarus and KYKY, has been remanded in custody for another 2 months.



Photo: office life



On February 25, the first ten defendants for the “**karahod**” protest were announced in Brest. Maryna Hłazava and Jarasłaŭ Jarašuk were convicted to 1.5 years of “home imprisonment”, Maryna Sirecan – 1 year of “home imprisonment”. Mikaja Fiedarenka, Jaŭhien Kaŭpačyk, Alaksiej Jakubuk, Viktar Dzienisienka, Vital Litvin received 1.5 years of restricted freedom in an open correctional facility, Maksim Maksim Žaraŭ and Vadzim Varanovič – 2 years of restricted freedom in an open correctional facility. The case was opened under Part 1 of Art. 342 of the Criminal Code and involves about 50 people.

Dzianis Zajańčeuški and **Maksim Tačjanok** were sentenced to 3 years of imprisonment in an open correctional facility for an installation with photos of Natallia Kachanava, head of the upper chamber of Belarus parliament, and Ivan Kubrakoŭ, Interior Minister.



14 pensioners were detained on February 26 at several railway stations in Minsk. The ladies read Belarusian books on the train, it was an action in support of the Belarusian language. A 75-year-old Natallia Ivanisava was fined 231 EUR and released. On March 1, some of them were fined: Alena Zaścienčyk – 554 EUR, Aksana Karatova, Luboŭ Kučynskaja, Sviatlana Łaziebnikava, Nina Nieściarovič, Iryna Novik, Tačciana Šymanskaja – 277 EUR. A 66-year-old Halina Huliankova was sentenced to 20 days of administrative arrest.



Photo: Darja Bialkievič

2. PRESSURE, DISMISSAL, BAN



«Моя душа»
Анатол Качанчyk
2017



«Океан»
Анатол Качанчyk
2017

Six paintings out of fifty-six were removed from **Nazdia Buka's** exhibition "Personal Business" in Hrodna, as they contained a combination of white and red colors.



Anatol Kachančyk, who painted the facade of his house white-red-white and spent 7 days in prison for that, was fired from the railway where he had worked for 38 years.

3. SYMBOLS

The number of punishments for white-red-white symbols is increasing week after week.

Some of the most alarming cases are those when the system puts pressure on children. The **Mieljaniec family** with many children has been threatened with the status of socially unreliable for the white-red-white blinds on the windows.



Photo: svaboda.org



Ihar Kraŭčenia, a resident of Homel who spent 28 days in the Buda-Kašaloŭ pre-trial detention center for a photo with a white-red-white flag under a Christmas tree, went on a hunger strike for the whole term of 28 days.

23 days for two, fines and confiscated goods worth 28000 BYN [8854 EUR], this is how the owners of the store "**Moj Rodny Kut**", selling goods with national symbols, have been punished.

