

# GUBOPiK, The Regime's Punitive Agency for Combating Dissent



## CONTENT

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	3
<u>METHODOLOGY, SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE</u>	6
<u>CHANGES IN THE BELARUS' LEGISLATION ON COUNTERING EXTREMISM</u>	9
<u>GUBOPIK'S PRACTICES</u>	13
<u>OFFICIAL RHETORIC AND PROPAGANDA IN MASS MEDIA</u>	14
<u>ARRESTS AT DEMONSTRATIONS</u>	16
<u>POLITICAL SURVEILLANCE</u>	17
<u>DETENTIONS AND ABDUCTIONS OF DISSENTERS,     FALSIFICATION OF CRIMINAL CASES</u>	19
<u>FORCED REPENTANCE</u>	25
<u>PROPERTY SEARCHES AND VANDALISM</u>	27
<u>INDIVIDUAL CASES (INTERVIEWS WITH SURVIVORS)</u>	29
<u>ABDUCTIONS OF CITIZENS BY GUBOPIK OFFICERS</u>	29
<u>SEARCHES IN DWELLINGS, DETENTIONS AT ACTIONS AND     IN PUBLIC PLACES, INTERROGATIONS AT THE GUBOPIK     HEADQUARTERS</u>	30
<u>REPENTANT VIDEOS</u>	37
<u>APPLICATION OF LEGAL NORMS (QUALIFICATION). CONCLUSIONS</u>	40

## INTRODUCTION

*«Barsukou approaches the guards from GUBOPiK<sup>1</sup>, talking very fondly to them: "You, guys, never rest" Then he turns to me: "Why are you looking at me, oppie? Do you want me to shoot you? It won't get me in trouble" »*

*From a survivor's story*

A special unit within the system of Belarusian internal affairs bodies, responsible for combating organized crime, is the Main Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (GUBOPiK, or HUBAZiK, in Belarusian)<sup>2</sup>.

By law, the main activities of this structure include combating corruption in the government and priority sectors of the economy; combating organized crime, including transnational and international crimes; suppressing and solving serious and especially serious crimes of general criminal and economic nature committed by organized groups; identifying and eliminating channels of illegal migration, as well as detecting and suppressing other crimes committed by members of organized groups formed on the basis of national

1. **Aliksandr Barsukou** (aka Alexander Petrovich Barsukov): Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus (2017-2020), Assistant to the President of the Republic of Belarus - Inspector for Minsk since October 29, 2020, Lieutenant General of Police. One of the leaders of security agencies that suppressed the protests in 2020.

2. [Main Directorate for Combating Organized Crime](#) // Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus. Official website - [mvd.gov.by](http://mvd.gov.by)

or ethnic origin or operating in diaspora formations; as well as suppressing terrorist and extremist manifestations.

However, for many years GUBOPiK has been focusing on fighting dissent in Belarus<sup>3</sup>. This mainly involves **the third directorate** (on countering extremism), which consists of three divisions: the first division works on countering extremism in radical civil and other formations, the second – on countering extremism in ethnic, and religious formations and illegal migration, and the third is a division for computer intelligence. The third directorate is headed by **Bedunkevich, Mikhail Petrovich**<sup>4</sup>.



*Mikhail Bedunkevich, Deputy head of the Main Directorate – Head of the Third Directorate (GUBOPiK). Photo: [www.sb.by](http://www.sb.by)*

During the 2020 protests, the GUBOPiK security forces were involved in the physical suppression of street actions and arrests of protesters. For these purposes, four «Attack» groups were formed within the agency, which also included members of the special operations forces of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Belarus. However, arresting protesters was not the only job GUBOPiK does. Its employees also interrogate detainees, check for subscriptions to Telegram channels that are prohibited in Belarus, and for involvement in any «extremist» formations or activities.

Since 2021, after the crackdown on street protests, the agency has been massively prosecuting Belarusian citizens who express dissatisfaction with the situation in the country, and since 2022, following the start of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, – also those who oppose the Russian invasion. In its Telegram channels, the GUBOPiK circulates «repentant» videos of detainees, and the apartments of people who fled persecution, trashed during police raids.

**Andrei Ananenka** (aka Andrei Valeryevich Ananenko), Head of the Main Directorate, has been leading the agency since September 2022. He replaced Colonel **Dzmitry Kovach** (aka Dmitriy Kovach), who, in his turn, replaced **Andrei Parshyn** (aka Andrei Parshin) – the latter was removed from his post as head of GUBOPiK in March 2022 and transferred to the position

3. [GUBOPiK: extremists and terrorists will not disturb the peaceful life in Belarus.](#) // SB Belarus Segodnya - sb.by (9.08.2022)

4. [Siarhei Dzmitryeu. «He is behind all the brutality that is happening.» 6 facts about Bedunkevich, deputy head of GUBOPiK.](#) // Belarusian News - UDF.BY (26.03.2021)



**A. V. Ananenko**, Head of the Main Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (GUBOPiK). Photo: [www.mvd.gov.by](http://www.mvd.gov.by)

of head of the Department for Operational and Investigative Activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus.

From September 2014 to November 19, 2020, GUBOPiK was led by **Mikalai Karpiankou** (aka Nikolai Karpenkov)<sup>5</sup>, notorious for his personal involvement in the violent suppression of protests and trashing of property<sup>6</sup>. Currently, Karpiankou is the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus and the commander of the internal troops.



