



Belarussian  
PEN  
Centre

# Cultural Resistance in Belarus

**Issue 10 (23)**

March 16, 2021

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*There are poems that have been relevant for us for hundreds of years, there is news that breaks our hearts, and an understanding that we must keep going so that the poems about our struggle for freedom remain in the past and our hearts can finally be filled with joy.*

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\*SUPPORTED BY PEN BELARUS

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# 1. ARRESTS, CONVICTIONS, PROSECUTION



**Maksim Znak**, lawyer, poet and musician, member of Viktor Babaryka's team, political prisoner, detained on September 9, remains in jail until May 9. He is charged under Art. 361 part 3 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (call to action against national security), Art. 357 part 1 (conspiracy to seize power) and Art. 361 part 1 (creation of an extremist formation or its management).



**Siarhiej Cichanoŭski** [Siarhei Tsikhanouski] is charged with four counts under the Criminal Code of Belarus:

Part 1 of Art. 293 (organization of mass riots);

Part 3 of Art. 130 (incitement to social hostility);

Part 2 of Art. 191 (obstruction of the Central Election Committee);

Part 1 of Article 342 (organization of actions that grossly violate public order).

The most severe article is punishable by up to 15 years in prison.



**Anastasija Pieravoščykava** [Anastasiya Peravoshchykava], a resident of Homel who has been in prison since the end of January 2021 (she was tried 6 times in a row, each time receiving 15 days of administrative arrest, which makes 105 days in total), has been recognized a political prisoner.



**Ihar Bancar** [Igor Bantser], musician and activist, has been on a "dry" hunger strike since March 3. On March 12, another regular hearing in his case took place, he asked the court to change the measure of restraint and release him from custody, but the judge did not grant his request. The next hearing in his case is scheduled for March 18, potentially the 16th day of his hunger strike.



Photo: svaboda.org

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February 28

The Polish Consul in Brest **Jerzy Timofeiuk** took part in an event dedicated to the Day of "Damned Soldiers" and by this allegedly violated the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations by participating in the event.

March 9

Chargé d'Affaires of Poland **Martin Wojciechowski** was summoned to the Foreign Ministry of Belarus.

March 10

In response Poland declared the diplomat from the Belarusian Embassy in Warsaw a persona non grata

March 10

The Brest Prosecutor's Office opened a criminal case over "the heroization of war criminals".

March 11

The Belarusian Foreign Ministry informed Wojciechowski about the inexpediency of the presence of two more Polish diplomats on the territory of the country – the head and consul of the Consulate General of Poland in Hrodna.

March 12

**Hanna Panišava**, the principal of the Polish School in Brest, was detained when she returned to Belarus from a working visit to Poland.



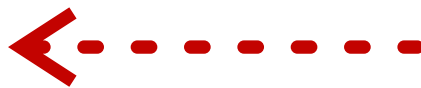
March 12

The Polish Foreign Ministry announced the expulsion of two Belarusian consuls from Warsaw and Bialystok.

On March 14, several people were detained during the **Maslenitsa** celebrations in Minsk.



**Ihar Łosik** [Ihar Losik], a journalist and blogger, political prisoner, announced the beginning of a "dry" hunger strike on March 11.



**Natalla Chierše** [Natalia Hershe], artist, political prisoner who had been on hunger strike since February 22, ended it on March 12.



**Lizavieta Hančarova** [Lizaveta Hancharova], designer and artist, was detained in Minsk on March 12 together with her father during a small neighborhood protest action. On March 15, they were both sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest.