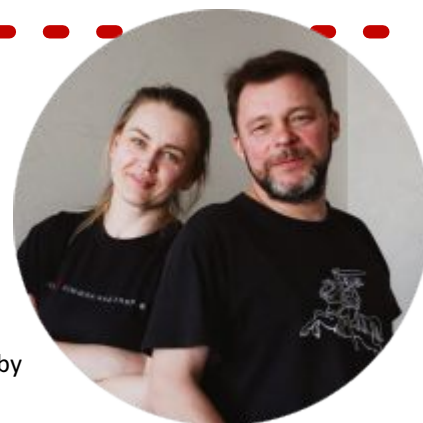


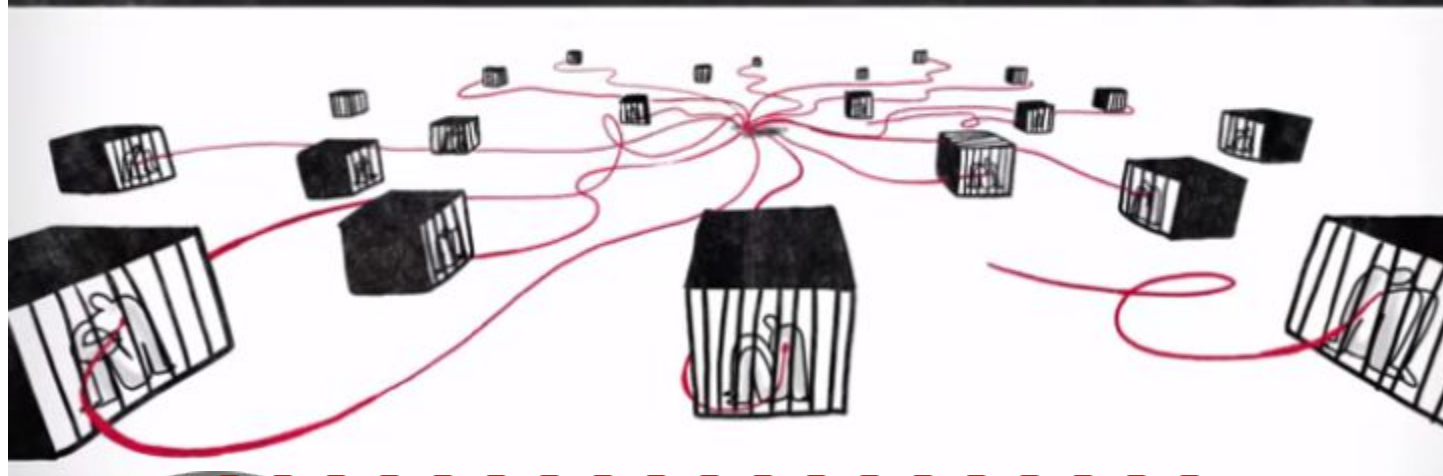
Photo: nn.by



887 Belarusian historians sent a letter in defense of the white-red-white flag to the Prosecutor General, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Director of the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

4. CULTURAL RESISTANCE

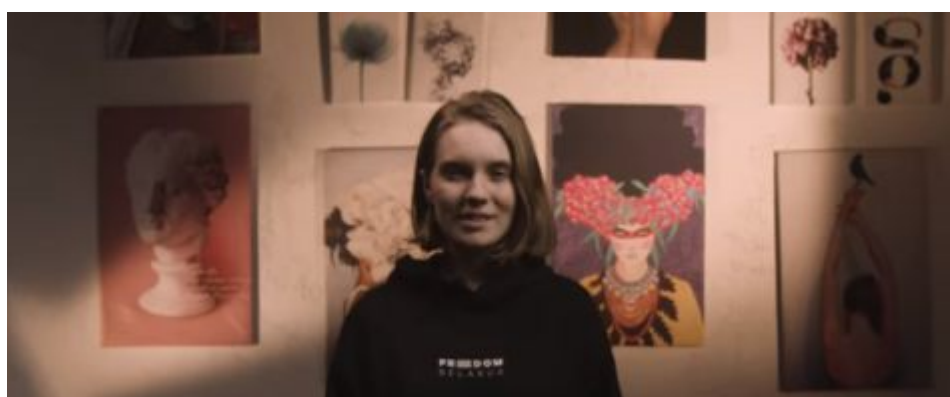
Pavieł Arakielan presented a video “Tomorrow I Will Go to Die”.
Animation by **Marharyta Cichanovič**.



Words are more powerful:

Belarusian poet **Dźmitryj Strocaŭ** reads a poem by **Moyshe Kulbak**.

The Freedom Belarus project wants to create a virtual museum - a safe platform for creative people of Belarus. To do this, they have gathered a team and launched a crowdfunding campaign.



The “**Revision 30**” project shows the life of Belarus in the 90s and in 2020. It has a team working on it, and two main authors-photographers: Siarhiey and Dźmitry Bruško, father and son. They caught up with different historical times and portrayed them each in their own way.

New art pieces



Marta Šmatava
«Sunday. 2020. Belarus»



Volha Jakuboŭskaja
«Spring will come!»



Vi Valiukevich
"On the solidarity and support
of the main songs of Belarus –
the voices of journalists –
who continue being sentenced
to years of imprisonment."



A charity concert in support of the affected independent authors, distributors and publishers was given by **Maksim Žbankoŭ**, who read excerpts from his new book “SloMo. Home criticism of cultural design”, and **Arciom Zaleski**, who placed musical accents.



The concert of **the band "RSP"** (Razbitaje Serca Pacana) for the festival "Artists of Victory" was broadcast on February 27. It was recorded by the organizers in advance, and literally a day after that musicians of this and other bands were detained and convicted to administrative arrest.



Photo: Euroradio.fm

5. VOICES OF BELARUSIAN CULTURE



Sviatlana Aleksijevič

"It is very important for us now to keep our morals. I think this is the only way out: we must maintain self-respect. Spring is ahead, it may become a serious test."

Photo: Reuters

Hanna Chitryk, a former actress at the Kupala Theater, musician, who left for Israel together with her husband and son three years ago for better living conditions for her son who was diagnosed with autism. *"We can't all just drown now: we simply don't have the right for that, because people have died. We can't give up only because there hasn't been that much activity recently. I believe that everything will be fine."*



Photo: nn.by



Volha Siemčanka, an employee of the Mahiloŭ Drama Theater fired for her activism.

"There's no going back. The government won't accept our existence. We were all listed by head, and they'll continue "working" with us. If the protest wasn't so important, they wouldn't imprison us."

Aleh Harbuz, a former actor of the YankaKupała Theater. *"It was not Paviel Łatuška who ruined the theater and Gorbachev did not destroy the country. These changes have come naturally, led by historical processes."*



Photo: kinopoisk.ru



Dźmitry Bruško, photographer.