**Mikalai Karpiankou**, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus - Commander of the Internal Troops. Head of GUBOPiK (September 2014 - November 2020). Photo: [www.mvd.gov.by](http://www.mvd.gov.by)

5. [Karpenkov, Nikolai Nikolaevich](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karpenkov,_Nikolai_Nikolaevich) // Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia - ru.wikipedia.org

6. [The head of GUBOPiK smashes a cafe window - new video.](#) // REFORMATION - reform.by (15.09.2020)

## METHODOLOGY, SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

This document is a new report of the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus<sup>7</sup>. The materials offered below were gathered in order to build an overall picture of the ongoing mass reprisals against the Belarusian people and to systematize the collected evidence. The main objective of this process was to focus on the problem of impunity of law enforcement agencies and to ensure accountability of the perpetrators of human rights violations and crimes.

This study was designed with the following considerations in mind regarding the methodology for collecting and using the information.

The document relies on information about massive human rights violations and crimes committed by law enforcement agencies in Belarus in 2020-2022 (following the fraudulent presidential election in August 2020). In particular, it looks at abuses by the GUBOPiK's Third Directorate (for combating extremism). Many of these crimes are so serious that they are prosecuted under the principle of universal jurisdiction, regardless of where the alleged crime was committed, the nationality of the alleged perpetrators, the country of residence, or any other connection with the prosecuting agency. Such crimes include torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, arbitrary arrest or detention, abduction, enforced disappearance, and some other human rights violations.

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7. [International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus](#). // International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus. Official website - [torturesbelarus2020.org/](http://torturesbelarus2020.org/)

In view of the recent systematic and massive nature of such crimes, many international bodies and organizations have issued a number of new documents and standards relating to the personalized responsibility of individuals involved in serious human rights violations. In particular, the European Union Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/1999 of 7 December, 2020 concerning restrictive measures against serious human rights violations and abuses (EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime – EUGHRSR) serves these purposes<sup>8</sup>.

This study analyzes information from open sources (media, Telegram channels) to build up an overall picture of the ongoing mass repressions against civil society and individual citizens in Belarus, carried out primarily by GUBOPiK officers, as well as the main methods they use (abduction, torture, severe beating, inhumane and degrading treatment, and smashing people's homes).

A significant part of the study contains the statements by survivors of the GUBOPiK's abuses in the above period of time. The experts analyzed **33 interviews** of victims and witnesses interviewed by the International Committee for Investigation of Torture in Belarus from August 2020 to September 2022. These individuals were either arrested by GUBOPiK officers, tortured on the premises of this agency and by its employees, or subjected to humiliating search procedures, forced to give statements, or record repentant videos confessing to actions that cannot be considered criminal. Each individual case also contains copies of documents confirming the harm inflicted by the GUBOPiK officers (results of medico-legal examinations, extracts from medical records or hospital epicrisis, photos of injuries and other documents). This data makes it possible to identify those acting on behalf of the state and to hold them personally accountable for their actions.

Experts view individual interviews and supporting documents as particularly important because they provide fundamental evidence for developing strategies and guidelines for effective investigation and prosecution of crimes committed in Belarus, as well as for enhancing support to survivors of human rights violations. Many survivors currently reside in the European Union and can exercise their right to an effective remedy through the principle of universal jurisdiction.

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8. [COUNCIL DECISION \(CFSP\) 2020/1999 of 7 December 2020 concerning restrictive measures against serious human rights violations and abuses](#) // EUR-Lex. Access to European Union Law – eur-lex.europa.eu

In their analysis of the collected data, the authors prioritized the seriousness and/or impact of the abuses and crimes, and the social, psychological, and medical consequences for the survivors.

Also, due to the threat of further persecution, this study does not reflect some details of the victims' statements by which they can be identified. The experts chose to leave out details on the individuals who were involved in the torture and cruel inhuman treatment, focusing on GUBOPiK as the chief perpetrator of the regime's criminal orders in Belarus. These data, omitted from the report, remain in the survivor interviews and supporting documents preserved by the International Committee for Investigation of Torture in Belarus.

At the same time, we realize that human rights defenders need to enhance accountability efforts by developing new avenues for doing so (sanction cases, universal jurisdiction proceedings, etc.) in order to end impunity for perpetrators who believe they would never be held accountable.



## **CHANGES IN THE BELARUS' LEGISLATION ON COUNTERING EXTREMISM**

To give a semblance of legitimacy to the abuses committed by security forces, Belarus makes extensive use of anti-extremist legislation, in particular, the Law of January 4, 2007 (with subsequent amendments and supplements) «On Combating Extremism» (hereinafter referred to as the Law), Council of Ministers Resolution No. 575 of 12 October 2021 «On measures to combat extremism and rehabilitation of Nazism», and a number of provisions of the Code of Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code, as well as other legal acts.

Thus, in particular, the Code of Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code outline specific elements of the so-called extremism-oriented offenses and establish penalties for committing such offenses.

According to art. 361-1 (2) of the Criminal Code, an extremism-oriented crime is a crime associated with the commission of intentional acts defined as extremism by the legislation (see art. 1 of the Law «On Combating Extremism»), as well as any other crime committed for reasons of racial, ethnic, religious enmity or discord, political or ideological enmity or for reasons of enmity or discord against any social group.

Accountability for extremism was first introduced in Belarus in April 2016. These innovations included the following:

- Article 130 of the Criminal Code introduced punishment for inciting social enmity and discord;
- criminal liability was introduced for the establishment of or participation in an extremist formation (Article 361-1 of the Criminal Code), as well as for financing the activities of an extremist formation (Article 361-2 of the Criminal Code);
- the Code of Administrative Offenses then in force included a rule on administrative responsibility for the distribution, production, storage and transportation of information products containing calls for extremist activities or promoting such activities.