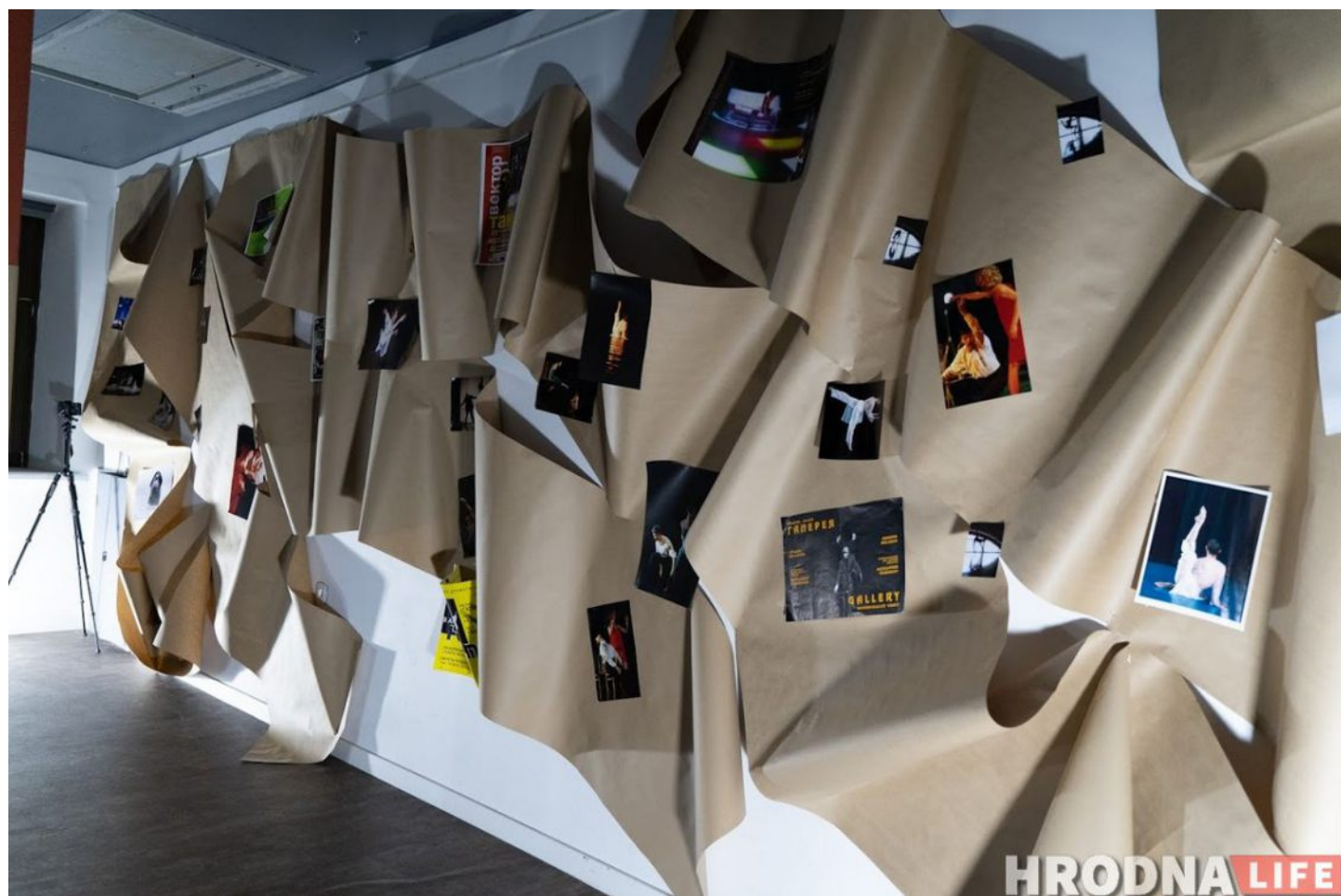
In Brest on March 15, **ten more people** were convicted in the "Karahod case". They received sentences from 1.5 years of home arrest (chimiya) to 1 year and 8 months in prison. No journalists were let to the pronouncement of the verdict.

## 2. PRESSURE, DISMISSAL, BAN

**Alaksandr Pamidoraŭ**  
[Aliaksandr Pamidorau],  
the musician, showman and  
radio host, was called by phone  
for questioning by the  
Department of Financial  
Investigations on March 10.  
He demanded that a summons  
be sent.



The exhibition "Dance Theater in the Theater" by the choreographer of the Hrodna Drama Theater **Viktoryja Balcar** (who has worked there since 1996), who has participated in the projects taking place at the only independent cultural space in Hrodna "Center of Urban Life", was banned to be held in the theater. Also, the contract with Viktoryja is not extended.



## 3. SYMBOLS

The system's attacks on everything related to white-red-white colors is taking on increasingly absurd forms. Courts do not stop work even on weekends: on Sunday, March 7, **Alaksandr Danilin**, who was detained on the night of January 6-7 while hanging ribbons in Baraŭlany, was sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest. On Sunday, closed hearings were held in at least three courts, having sentenced at least four people to administrative arrests. It might have been related to the fact that March 8 (Monday) was a public holiday.



