

**LEGAL INITIATIVE:
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024**



Legal Initiative is a Belarusian human rights organization that has been working with human rights since 1996.

Until 2021, the organization was actively operating within Belarus. Its areas of focus included court and military monitoring, conducting educational courses and training, filing complaints to the UN Human Rights Committee, engaging with UN special procedures, promoting human rights through quizzes and quests, and producing human rights-focused films and video materials.

Belarus faced record levels of state violence in 2020 following protests sparked by fraudulent presidential elections. Between August 9 and August 12 alone, some 7,000 peaceful protesters were arrested. In response to the wave of violence, the Legal Initiative founded the International Committee to Investigate Torture in Belarus, a special project aimed at documenting as many cases of torture as possible and preserving all evidence of the regime's crimes.

In 2021, most of the Legal Initiative team had to flee Belarus and continued their work from Lithuania. We conduct human rights education programs and awareness-raising events, advocacy campaigns, make human rights videos, and document evidence and assist people who have suffered torture and ill-treatment at the hands of the regime in Belarus.

On October 7, 2024, the regime **recognized** our special project “International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus”, all social networks of the project, as well as the contact account as an extremist formation. Our leaders, Siarhei Ustsinou and Viktoria Fiodarava were publicly mentioned as the persons involved with the project.

AREAS OF LEGAL INITIATIVE ACTIVITIES IN 2024

- Education
- Awareness raising
- International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus
- International Advocacy



EDUCATION

We believe in the power of knowledge for respect of human rights

Respect for human rights is possible only in a society where every person is aware of their rights. Therefore, education is one of the key areas of the Legal Initiative's activities.

We actively organize **educational events**, including **workshops, schools** and **webinars**, to provide participants with practical knowledge and tools to protect their rights and promote human rights initiatives.

119

people attended our educational events in 2024.
Some participants took part in more than one program.

“Human Rights in Action” course

The educational course "Human Rights in Action", which was launched in 2023, continued its work. This one-year advanced level program is designed for those who are already familiar with the concept of human rights, seek to deepen their knowledge and are ready to make real efforts to protect human rights in society.



PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

Strengthening the Belarusian human rights sector and training new specialists and professionals.

Results

42

applications were submitted

18

participants were selected and successfully completed the program

2,3

candidate competition for a seat

The course has become an important platform for the training of new skilled human rights defenders capable of contributing to the strengthening of civil society and the promotion of human rights.

Autumn Human Rights School

The Autumn Human Rights School is a basic educational course for those who want to acquire fundamental knowledge about human rights and their defense.

21

applications were submitted

14

participants were selected and successfully completed the course

1,4

candidate competition for a seat

INTERNSHIPS

In 2024, three waves of internships were organized, involving 9 people. The internships were held in Belarusian human rights organizations.

Human Rights Projects Implemented by Alumni

After completing the "Human Rights in Action" school, alumni successfully implemented three projects supported by the Legal Initiative:

1. "Rights First" (July–September)

A series of five online lectures exploring human rights through the lens of pop culture.

2. HIV+ Drop (October–November)

A project addressing HIV awareness and combating discrimination.

3. TikTok on Human Rights "RADA" (October–November):

Creation and publication of 15 TikTok videos focused on human rights topics.

EVENTS FOR ALUMNI

In 2024, we organized a series of educational events for the alumni of our programs to deepen their knowledge and enhance their practical skills in the field of human rights.

In-person events

2

in-person events we have held

27

participants attended

1. Seminar on "Migration and International Human Rights Law"

2. Seminar on "Human Rights and Vulnerable Groups"

Online webinars

4

online webinars we have held

47

participants attended

1. "Exercising the Right to Information in Modern Belarus"

2. "Registering NGOs in Poland"

3. "Debunking SMM Myths in the Civic Sector"

4. "She's Right: Discrimination or Overreaction?"

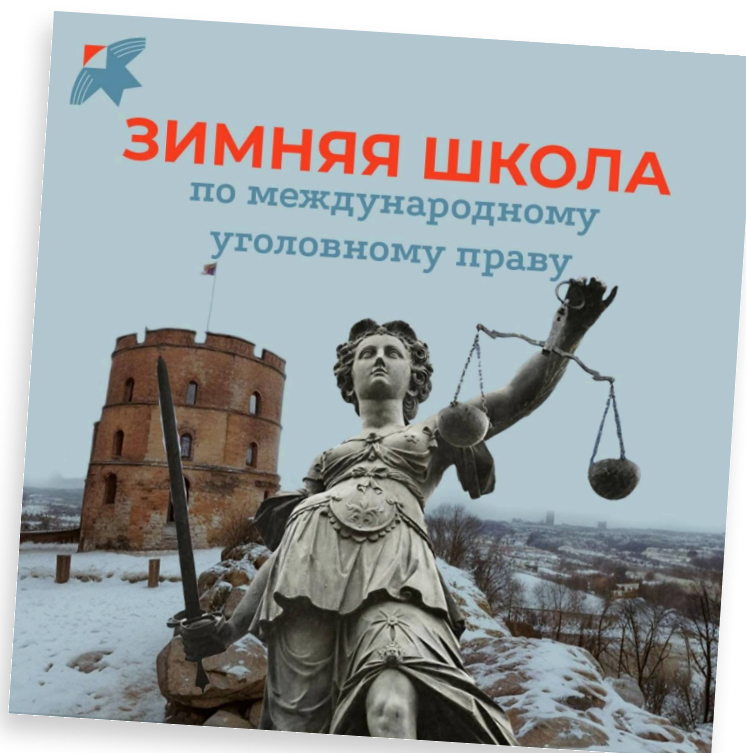
These events became an integral part of alumni post-training, equipping participants with the tools to effectively apply their knowledge in their human rights work.