The Council of Ministers Resolution No. 575 specified the procedures for the Ministry of Internal Affairs to coordinate the efforts on countering extremism, as well as for maintaining and publishing the lists of organizations, formations, individual entrepreneurs and citizens involved in extremist activities.

The very concept of «extremist activity» first appeared in Belarus' legislation in 2007, with the adoption of the above-mentioned Law on Combating Extremism.

It should be mentioned that the original version of this law generally conformed to the generally accepted definitions as found in a number of international legal acts, and the 2001 Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, in particular.

Thus, the Shanghai Convention defined «extremist activity» as follows: «Extremism is an act aimed at seizing or keeping power through the use of violence or changing violently the constitutional regime of a State, as well as a violent encroachment upon public security, including organization, for the above purposes, of illegal armed formations and participation in them, criminally prosecuted in conformity with the national laws of the Parties».

However, in subsequent years, the Belarusian legislation on combating extremism has been consistently following the political needs of the authorities and turning more and more clearly into one of their most important tools to retain power.

Over time, the classical concept of extremism has blurred, and the government's interpretation of extremist activity has grown much broader. After the events of the summer and autumn of 2020, almost any activity, including non-violent acts related to expressing disagreement with the policies of the ruling regime, began to be viewed as extremist.

Thus, article 1 of the Law, as amended on May 14, 2021, the following actions, among others, are considered extremist:

- dissemination of deliberately false information about the political, economic, social, military or international situation of the Republic of Belarus, or the legal status of citizens in the Republic of Belarus, that discredits the Republic of Belarus;
- insulting of a representative of the government due to performance of their official duties, discrediting executive and administrative bodies;
- public calls to organize or conduct, for these purposes, illegal meetings, rallies, street marches, demonstrations or picketing in violation of the established procedure for their organization or conduct, as well as some other non-violent actions.

The bans on the above actions contained in the Belarusian legislation contradict the fundamental principles of international law and the specific clauses of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Articles 19, 21, etc.), while the practice of prosecuting citizens for exercising human rights in accordance with the above articles has been repeatedly recognized by the UN Committee on Human Rights as contradicting the international obligations of the Republic of Belarus.

Thus, the legal concept of extremism has been completely perverted by the Belarus ruling regime and has been made to serve the fight against dissent and any opposition activity.

Since its adoption in 2007 and to date, the Law «On Combating Extremism» has been amended eight times, and the most significant changes were made in 2021 under the undoubted influence of the 2020 events.

The Law «On Combating Extremism», as amended on 14 May 2021, introduced an unprecedented extrajudicial procedure for declaring groups of citizens (informal organizations, Internet communities, etc.) extremist formations; and such decisions are made by the leadership of the State Security Committee (KGB) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

As discussed above, the Ministry of Internal Affairs is also in charge of maintaining and publishing lists of organizations, formations, individual entrepreneurs, and citizens involved in extremist activity.

Including individuals on such a list entails a whole range of legal restrictions for them.

Thus, according to Article 18 of the Law, the citizens included in the list,

before and within five years after the expungement of the criminal record, are prohibited from teaching, publishing and some other activities, as well as from holding public office, military service, while their financial transactions are subject to special scrutiny.

As of early October 2022, the list of citizens of the Republic of Belarus, foreign citizens, or stateless persons involved in extremist activities published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs included 573 individuals, whereas the list of organizations, formations, and individual entrepreneurs involved in extremist activities included 92 groups<sup>9</sup>.

New legislative amendments have been made to the anti-extremism legislation in response to the war against Ukraine unleashed by Russia with the complicity of the Belarusian regime and its sharp rejection by the pro-democratic part of Belarusian society.

The so-called Belarusian «rail guerrillas» sprang throughout the country acting to disrupt military supplies to Ukraine. Their activities, highly praised in Ukraine, caused a legislative move that is unprecedented in the post-Soviet area.

As the UN Human Rights Committee notes in its General Comment No. 36, in States parties which have not yet abolished the death penalty, it must not be applied arbitrarily, and it must be imposed only for the most serious crimes. It is contrary to the object and purpose of article 6 of the ICCPR for States parties to take steps to increase the rate and extent in which they resort to the death penalty, and it cannot be reconciled with full respect for the right to life.

Nevertheless, despite the trends toward limiting the use of the death penalty, contrary to its obligations under Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and contrary to the established international criminal law practice, on April 27, 2022 the Republic of Belarus rushed to introduce death penalty for an incomplete crime – an attempt to commit an act of terrorism.

In other words, the new law allows the state to execute people not only for specific deliberate acts that resulted in death, but also for actions that could have led, but in fact did not lead to such consequences.

Thus, the state's blatant intimidation campaign and genuine legal extremism, combined with the large-scale crackdown on Belarusian CSOs, independent media and individual citizens, clearly marked the legal collapse hitting literally all spheres of public and social life in the country.

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9. [Republican List of Extremist Materials](#) // Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus - miniform.gov.by

## GUBOPIK'S PRACTICES

The methods and practices the GUBOPiK uses in Belarus are in total violation of the standards applied by law enforcement agencies in democratic countries, which, first and foremost, should be based on unconditional respect for human rights.

Here are GUBOPiK's **main methods and practices**:

- psychological influence on society in order to intimidate, and suppress protest sentiments;
- propaganda of the pro-government stance as the one legitimate one;
- manipulation with symbols, facts, beliefs, and actions of opposition-minded citizens (creation of repentant videos);
- discrediting opposition, and independent media and Telegram channels, and other sources of information;
- brutal dispersal of peaceful protests;
- arrests of protesters;
- preventive arrests of dissenting citizens based on information from agents and informants, social media, and open sources;
- abductions;
- torture in order to obtain information and false accusations;
- political surveillance, collecting information and creating false evidence to prosecute individuals for their oppositional political activity and dissent;
- search raids and trashing the homes of dissenters;
- falsification of criminal and administrative cases against opposition-minded citizens;

- provocation of people to commit crimes with a view to arresting them.