Photo: mff.by

**Paviel Sieviaryniec** [Paviel Seviarynets] turned to **Metropolitan Benjamin** asking him to stand up for the white-red-white flag.



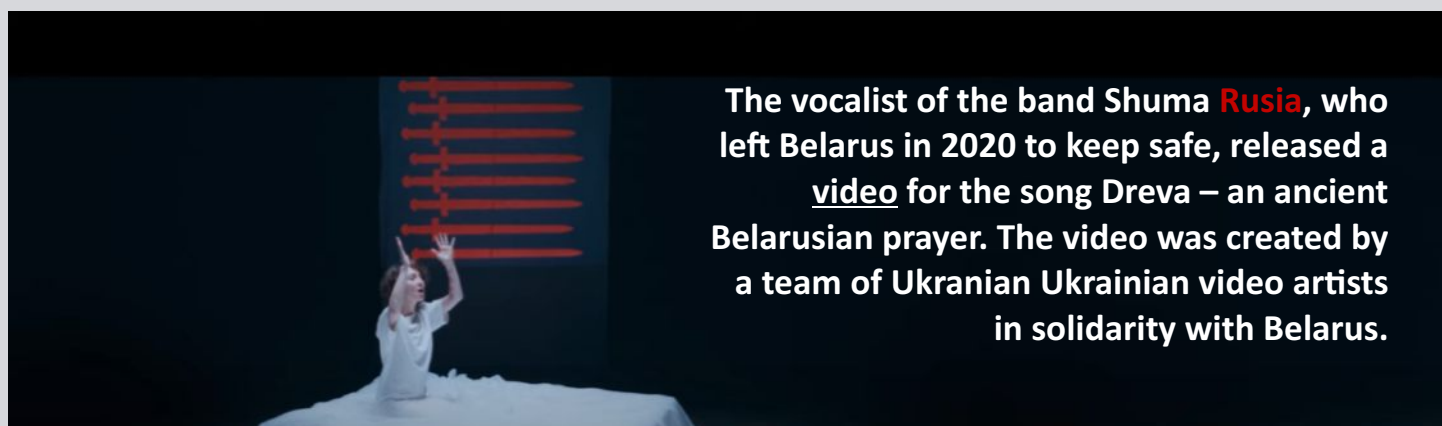
## 4. CULTURAL RESISTANCE

**Volny Chor** performed the song "We will come out in a tight line", one of the symbols of the Belarusian National Republic, which has gained new relevance today.



**Words Are More Powerful:** music and frontman of Gods Tower **Lesley Knife** reads a poem by Vacłaŭ Łastoŭski "I did not bow my head before the force".

LIVE of **Marharyta Laŭčuk** [Marharyta Liauchuk] and **Andrej Pavuk** was held on March 13 as part of the **Victory Artists** festival in support of Belarusian artists who suffered for their civic position. Marharyta Laŭčuk has become a bright symbol of the 2020 protest. Due to her active position she had to leave Belarus. Andrej Pavuk is a civil activist who has been repeatedly brought to administrative responsibility by the authorities on trumped-up grounds. In the fall of 2020, he and his family were unable to return to Belarus due to persecution.



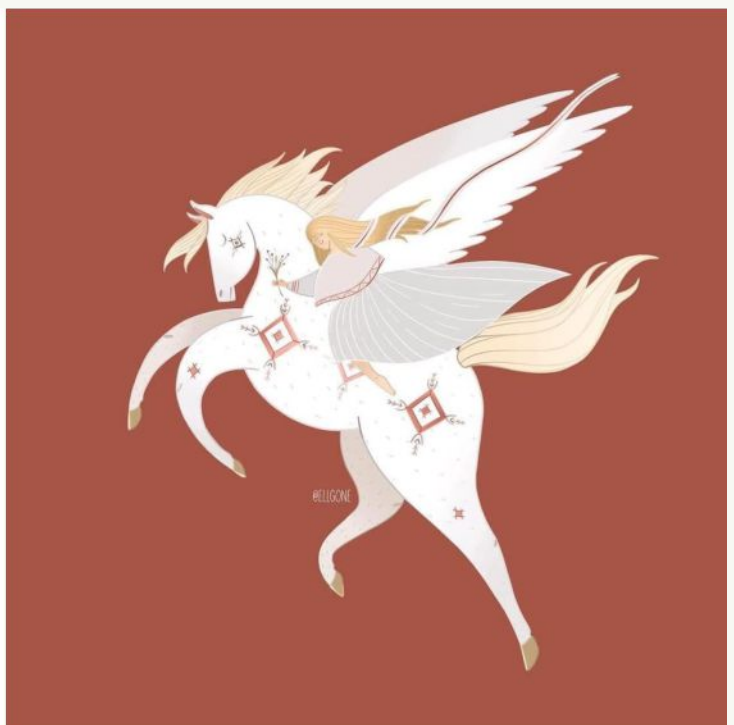
The vocalist of the band Shuma **Rusia**, who left Belarus in 2020 to keep safe, released a video for the song Dreva – an ancient Belarusian prayer. The video was created by a team of Ukrainian video artists in solidarity with Belarus.