LAUNCH OF A NEW EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

In December 2024, we hosted the “Winter School on International Criminal Law”

13

participants attended



The program covered key aspects of international criminal law, including:

- The theory and history of international criminal law;
- War crimes and acts of aggression;
- Crimes against humanity and genocide;
- The activity and role of the International Criminal Court;
- The main principles of international criminal proceedings.

The school provided a platform for in-depth exploration of these topics and facilitated experience sharing among participants.

AWARENESS RAISING

We strive not only to train and educate activists and future human rights defenders, but also to work to ensure that every person can confidently answer the question: “What are human rights? For this purpose, we actively use modern formats and platforms: we create videos, introduce elements of gamification, organize awareness-raising events and participate in public functions.

We run a **YouTube channel** to make as many people as possible aware of the human rights crisis in Belarus, current issues, and human rights in general. Over the past year we have put a lot of effort into its development, thanks to which our channel continues to be the most popular human rights YouTube channel in Belarus.

IN 2024, WE:

2

live streams successfully hosted

unique long-form videos created
and published

50

51

YouTube Shorts

views of our
videos

1 150 000+

389%

increase in the number of views
compared to 2023

hours of total watch time, up by
311% from 2023

24 000

3 000+

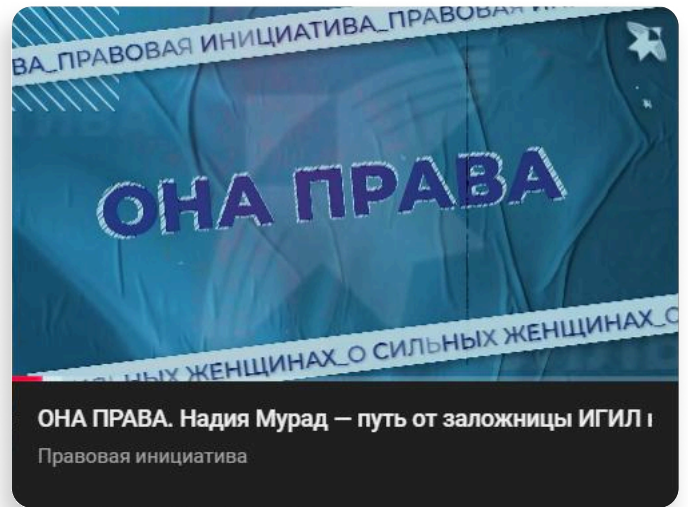
new subscribers this year, reflecting a 341% growth
from 2023. As of today, our channel has more than
7,000 subscribers.

New unique products:

She's right

This year we launched a new project - a video series "She's Right" dedicated to women human rights defenders. "She's Right" is an important initiative that raises the topic of women in human rights, which has long remained in the shadows. We have become one of the few human rights organizations that not only talk about women's contribution to the human rights movement, but also take concrete steps to promote and recognize it.

The videos are about strong, successful women who by their example break stereotypes and prove that human rights defense is a cause for everyone.



The project is not just a series of videos, but a contribution to the visibility of women's leadership, an inspiration and motivation for those who are willing to fight for rights and justice.

8

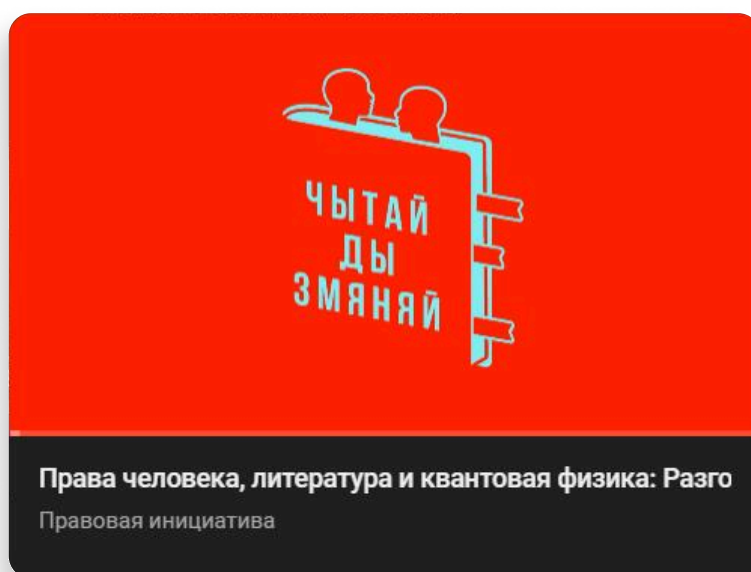
videos were produced within the framework of the project, which garnered a total of over 16,000 views.