This section focuses on the most egregious facts of the activities of this punitive unit in the period from the beginning of the 2020 election campaign to the present.

The following cases of criminal actions by law enforcement officers of GUBOPiK and the immediate leaders of this unit have been made public through the independent and state media, are credible and serve as an additional source of evidence and proof of these crimes.

## OFFICIAL RHETORIC AND PROPAGANDA IN MASS MEDIA

GUBOPiK leadership are actively engaging with the state media of Belarus. In their official comments, they often refer to untruths and use hate speech. The Ministry of Internal Affairs often ignores the cases of misrepresentation of facts and abuse of power, and sometimes even justifies them, which leads to total impunity and absolute permissiveness for its officers

So, in October 2020, **Mikalai Karpiankou**, the then head of GUBOPiK, gave an extensive commentary on the events of 2020 to Belarus 1 TV Channel<sup>10</sup>. He labeled the protesters as «militants», «street thugs», «extremists», «fascists», and «sharp-hoofs», spoke of «prearranged plans to attack» officers, the «humanity of police officers», and claimed he knew about the alleged plans of the detained Stepan Latypov to use «his brigade of swingers» to spray a «dangerous substance» on protesters and members of the law enforcement agencies. The entire story aimed to create a negative image of the protesters, as of those willing to do anything illegal for money.

On November 19, 2020, Lukashenka, who currently holds the office of President, appointed Mikalai Karpiankou as Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs and Commander of Internal Troops<sup>11</sup>. At the beginning of 2021, the BYPOL initiative<sup>12</sup> published an audio recording in which Karpiankou, at a farewell meeting regarding his transfer to the post of Deputy Minister of the Interior,

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10. [EXCLUSIVE! Karpiankou, head of the GUBOP: only thugs remain on the streets](#) // ATN: News of Belarus and the world - Youtube.com (18.10.2020)

11. [Lukashenka reshuffles the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs](#) // BelTA – belta.by (19.11.2020)

12. BYPOL is an initiative created by former employees of the Belarusian security forces to counter the Belarusian authorities.

talks with the security forces of the GUBOPiK in October 2020. Karpiankou talks about the death of one of the protesters, Aliaksandr Taraikouski (aka Aleksandr Taraikovski), about Lukashenka's permission to use weapons, including at close range, and reassures: «We are covered from all sides by the Head of State in terms of the use of weapons.» He calls the protesters «terrorists», «sharp-hoofed», «superfluous people in our country», and talks about plans to create special camps for them<sup>13</sup>.

MIA spokesperson Volha Chamadanava (aka Olga Chemodanova) refused to comment on the recording, calling it a fake, and adding that the MIA «ensures security» and «is guided by the law» in its activities. Later, TUT.BY sent the leaked recording for phonoscopic testing, which confirmed that the voice on the audio belonged to Karpiankou<sup>14</sup>.

**Andrei Parshyn**, who replaced Mikalai Karpiankou, in an interview to the Minskaya Pravda newspaper<sup>15</sup> in November 2021 spoke about the forthcoming law on deprivation of citizenship for extremist activity: «In particular, we believe that individuals found guilty of committing certain categories of extremist crimes or causing serious harm to the interests of the Republic of Belarus may lose their citizenship, regardless of how they acquired it».

In this interview he also gave his own description of the people who oppose the Lukashenka regime: «The first type would be the people who are already well settled in life, they have everything. As they say, rich and bored, too much money and too little to do. (...) The second type would include total thugs and outcasts who think they can improve their financial situation through a coup or revolt, or use it as a social elevator and become some kind of revolutionary heroes». And just below, he added: «Here is a social profile of these "opps" who oppose their own people: unemployed, with criminal record, and a supporter of LGBT values. In essence, they are people with inflated self-esteem who failed to fulfil their potential. Radical Telegram-channels and opposition leaders declare these dregs of society to be "political prisoners", making up heartwarming stories about how "the regime imprisons the best people of the country for no reason"». In the same interview, he uses well-established propaganda clichés, such as «Oppie patrons», «adherents of the White-Red-White sect» and «sofa commentators», etc.

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13. *Lepeiko, Gleb, Mardilovich, Anton.* [«Either Maim, or Mutilate, or Murder.» Selected passages from the speech by a man whose voice resembles that of the deputy head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs](#) // «Mediazona in Belarus» - [mediazona.by](#) (15.01.2021)

14. [Who was talking about a «camp for the sharp-hoofed» on the leaked audio? Finding of the TUT.BY expert review](#) // Legal Initiative - [legin.by](#) (09.07.2021)

15. [Andrei Parshin, head of GUBOPiK: "Traitors must be punished. And it's a matter of time»](#) // «Minskaya Pravda» - [mlyn.by](#) (23.11.2021)

It is worth noting that the top leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in particular, Deputy Minister **Henadz Kazakevich** (aka Gennady Kazakevich), dodges questions about illegal or improper actions of the GUBOPiK. At the online conference «Telegram threats: who is behind them and who benefits from destabilization in society»<sup>16</sup>, when TUT.BY journalists asked about the brutal arrest of a citizen for a minor administrative offense in a public place, with his hands twisted and handcuffs used, the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs replied: «Let us step away from the legal assessment of this situation<sup>17</sup>».