Hrodna residents have created a series of postcards with images of the political prisoners held in the Hrodna prison.



### Lizavieta Hančarova's illustrations



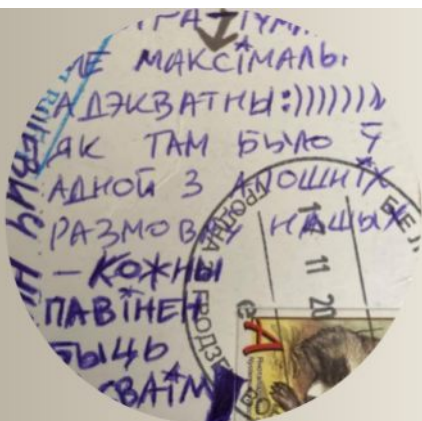
## 5. VOICES OF BELARUSIAN CULTURE

**Hienadz Haranski** [Henadz Haranski], actor of the Youth Theatre in Minsk, tells how actors survive now and how the audience have changed recently.

*“Our theatre has reached a new level in terms of work. Uładzimir Savicki supports the directors' initiative and agrees to experiment with the material. Lightmen approach the actors to clarify the points where those come on the stage in order to set up the light more accurately. The sound engineers ask the director where it is better to play music: from portals, on stage, from surround. And the installers are ready not only to install the scenery, but to climb on the grate to help perform the necessary trick for the mise-en-scène. Feeling how much the current audience needs theater, we really became a united team.”*



Photo: tut.by



**Ihar Bancar** in his letter from prison,

*“Certainly, all people are different. Even identical twins are different. The only thing that unites us all is the fact that we are all living beings: with feelings, thoughts, dreams, aspirations, etc. It's good to know that there are enough people of good will (so different) in our country.”*

Musicians of the **VAL** duo **Lera Hrybusava** and **Ulad Freiman**, who were supposed to represent Belarus at the Eurovision Song Contest but were expelled for their political position.

*“We would like to represent a free country and sing a song about the events in Belarus, about what worries us now, what is happening around us. You know that Belteleradiocompany would never give us the right to present ourselves in this way.”*



Courtesy photo

## 6. INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Photographer **Nadziežda Bužan** [Nadezhda Buzhan] became a finalist of the most prestigious professional photography contest in the world – World Press Photo. The photo, in which Volha Sieviaryniec [Sevyarynets] is waiting for her husband near the infamous detention centre in Akrestsina with flowers, was included in the list of the best in the spot news nomination. The winners of the contest will be announced on April 15.



A picket in support of Ihar Bancar took place in Warsaw.






## 7. EUROVISION

# EUROVISION

## SONG CONTEST

On Tuesday the 9th March, the national broadcasting company, BTRC, opted to select the group Galasy ZMesta and their song “Ya Nauchu Tebya (I’ll Teach You)” to represent Belarus at this year’s **Eurovision Song Contest**. The band’s songs mock at the protesters and their leaders. Eurovoix, one of the largest news sites covering Eurovision, released a statement criticizing the situation, as the song violated the rules of the contest because it has political implications. A petition started by Swedish political party Liberalerna to disqualify Belarus from Eurovision 2021 hit 1000 signatures. The European Broadcasting Union checked the song for compliance with the rules of the contest and informed Beltele radiocompany that in its current form, it cannot represent Belarus at "Eurovision 2021".



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