New unique products:

Read to Change

The second unique project was the podcast series "Read to Change", where human rights defenders from various fields discuss their favorite books with the host. Each episode focuses on a pressing human rights issue—be it the rights of vulnerable groups or critical social challenges.



The podcast's guests share books connected to their professional experiences, ranging from fiction and non-fiction to essays and biographies. This podcast is not just about books -- it's about the ideas that inspire people to fight for justice and make the world a better place.

10

episodes have been released over the year, which have racked up a combined total of over 40,000 views.

New unique products:

Two poles

One of this year's key projects was the “Two Poles” project, a unique initiative aimed at dismantling propaganda narratives and increasing media literacy. This project was created for two target audiences: people of the older generation and young people.



“Two Poles” is a series of 20 videos and **10 analytical articles**. Within the framework of the project, we systematically dismantled popular propaganda theses, arming the audience with facts and logic. Our goal is to help people resist manipulation, critically evaluate information and maintain independent thinking. Overall

We have been able to contribute to the fight for information freedom, especially in the context of increasing pressure from the regime and the complete elimination of independent media in Belarus. “Two Poles” is our attempt to expose the techniques of propaganda, show their inconsistency and help people realize the power of awareness.

20

20 video episodes have been produced over the year

750 000+

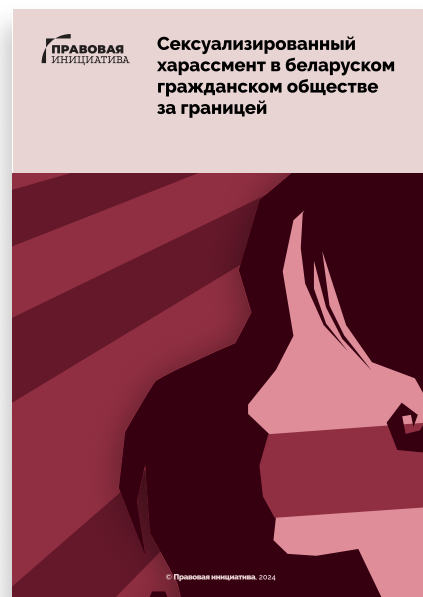
views have been collected by the videos in total

10

ANALYTICAL ACTIVITIES OF LEGAL INITIATIVE

Report on Sexualized Harassment in the Belarusian Civil Society Abroad: Survey Results and Recommendations

This report marks the first study addressing sexualized harassment within the Belarusian civil society in exile - a topic that had previously remained unexamined. The Legal Initiative became one of the first human rights organizations to openly highlight the issue of harassment within the community.



Report on the Situation of the LGBTQ+ Community in Belarus

This report was prepared based on data collected in collaboration with TG-House and other LGBTQ+ human rights organizations working with the LGBTQ+ community, including those operating within Belarus.

The report was informed by the regular violation of the rights of LGBTQ+ people in Belarus, which dramatically worsened after the elections in August 2020.

The report presents evidence of systematic mass discrimination and torture against LGBTQ+ representatives and discusses the lack of mechanisms to protect vulnerable groups in Belarus.

Webinars

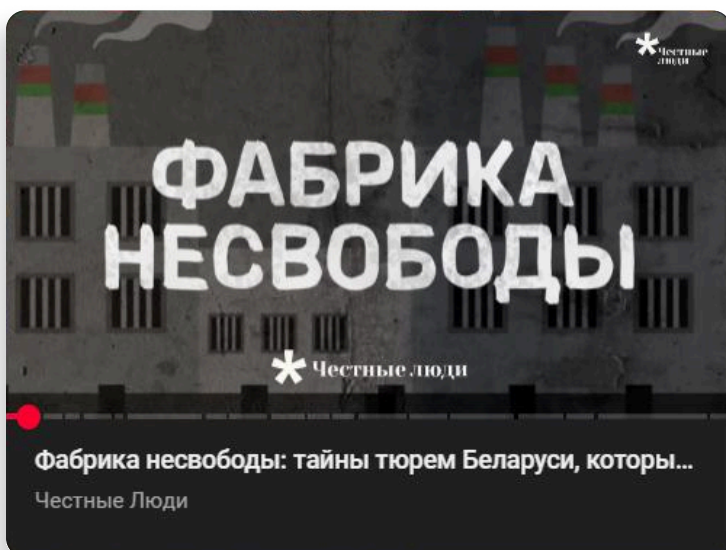
We held three "Citizen and Investigation" webinars on self-defense in political criminal cases for LGBTQ+ people and their families in Belarus. Despite the legal default, people feel the need for these kinds of webinars.

30+

people in total participated in the webinars

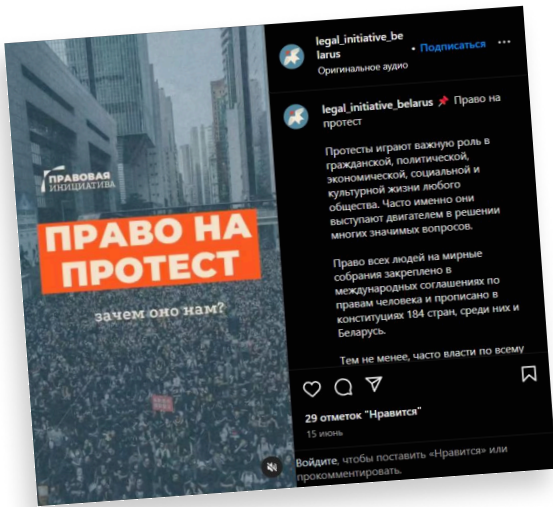
Collaborations:

Together with New Regions, we prepared a series of **articles** on how to talk to children about LGBTQ+ issues.