## ARRESTS AT DEMONSTRATIONS

It is difficult to identify GUBOPiK members during arrests at mass protests, as they do not wear matching uniforms or any identifying insignia. As a rule, the officers are dressed in civilian clothes, most often in sportswear – «the window was smashed by people in civilian clothes, wearing hoods, masks, and carrying truncheons<sup>18</sup>».

Later, people started identifying them by indirect features: bulletproof vests, helmets, balaclavas<sup>19</sup>, and/or the presence of special equipment, such as rubber truncheons, weapons,<sup>20</sup> etc. The media and Telegram channels have preserved numerous photo-<sup>21</sup> and video materials<sup>22</sup> of people in civilian clothes and with truncheons brutally arresting and beating protesters who do not show any resistance to them<sup>23</sup>.

The incident of Cafe O'Petit windows being smashed during a peaceful March of Unity in Minsk became widely known. On September 6, 2020, when the rally was brutally dispersed, several unidentified people with truncheons pursued the demonstrators to Cafe O'Petit, where they tried to hide from arbitrary arrests<sup>24</sup>.

16. [Online conference «Telegram threats: who is behind them and who benefits from destabilization in society»](#) // Fast. Important. Credible. Youtube.com (13.07.2020)

17. [Employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were harassed on the Internet after the events in Hrodna - Kazakevich](#) // BelTA - belta.by (13.07.2020)

18. [March of Unity. Online](#) // «Mediazona in Belarus» - mediazona.by (6.09.2020)

19. [During today's crackdown in Kurapaty, a woman tried to talk to a stranger in a helmet](#) // RFE/RL-Belarus. Telegram channel (1.11.2020)

20. [Viasna human rights defenders have got the names of 168 detainees...](#) // RFE/RL-Belarus - Telegram-channel (11.1.2020)

21. [The level of violence in Minsk...](#) // MotolkoPomogi - Telegram channel (1.11.2020)

22. [More animals for you in the video...](#) // MotolkoPomogi - Telegram-channel (8.11.2020)

23. [Atrocities by GUBOPK in the Niamiha shopping mall around 3 p.m...](#) // MotolkoPomogi - Telegram-channel (8.11.2020)

24. [March of Unity. Online](#) // Mediazona - mediazona.by (6.09.2020)



That same day the media reported on the incident, along with video and photos that clearly showed GUBOPiK chief **Mikalai Karpiankou** breaking the glass door of a cafe with his truncheon, chasing peaceful civilians.

MIA spokeswoman **Volha Chamadanava** commented on the incident: «Police officers chased active participants of the unauthorized event (less than ten people), who provoked them, and then tried to escape into a cafe<sup>25</sup>».

Mikalai Karpiankou and his squad have also been seen dispersing other peaceful protests in Minsk, for example, on September 23, 2020, the day of Lukashenka's inauguration<sup>26</sup>. On this day, Karpiankou personally «gave the go-ahead to detain TUT.BY journalist Alena Talkachova<sup>27</sup>.

Thus, GUBOPiK is one of the units that vigorously detain and beat protesters at peaceful rallies.

## POLITICAL SURVEILLANCE

As we learned from the investigation conducted by BYPOL initiative, long before Tsikhanouski's arrest, the GUBOPiK began to explore the options for criminal prosecution of **Siarhei Tsikhanouski** (aka Sergey Tikhanovski) and his associates. «... With respect to their socio-political activities, the GUBOPiK started working on a case of operational records, led by a senior investigator of the second division of the third directorate, **Ivan Aleksandravich Tarasik**. The general supervision of the case was carried out by the head of the third directorate **Mikhail Bedunkevich**<sup>28</sup>».

On 29 May 2020 Siarhei Tsikhanouski was arrested in Hrodna at a picket in support of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. On 4 June 2020, the blogger's summer house was searched<sup>29</sup>.

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25. [The representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Volha Chamadanava comments...](#) // RFE/RL- Belarus - Telegram Channel (6.09.2020)

26. [GUBOPiK chief Karpiankou showed up at Niamiha again...](#) // Nasha Niva - Telegram channel (23.09.2020)

27. [Head of the GUBOPiK Mikalai Karpiankou gave the go-ahead for the arrests...](#) // KYKY.ORG - Telegram channel (23.09.2020)

28. [The Tsikhanouski Case: BYPOL Reveals Political Agenda](#) // BYPOL. Official website - bypol.org

29. [\\$900,000 found during a search at Siarhei Tsikhanouski's dacha](#) // Human Rights Center Viasna. Official website - spring96.org (4.06.2020)

On 14 December 2021, the Homel Regional Court sentenced Siarhei Tsikhanouski to 18 years in a penal facility<sup>30</sup>. Belarusian human rights community recognizes Siarhei Tsikhanouski as a political prisoner<sup>31</sup>.

On 6 August 2020, GUBOPiK members participated in the arrest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's campaign manager **Maria Maroz**: «When GUBOPiK arrested me, I had an impression that they knew everything that was going on at the Headquarters. When they grabbed me, my security guard wanted to get out of the car, they addressed him by name and told him to "sit tight". At the department, they requested that I refrain from further activities [organizing 'unsanctioned events']<sup>32</sup>».

On 12 August 2020 **Maksim Znak**, lawyer of former presidential candidate and political prisoner **Viktar Babaryka**, said that at least five volunteers of the headquarters were detained: «Preliminary we know that they were arrested by GUBOPiK, the lawyers were not allowed to see them yet, but they were told that the investigative actions would be conducted by the Minsk City Department of the Investigative Committee»<sup>33</sup>.