"What we see now is not a protest, but the nation being formed."

Photo: Uładź Hrydzin

Sviatlana Kuprejeva, former member of Viktor Babaryka's initiative group, daughter of the poet Mikoła Kuprejeŭ, has been in the KGB pre-trial detention center for 9 months now, there she has started writing poems.

"It would be nice to live, to always be surrounded by people like I am now: kind, not selfish, patient, always smiling. I am happy to meet people like ones I have met here. Now it's in prisons where you'll find the best people."



Courtesy photo



Maryja Kalesnikava

gave an interview from behind bars. *"Here I really miss music which I love so much. The world of music in which I have lived for the last 30 years is very different from what I hear in this place. Lack of music is torture. What saves me is my memory – when I close my eyes and listen to Bach, Mozart and what I played myself".*

6. INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY



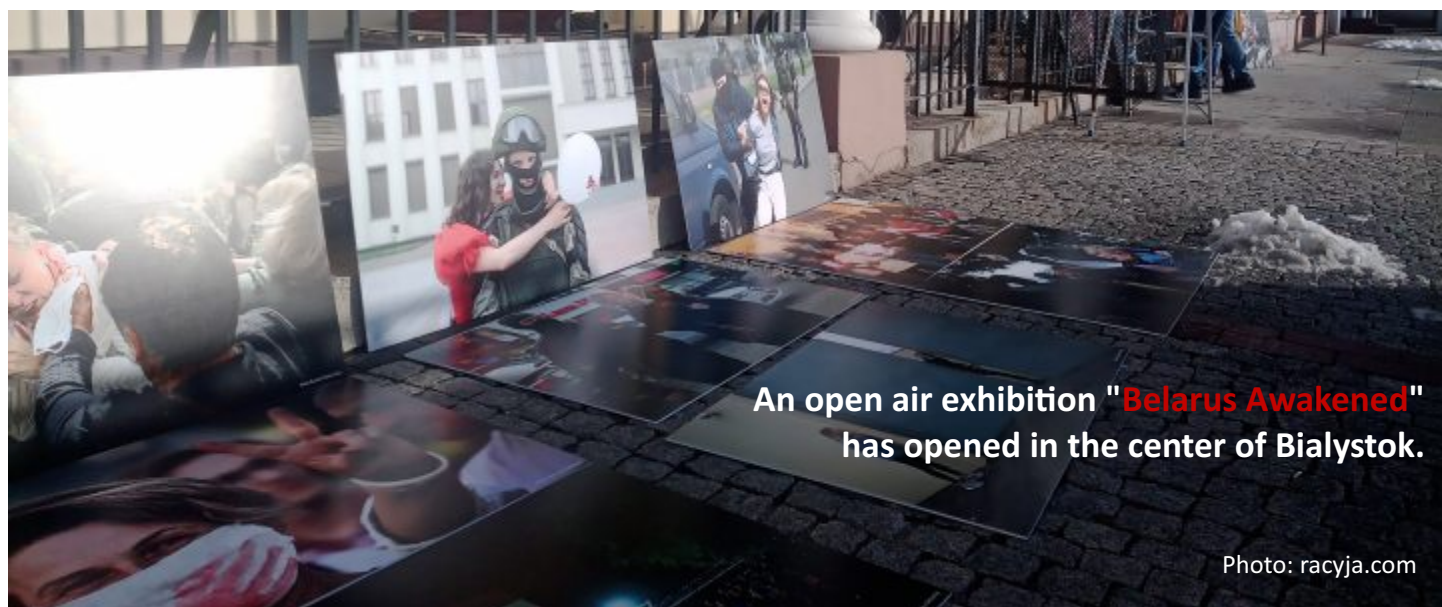
PEN France has expressed solidarity with Belarus.



The International Federation of Translators (FIT)
demands the release of Volha Kalackaja, as well as an end
to violence and repression against writers, translators
and independent cultural figures in Belarus.



The Ukrainian Association of Translators joins the statement
of the International Federation of Translators
and demands the immediate release of **Volha Kalackaja**.



An open air exhibition "**Belarus Awakened**"
has opened in the center of Bialystok.

Photo: racyja.com

The British actress **Kristin Milward** recorded an excerpt from "Second Hand Time" by Svetlana Alexievich in support of the Belarusians.







Russian opera singer **Svetlana Kasyan** has recorded the hymn "Salve, Regina" in solidarity with Belarusians who, despite the persecution, continue their peaceful struggle for freedom and justice.



Actors of the Finnish National Theater organized a reading of Andrej Kurejčyk's play "Offended. Belarus(sia)" in the English translation and made a donation in support of the Belarusian theatrical community through the Belarusian Culture Solidarity Foundation.



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