Participated in a **movie** about Belarusian prisons created by the independent community "Honest People"

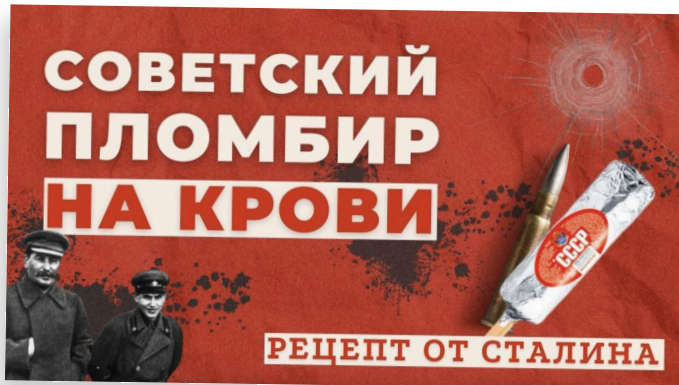
Outreach activities and information materials



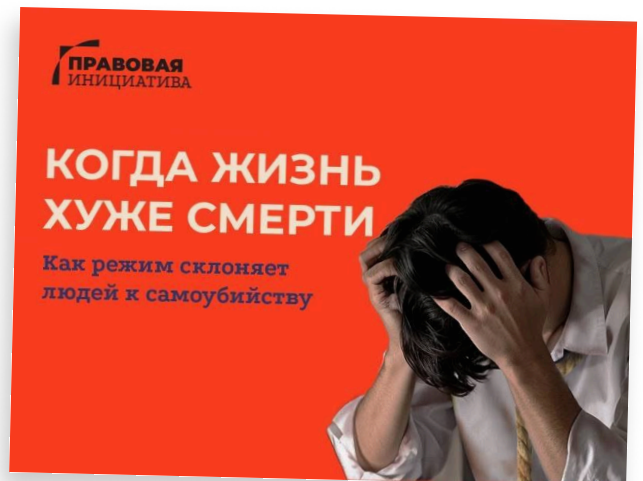
“The Right to Protest.”



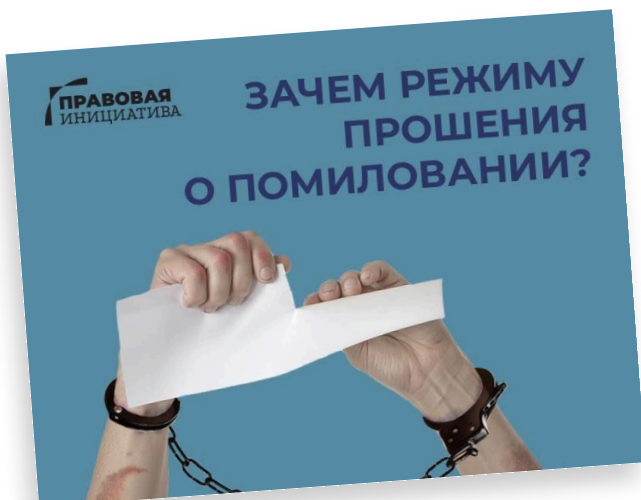
Analysis of the resolution on Belarus



Article on the use of torture in the USSR



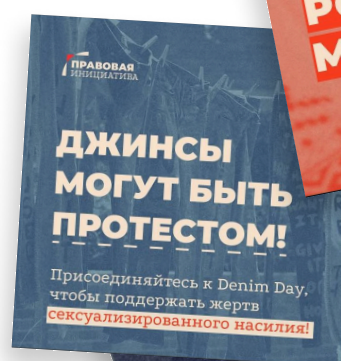
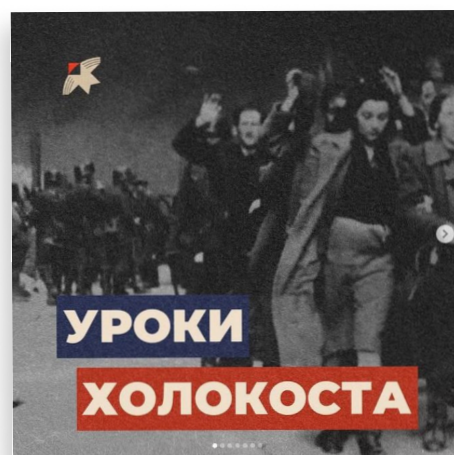
Analysis of systemic pressures leading to suicide



Article on pardon practices

International Days Marked:

- **International Holocaust Remembrance Day**
- **International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation**
- **International Mother Language Day**
- **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**
- **Denim Day:** A day of solidarity with survivors of sexualized violence.
- **Day of Political Prisoners in Belarus**
- **Zero Discrimination Week**
- **International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**, we published daily educational posts over 16 days, starting on November 25, to amplify awareness and encourage action against violence toward women.