In the morning of 7 September 2020, media began to report that unknown persons had forced a member of the Coordinating Council, **Maria Kalesnikava** (aka Maria Kolesnikova), into a minivan marked «Communication» near the National Art Museum, after which she could no longer be reached<sup>34</sup>.

After some time, contact was lost with the Council's press secretary, **Anton Radnianski** (aka Anton Rodnenkov), and its executive secretary, **Ivan Krautsou** (aka Ivan Kravtsov)<sup>35</sup>. On the morning of 8 September 2020, it was reported that Krautsou and Radnianski had entered Ukraine the previous night; Maria Kalesnikava was not with them.

On the evening of the same day, they held a press conference in Kyiv and spoke in detail about how they had been kidnapped by GUBOPiK security forces and were held in several offices of the agency. According to Anton Radnianski, they «handcuffed him and put a bag over his head,» and he spent four hours in that position<sup>36</sup>.

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30. [Tsikhanouski's case closed: the blogger receives 18 years in a penal facility](#) // BelTA – belta.by (14.12.2021)

31. [We demand the immediate release of Siarhei Tsikhanouski and an end to his criminal prosecution](#) // Human Rights Center Viasna. Official site - spring96.org (1.06.2020)

32. [The story of the detained Maria Maroz, told by herself](#) // BelSAT-TV – belsat.eu (8.08.2020)

33. [Babaryka's headquarters reported the detention of several volunteers in Minsk](#) // Interfax - interfax.ru (12.08.2020)

34. [Abduction of Maria Kalesnikava](#) // Mediazona in Belarus – mediazona.by (10.09.2020)

35. [Maria Kalesnikava abducted by strangers in the center of Minsk](#) // REFORMATION - reform.by (07.09.2020).

36. [Anton Radnianski and Ivan Krautsou speak in detail on how they were forced to leave Belarus](#) // The Village - Belarus - www.the-village.me (8.09.2022)

According to the BYPOL initiative, the abduction of Maria Kalesnikava was carried out by 4 members of GUBOPiK, and was led personally by **Mikalai Karpiankou**<sup>37</sup>.

Anton Radnianski and Ivan Krautsou are currently abroad. On 6 September, 2021, the Minsk Regional Court sentenced Maria Kalesnikava to 11 years in a penal institution<sup>38</sup>. Belarusian human rights community recognizes her as a political prisoner<sup>39</sup>.

## **DETENTIONS AND ABDUCTIONS OF DISSENTERS, FALSIFICATION OF CRIMINAL CASES**

Politically motivated arrests began during the pre-election period and continue to this day. It is evident that GUBOPiK has been provoking, torturing, falsifying evidence, blatantly lying, discrediting, and brutally pressuring dissenting people.

On 15 September 2020, industrial climber and arborist **Stsiapan Latypau** (aka Stepan Latypov) was arrested in his courtyard while trying to defend the «DJs of Change» mural<sup>40</sup>. Some time later, Belarus 1 TV channel aired a story in which an anonymous GUBOPiK officer said that Latypau had allegedly intended to spray dangerous chemicals «near the combat lines of OMON and internal troops during a protest rally<sup>41</sup>».

The statement of the Belarusian human rights community on recognizing Latypau as a political prisoner mentions this story and emphasizes that «With regard to the accusations of plotting the poisoning of police officers, we note that these allegations do not stand up to any criticism, are not scientifically substantiated and are nothing but fantasies of GUBOPiK representatives<sup>42</sup>».

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37. [GUBOPiK](https://bypol.org) // BYPOL. Official website - [bypol.org](https://bypol.org)

38. [Masha gets 11 years, and Maksim gets 10. The court announced the sentence to Kalesnikava and Znak](https://zerkalo.io) // «Zerkalo» - [zerkalo.io](https://zerkalo.io) (6.09.2021)

39. [We demand the immediate release of Maria Kalesnikava, Maksim Znak and Ilya Salei](https://spring96.org) // Human Rights Center «Viasna». Official website - [spring96.org](https://spring96.org) (10.09.2020)

40. [List of the repressed. Stsiapan Latypau](https://prisoners.spring96.org) // Human Rights Center Viasna. Official website - [prisoners.spring96.org](https://prisoners.spring96.org)

41. [Everyone thought that the KGB was the worst, until they saw GUBOPiK](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...) // Yuras Navitski. Youtube.com (20.09.2020)

42. [We demand the immediate release of political prisoner Stsiapan Latypau](https://spring96.org) // Human Rights Center Viasna. Official website - [spring96.org](https://spring96.org) (25.09.2020)

On 1 June 2021, in the Savetski District Court of Minsk, Latypau, with signs of beating on his face, proclaimed: «Father! After our meeting, the GUBOPiK came to see me. They promised that if I did not plead guilty, I'd get into a "sweatbox", and there would be criminal cases against family and neighbors. I've spent 51 days in a "sweatbox". So you get ready<sup>43</sup>», – after that Stsiapan attempted suicide by sticking a ballpoint pen into his throat.

On 16 August 2021 Savetski District Court of Minsk sentenced Stsiapan Latypau to eight years and six months imprisonment in a reinforced penal colony and a fine of 300 base values<sup>44</sup>.

On 17 September 2020 **Marfa Rabkova**, coordinator of the volunteer service of the Human Rights Center «Viasna», was arrested in Minsk together with her husband. «Several buses stopped in the middle of the street, people ran out and put them face down on the asphalt. They were told that they were arrested in a criminal case under Part 3 Article 293 of the Criminal Code (Training or other preparation of individuals to participate in mass unrest, or financing of such activities). The arrest was carried out by GUBOPiK officers<sup>45</sup>». Later, the husband was released.