We continue to promote the human rights agenda and look for new ways to make the topic of human rights accessible and understandable to all.

“The Day After Tomorrow Will Be Tomorrow”

This year we staged a mono-performance “The Day After Tomorrow Will Be Tomorrow” together with Pavel Haradnitski:

“The Day After Tomorrow Will Be Tomorrow” is a unique online mono-performance based on the true story of arrest, imprisonment and long-awaited release. It is a story about survival in tough conditions and about hope.



The play was staged in Warsaw, Vilnius, Prague, Salzburg and Stockholm. In total, the show was attended by about 350 people. In addition, on December 10, International Human Rights Day, an online premiere of the play was held on the Legal Initiative's YouTube channel. Access to the video was open for 24 hours in order not to reduce the interest of viewers in the offline format of the performance. The play was viewed by 239 unique users within a day. The campaign also included a **live Instagram broadcast** with actor and director Pavel Haradnitski, where viewers could ask the actor questions directly and learn more about the production.

The play has attracted significant international attention, generating widespread response. The production not only highlighted the theme of repression, but also strengthened ties with partners, such as a proposal from a Prague theater for further cooperation.

The project became an important tool to draw international attention to the lack of respect for human rights in Belarus, enhancing dialog and support in the international arena.

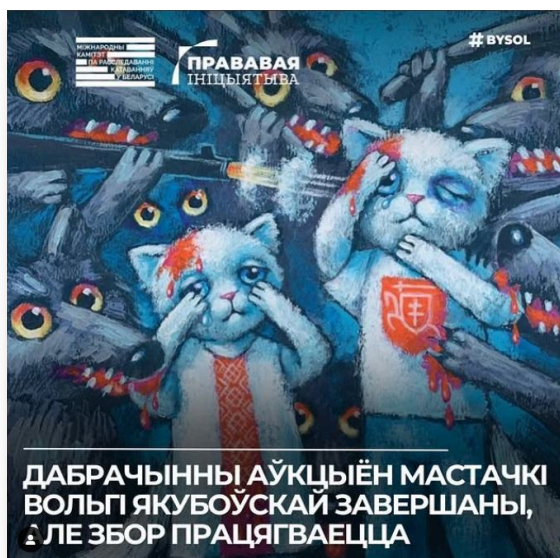
Week Against Torture 2024



Since 2018, we have been running the “Week Against Torture” campaign, which aims to draw attention to the ongoing torture, ill-treatment of detained and imprisoned Belarusians. The campaign is timed to the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture (June 26).

As part of the campaign **"Week against Torture 2024"** we held 10 events and 3 activities in cooperation with partner organizations:

1. Presentation of the public inquiry: **"Torture in the Maskouski District Department of Internal Affairs"** - June 25, 2024 (online, closed format).



2. **Charity event:** online auction of Volha Yakubouskaya's painting to help the victim of regime Mikalai Papelski- June 26-30, 2024 (online), which raised 700 euros.

Week Against Torture 2024

3. Open House and sound installation at the Museum of Prisons in Lviv - June 26, 2024 (Lviv, Ukraine). Documentary stories of victims of repression by the Belarus regime were played in the cells of the museum to remind that the tragedy of political prisoners continues - in Belarus, in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and in Russian prisons.



4. **Collaboration with blogger Andrei Pavuk** - June 26, 2024 (online).

5. Thematic quiz "Pravo Napravo" - June 26, 2024 (Poznan, Poland), which was previously presented in online quiz format, accessible to all.



6. First Aid Training - June 27, 2024 (Poznan, Poland), where participants learned first aid skills under the guidance of professionals. The training taught techniques of cardiopulmonary resuscitation, stopping bleeding and wound care.

Week Against Torture 2024

7. **“Prison Experiment”** - June 27, 2024 (Vilnius, Lithuania). The aim of this experiment was to draw attention to the fate of more than 1,400 political prisoners held by the regime.



At the Museum of Occupation and Freedom Struggle in Vilnius, the participants, mostly foreigners, experienced first-hand the conditions of political prisoners in Belarus by being held in an overcrowded cell. Afterwards, the participants had a chance to share their impressions during an open discussion on torture and inhuman treatment in Belarusian prisons.



8. Participation on the platform of civil organizations at Hučna Fest - June 29, 2024 (Warsaw). Hučna Fest is one of the largest Belarusian festivals, bringing together contemporary literature, art, current Belarusian music and activism. At this event, we organized activities dedicated to the “Week against Torture”, continued raising money for the treatment of the consequences of torture for Mikalai Papelski, and presented the activities of the Legal Initiative and the International Committee through informational materials.

Campaign Features

This campaign stood out for its interdisciplinary approach, blending art, education, and practical activities. The events included a variety of formats: lectures, quizzes, training sessions, theatrical performances, film screenings, exhibitions, experiments, research presentations, and public discussions.

We organized in-person events in Vilnius, Warsaw, Poznan, and, for the first time, in Lviv.



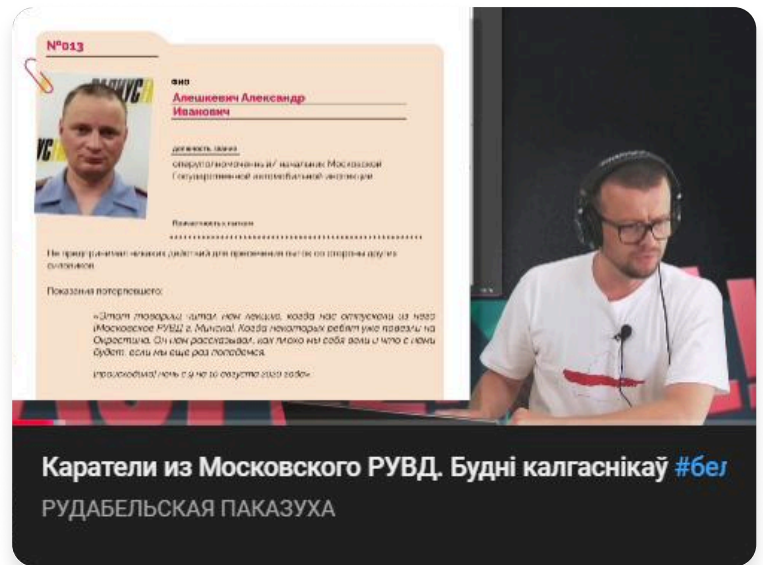
Campaign Partners



The campaign involved 12 organizations, with partners and the media helping to spread information about the events. This collaboration enabled the campaign to reach a broader audience, raising awareness within Belarusian society about the issue of torture and attracting international support.

Results and Achievements

A collaboration was organized with blogger Andrei Pavuk, who made a video of phone calls to alleged human rights abusers.



72 000+

views in two days

The campaign was covered in Lithuanian media, which helped to attract the attention of an international audience.

The campaign has seen an increase in the number of participants, viewers and the number of organizations willing to join the initiative. We plan to continue organizing the Week against Torture, expanding the geography and attracting even more participants.

LEGAL INITIATIVE'S SPECIAL PROJECT: INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF TORTURE IN BELARUS

The International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus (IC) works to document as many cases of torture by the regime as possible, to preserve the evidence until fair courts can be established to hold perpetrators accountable in the future.

Main areas of focus of the International Committee:

- **Conducting and publishing investigations** based on the collected and documented accounts of victims.
- **Informing about what is happening in Belarus:** disseminating information in the international arena.
- **Facilitating legal proceedings outside Belarus:** utilizing the mechanism of universal jurisdiction.
- **Protecting the rights of victims:** assisting victims of repression and torture, as well as those affected by the actions of the Belarusian security forces.
- **Documenting stories and preserving evidence:** creating a unified database of the regime's crimes.

Documenting for accountability purposes

Documenting is the central and most extensive part of the IC's work. The widespread torture of Belarusian citizens, which began in 2020 and continues to this day, constitutes a crime against humanity

These actions violate international law, and all perpetrators must be held accountable.

Our primary objective is to reconstruct events from August 2020 to the present, preserving all evidence of crimes and identifying the names of perpetrators. We aim to show the perpetrators that their actions are known and to send a clear message to the regime: nothing will be forgotten or forgiven. All collected statements, including data on the perpetrators, are securely stored in our database on protected servers. When the time comes, this evidence will be made public to ensure accountability.

Maintaining a survivor database and communicating with witnesses who have survived torture and ill-treatment

From August 2020 to date, the IC has maintained a documented witness database of materials, documents, links to open sources and contacts. Communication and keeping in touch with witnesses is a separate and extensive part of the IC's work. We are in constant communication with witnesses on issues ranging from legal remedies to assistance in contacting migration services.

Assistance to the OHCHR mission

As in previous years of work, the International Committee actively assists the UN mission in finding contacts of witnesses who survived torture and ill-treatment, providing materials at the request of the UN Expertise on the Situation in Belarus (later - UN Group of Independent Experts, searching for information or persons who can testify to the human rights situation in Belarus). In 2024, we provided at least 50 contacts of witnesses from Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Georgia to the Group of Independent Experts, as well as assisted in meetings of witnesses with them.

Cooperation with the International Accountability Platform for Belarus.

Since March 2021, the Committee has been an active member of the IAPB. In the framework of the IAPB, we communicate with witnesses to collect evidence of crimes against humanity. We have trained specialists to work with the modern Relativity database, we participate in trainings and webinars to enhance the skills of documenters. For example, in 2024 our documenters were trained in documenting sexualized violence, deportation crimes, proving crimes against humanity etc. Also, throughout the year, the Committee has been preparing witnesses to be interviewed by investigators in the Czech Republic.

IC's Results and Achievements:

1884

people - total number of documented survivor accounts over time of operation.

67

people - documented cases in 2024.

The more facts and evidence are collected, the more perpetrators will be held accountable!

We believe that it is as important to talk about what is happening in Belarus as it is to collect and document information about it. The world community should know that torture has never stopped in Belarus. Just as the Belarusians themselves should not forget about it.

Investigations are our main tool to showcase the developments in Belarus. We analyze hundreds of cases in order to create an objective picture of what is happening and bring it to the public.

4

documents we published this year - 3 public inquiries and 1 analytical study together with the human rights center Viasna.