On 6 September 2022, the Minsk City Court sentenced Marfa Rabkova to 15 years of imprisonment in a penal institution<sup>46</sup>. Belarusian human rights community recognizes her as a political prisoner<sup>47</sup>.

On 13 October 2020, businessman **Maksim Kharoshyn** (aka Maksim Khoroshin) was brutally arrested and beaten in his courtyard. Later Kharoshyn told the Voice of America: «At 8:30 a.m., they took me out of the car, gave me three blows to the face, twisted my wife's arms, put her on the asphalt, and put me on the asphalt, in my own puddle of blood. So I lay there for 15 minutes while the car was being searched. Then they put a balaclava on my head, and dragged me into a van, where the GUBOPiK officers tried to threaten me<sup>48</sup>».

43. [Political prisoner Latypau tries to commit suicide during the trial](#) // REFORMATION – reform.by (1.06.2020)

44. [Political prisoner Stsiapan Latypau sentenced to 8.5 years and a fine of 300 base values](#) // Human Rights Center Viasna. Official website - spring96.org (16.08.2021)

45. [Marfa Rabkova, coordinator of Viasna's volunteer service, arrested](#) // Human Rights Center Viasna. Official website - spring96.org (18.09.2020)

46. [Viasna members receive sentences: Marfa - 15 years, Andrei - 6 years: sentences to 10 political prisoners announced](#) // Human Rights Center Viasna. Official website - spring96.org (6.09.2022)

47. [We demand the immediate release of Marfa Rabkova, a political prisoner and human rights activist of the Human Rights Center Viasna](#) // Human Rights Center Viasna. Official website - spring96.org (21.09.2020)

48. *Aleksandr Yaneuski*. [Maksim Kharoshyn: «I was beaten unconscious»](#) // Voice of America - www.golosameriki.com (23.11.2020)

At about 11 a.m. an ambulance rushed Maksim to the hospital from the police department.

According to the victim's lawyer Yulia Levanchuk, he had «swelling of internal organs, swelling of the scrotum, a suspected fracture in the lower leg, numerous abrasions, and the entire left side completely smashed». According to Maksim, during the arrest he was beaten with batons and kicked, but only his nose was broken, whereas the main beating took place in the police department<sup>49</sup>.

A few days later, Maksim and his family left Belarus. On 27 November 2020, Maksim Khoroshin, together with his lawyer Giedrius Danelius, filed an application with the Lithuanian Prosecutor General's Office requesting an investigation<sup>50</sup>. According to Delfi, «the statement indicated that the man who beat the citizen of Belarus resembled the former head of the Main Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption (GUBOPiK) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus **Mikalai Karpiankou**». This is the first universal jurisdiction case open on the application of a citizen of Belarus after the elections in August 2020.

On 11 November 2020, GUBOPiK members arrested blogger and activist of the anarchist movement **Mikalai Dziadok** (aka Nikolai Dedok)<sup>51</sup>. The police video, published in the official Telegram channel of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus, shows Mikalai looking badly beaten<sup>52</sup>.

On 1 July 2021, during the second session of the Minsk City Court in the criminal case against him, Mikalai spoke about the torture<sup>53</sup> he experienced during his arrest, how the search was carried out and what was happening to him at that moment. Mikalai says that he was choked with a pillow, pepper-sprayed in the face several times, constantly humiliated, insulted, threatened with a stun gun, rape, and physical violence, all of which was accompanied by continuous beating. They tortured Mikalai to find out the password to his

49. [The flower shop co-owner, severely beaten by the security forces, temporarily left Belarus](#) // Current Time - [www.currenttime.tv](http://www.currenttime.tv) (18.10.2020)

50. [Victim of the Belarus regime asks Lithuanian prosecutors to launch investigation](#) // DELFI - [delfi.lt](http://delfi.lt) (27.11.2020)

51. [List of the repressed. Mikalai Dziadok](#) // Human Rights Center «Viasna». Official website - [prisoners.spring96.org](http://prisoners.spring96.org)

52. [One of the leaders of the country's anarchist movement arrested...](#) // Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus. Telegram Channel (12.11.2020)

53. [Choked with a pillow, bottle put in the mouth. At the trial, political prisoner Dziadok spoke about torture and beatings](#) // Human Rights Center Viasna. Official website - [spring96.org](http://spring96.org) (01.07.2021)

phone and force him to say what they wanted him to say on camera in his repentant video.

In his speech, Dziadok describes in detail the torture he experienced and names the persons who committed them, namely **Ivan Tarasik** and **Aliaksandr Alioksa** (aka Alekasandr Aleksa). BYPOL reports that both are members of the GUBOPiK: police lieutenant colonel Ivan Tarasik is deputy head of the first division of the third directorate, and police colonel Alioksa is deputy head of the third directorate and head of the first division. «They made me face the wall, and I tried to make conversation with the officers, asking them why they beat me. Alioksa replied that they no longer needed me, since I was "waste material". Tarasik answered: "To get moral satisfaction". Others were joking and laughing,» Dziadok describes an episode after the search.

Torture was also used against Mikalai Dziadok in the GUBOPiK building at 3 Revalutsyinaya Street in Minsk, in order to find out the passwords to his gadgets and get through the double authentication to his Telegram account. and harassment did not stop there, only the tactics changed: «I noticed that they changed tactics: first they would beat me and then they would ask me a question right away. When they beat me, I tried to dodge, so at some point Tarasik began to step on my face with his foot...». According to Dziadok's story, the officers could have been unjustifiably cruel simply because of a personal dislike for the detainee: «I was also threatened that if I didn't say what they wanted, other GUBOPiK officers would come at 6 a.m. and beat me in turns. I again asked why they beat me, if I gave the information they wanted, to which Tarasik replied: "Just because you exist." The humiliation continued into the morning, and before he was transferred to the Akrestina detention center, the officers threatened him with terrible conditions and violence in custody if he decided to complain about what happened and «opened his mouth about the officers».