Public inquiry “Centralny RUVD of Minsk. Torture of Detainees on August 9-13, 2020”

We studied 54 stories - this is more than 770 pages of text, as well as 137 pages of photographs of injuries and medical documents. Each witness was personally present in the Centralny RUVD (police department) of Minsk on August 9 - 13. Based on their accounts, we have restored the chronology of events, identified the officers who committed the crimes, and gave a legal assessment of their actions.



Publication of the inquiry

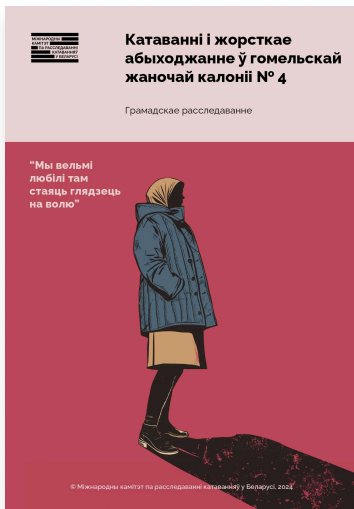
Public inquiry "Maskouski RUVD of Minsk. Torture of detainees on August 9-13, 2020".



Publication of the inquiry

We studied 48 documented stories of victims and witnesses. These are 569 pages of text and 58 pages of medical documents and photographs of injuries. On the basis of these materials we made a chronology of events and identified the perpetrators involved in the torture of civilians in the Maskouski police department of Minsk on August 9-13, 2020.

Public inquiry “Torture and ill-treatment in Gomel women's colony No. 4”.



Publication of the inquiry

We studied the stories and testimonies of 20 former political prisoners who served unlawful terms in penal colony No. 4 between May 2021 and February 2024, having studied 1,818 pages of text for this purpose. On the basis of these materials, we compiled a chronology of events and identified the officials involved in the torture of civilians in Homel Women's Colony No. 4

Analytical Study “How Justice Is Perceived By Survivors Of Torture And/Or Ill-Treatment”.

Together with the Human Rights Center “Viasna” under the leadership of the ex-director of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences, the IC surveyed almost 600 Belarusians who survived torture and/or ill-treatment by law enforcers after 2020 about their perception of justice. The results of the study were presented in Warsaw to Polish NGOs and embassy representatives.



Publication of the inquiry

53

times our investigations and research have been mentioned in the media .

Retreat for survivors of torture and ill-treatment

In November 2024, we organized a retreat for survivors of torture and ill-treatment documented by the IC. The retreat aimed to provide a space for recovery for those forced to flee Belarus due to threats of repression. Twelve participants were invited.

A professional psychologist with expertise in working with torture survivors facilitated the event.

Over two days, participants engaged in bodywork, attended psychological lectures, received individual consultations, and relaxed in a peaceful environment.

Psychological Group

In autumn 2024 in Warsaw, we organized a psychological support group for survivors of torture and ill-treatment.

The group was attended by 7 people. All participants of the group were interviewed and documented by the IC.

7

meetings were held in total

As a result, the participants reduced their stress levels, talked for the first time about the traumas they had suffered about 4 years ago, and self-organized into a separate chat room for mutual support after the end of the group sessions.

UNIVERSAL JURISDICTION

Mass torture, when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack on a civilian population, is a crime against humanity. In 2023, the United Nations officially equated mass torture in Belarus to CAH, for the first time.

Crimes of that magnitude affect everyone. Therefore, thanks to the principle of universal jurisdiction, they can be prosecuted and punished by any country with legislation that provides for universal jurisdiction.

Our organization has become an important part of that process. Thanks to our work, more than 100 cases of potential victims of mass torture have been examined this year.

Complaints filed to initiate criminal proceedings and be recognized as victims under universal jurisdiction:

1

to Lithuanian police

15

to Lithuanian prosecutor's office

This is just the beginning: We are confident that the number of individuals finding the courage to share their stories will grow each day, and justice will not be overlooked.

It is important to emphasize that each survivor is also a witness to the crimes endured by others. This makes every testimony an invaluable contribution to the fight for truth and justice.

Cooperation with CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women)

In 2024, our lawyers worked to file 6 complaints about violations of women's rights in Belarus, including discriminatory conditions of serving sentences in correctional institutions, with CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women).

15+

complaints and applications were filed to exhaust domestic remedies.

Two of the discrimination cases have already been brought before the national court. In the other cases, the proceedings are at the next-to-last stage of domestic exhaustion: we have filed complaints and are awaiting a response from the regime's authorities. The process is complicated by the fact that the regime has stopped responding to appeals coming from abroad, so for each next stage of appeal we have to wait at least two months.

The struggle for women's rights is not only a matter of justice, but also a fundamental necessity for building an equal and free society.

INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

55th session of the UN Human Rights Council: Legal Initiative's contribution

At the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council, a historic resolution on Belarus was adopted. It extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for another year and established a group of three independent experts to investigate human rights violations.

Legal Initiative chairperson, **Viktorija Fiodarava**, spoke at the session, presenting an analysis of the human rights situation in Belarus and amplifying international attention to the ongoing human rights violations.



Photo from the event

This resolution solidifies the foundation for continued work by human rights defenders, including our organization, enabling us to document and present evidence of the regime's crimes on the international arena.

Warsaw Human Dimension Conference 2024

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) was founded on the principle that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is as essential to the concept of security as the sovereignty of borders and the peaceful resolution of disputes. Since 1993, OSCE participating States have convened almost annually for the **Human Dimension Implementation Meeting** – Europe's largest human rights conference – to ensure accountability for upholding these values.



Photo from the event

Representatives of the Legal Initiative took part in three events of the Conference, devoted to universal jurisdiction, the human rights situation in Belarus and the need to launch the Moscow Mechanism to investigate the crime of deportation of Belarusians.

Parliament of Norway

On October 8, 2024, the Norwegian Parliament in Oslo hosted a seminar focused on political prisoners in Europe. Over 100 participants from various countries joined discussions on the rights of political prisoners. Among the speakers was Viktoria Fiodarava, the chair of Legal Initiative.

In her presentation, Viktoria highlighted the systematic persecution of human rights defenders in Belarus, who face pressure and reprisals for their work. She urged Norwegian MPs to support efforts to hold the Lukashenka regime accountable through the International Criminal Court, referencing the Lithuanian ICC referral.



Photo from the event

Viktoria Fiodarava emphasized the need to intensify international pressure and continue supporting political prisoners and human rights defenders enduring torture and repression in Belarus.

Communication to the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery

On April 10, 2024, Legal Initiative, together with our partners from Respect-Protect-Fulfill (“RPF”), sent a communication to the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. In this communication, we highlighted the problem of forced labor of prisoners in Belarus, which can be called a modern form of slavery. We not only presented detailed data on violations in the system of prisons and colonies, but also proposed concrete measures for international response.

This step was made possible thanks to the efforts of our team, which continues to document and consolidate evidence, helping to draw attention to the problem at the global level.

Participation in drafting a joint alternative report for CEDAW

Together with a number of human rights organizations, we submitted an alternative report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This report contains a description of the real situation, which differs from the propaganda version disseminated by the regime.

The Legal Initiative also submitted a **separate alternative report to CEDAW**, which reflects in more detail the situation of torture in Belarus, the situation of women in detention and the systemic discrimination allowed by the state.

Analytical report prepared for the UN Committee against Torture and the Special Rapporteur on Belarus

As an organization that currently focuses on gathering evidence on torture in Belarus, we decided to take a detailed look at the latest Concluding Observations on the Fifth Periodic Report of Belarus¹, prepared on 7 June 2018 by the UN Committee against Torture. An up-to-date review of the latest Observations made it possible to demonstrate changes in Belarus' engagement on human rights issues with the United Nations (in particular, with the UN treaty body, the Committee against Torture).

Information on Belarus' Implementation of Recommendations from the 3rd UPR Cycle on Torture and Ill-Treatment prepared for a joint report

We reviewed 34 recommendations from the 3rd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) related to the prohibition of torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, and the investigation of such acts.

¹ CAT/C/BLR/CO/5

Given the overlap among many recommendations, they were grouped into six categories. For each group, a detailed assessment was provided on the current state of implementation in Belarus.

Additionally, specific communications were prepared for:

- **The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances:** Addressing enforced disappearances in the context of elections.
- **The Special Rapporteur on Torture:** Reporting on hostage-taking as a form of torture.
- **The Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity:** Highlighting the role of civil society organizations in promoting international solidarity through transnational, international, and regional networks.
- **The Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus:** Contributing to the preparation of the 2024 report for the Human Rights Council.

Achievements at the UN Human Rights Committee: our contribution

Thanks to our efforts and participation, the UN Human Rights Committee considered 21 complaints from Belarusians, including the application of activist Mikhail Varantsou, who was represented by the Legal Initiative chair, Viktoria Fiodarava. The Committee recognized that Belarus had violated the rights of the complainants, ordered compensation for fines and court costs, and recommended a review of the regulatory framework, including the law on mass media.

Human Rights Prize for IAPB: Our contribution

March 22, 2024, The **International Accountability Platform for Belarus** (IAPB), where we are actively involved, received a prestigious human rights award from the **University of Graz**.



Photo from the event

Established in 2021, the IAPB collects and preserves evidence of crimes committed by the Belarusian regime. We play a significant role in this effort by contributing to the documentation of torture, ill-treatment, and other human rights violations.



Photo from the event

The IAPB serves as a coalition of organizations dedicated to collecting, verifying and storing evidence of human rights violations in Belarus. IAPB is a coalition of organizations:

- The International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus
- DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture
- The Human Rights Center "Viasna"
- REDRESS, a UK-based human rights organization.

The International Criminal Court

On September 30, 2024, the Lithuanian government submitted a referral to the ICC, seeking to determine whether the Court has jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute crimes against humanity, including deportation, persecution, and other inhumane acts committed by senior Belarusian officials since May 1, 2020.

We joined an **OPEN LETTER**, calling on ICC member states to support Lithuania's request for an investigation into alleged crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Belarusian regime.

On December 2, 2024, Viktorija Fiodarava spoke at the event "*The Belarus Situation in the ICC: Jurisdiction and the Need for State Party Support*" during the 23rd Assembly of States Parties to the ICC in The Hague. She presented the work of the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus and underscored the critical role of survivor participation in international processes and evidence collection. Legal Initiative is preparing materials for the ICC to provide evidence of crimes against humanity committed by Belarus authorities.