On 10 November 2021, Minsk City Court sentenced Mikalai Dziadok to five years in a general penal facility<sup>54</sup>, then in June 2022 he was transferred to a higher-security institution<sup>55</sup>. Belarusian human rights community recognizes Mikalai Dziadok as a political prisoner<sup>56</sup>.

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54. [Political prisoner Mikalai Dziadok receives a 5 year sentence](#) // Zerkalo – news.zerkalo.io (10.11.2021)

55. [Political prisoner Mikalai Dziadok transferred to a closed prison facility](#) // Euroradio – euroradio.by (29.06.2022)

56. [Statement by Belarusian human rights organizations on the recognition of 8 new political prisoners](#) // Human Rights Center Viasna. Official website - spring96.org (24.11.2020)

On 5 February 2021, the Frunzenski district court sentenced **Aliaksei Machalau** (aka Aleksei Mochalov)<sup>57</sup> to 1.5 years of «probation». Machalau was found guilty of insulting a government representative – the head of the third directorate of GUBOPiK Mikhail Bedunkevich in his Telegram post. In one of the Telegram chats, Machalau wrote: «On Golubka Street, Bedunkevich, one of the main GUBOPiK sleaze\*\*\*\*<sup>58</sup>».

On 23 May 2021, after the Athens-Vilnius plane was diverted to land in Minsk, **Raman Pratasevich** (aka Roman Protasevich), former editor of the Telegram channel NEXTA and Russian citizen **Sofia Sapega**, were detained at Minsk airport<sup>59</sup> by a KGB and GUBOPiK task force. As Sofia later admitted<sup>60</sup>, she managed the Black Book of Belarus Telegram channel, which published personal data of Belarusian security officials. The information about a bomb on the aircraft, that served as the basis for the forced landing, did not prove to be true.

After propaganda channels published a video of Raman Pratasevich being detained, the BYPOL group managed to establish that «in this video Raman is being led through the first floor of the GUBOPiK building, located in Minsk at 3 Revalutsyinaya Street, by police lieutenant-colonel Ivan Tarasik. He is the one who leads Raman into the office of the boss and mastermind of political repressions in the country, deputy head of GUBOPiK – **head of the 3rd directorate, police colonel Mikhail Bedunkevich**<sup>61</sup>».

The international community accused Lukashenka of an «act of state terrorism»<sup>62</sup>. This incident was a powerful trigger for the introduction of new and renewal of previously frozen sanctions (full blocking restrictions) against a number of Belarusian enterprises and their branches, as well as the imposition of personal sanctions against some members of the Belarusian authorities<sup>63</sup>.

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57. [List of the repressed. Aliaksei Machalau](#) // Human Rights Center Viasna. Official website - prisoners.spring96.org

58. [«I felt uneasy and anxious.» Young man on trial for insulting Bedunkevich, head of GUBOPiK](#) // Human Rights Center Viasna. Official website - spring96.org (3.02.2021)

59. [How Belarus landed a flight with Pratasevich onboard. Minute-by-minute chronology](#) // «Mediazona in Belarus» - mediazona.by (26.05.2021)

60. [“Yellow Plums” publish a video with Sofia Sapega, where she says she is the editor of the “Black Book of Belarus”](#) // “Mediazona in Belarus” – mediazona.by (25.05.2021)

61. [Bandits from GUBOPiK](#) // BYPOL - Telegram channel (3.06.2021)

62. [Rafael Fakhrutdinov. «The death penalty awaits me»: what Protasevich said before his arrest](#) // Gazeta.ru - gazeta.ru (23.05.2021)

63. [The EU Council approved sectoral sanctions against Belarus](#) // Grani.Ru - grani-ru-org. appspot.com (24.06.2021)

Since 5 June 2021, the EU has banned all state-owned Belarusian airlines to fly over the territory of the European Union, while a number of countries have stopped air communications with Belarus. This ban was supported by other countries, such as Ukraine, Great Britain, Iceland, and Norway<sup>64</sup>. In addition, personal sanctions were imposed against the leaders of Belenergoaviation, air force commanders and other individuals involved in the incident. International sanctions also affected the state airline Belavia<sup>65</sup>.

On 24 June 2021, it was reported that the EU Council approved the sectoral sanctions against Belarus<sup>66</sup>. The sanctions were introduced following the «escalation of serious human rights violations» in the country, repressions against civil society, the democratic opposition and journalists, as well as the **forced landing of a Ryanair jet in Minsk and the subsequent detention of journalist Raman Pratasevich and his girlfriend Sofia Sapega**.<sup>67</sup> Currently Pratasevich is under house arrest<sup>68</sup>, while Sapega was sentenced by Hrodna Regional Court to six years' imprisonment in a minimum security penal institution<sup>69</sup>. Raman Pratasevich and Sofia Sapega are recognized as political prisoners by the Belarusian human rights community<sup>70</sup>.

On 2 September 2021 **Aliaksandr Bahdanau** (aka Aleksandr Bogdanov), art-director of the cultural center «Korpus» in Minsk, **Maksim Kruk**, scenographer, and **Lizaveta Neumiaryzhyskaya** (aka Elizaveta Nevmerzhitskaya), event organizer, were arrested at work. In an interview with Zerkalo, Aliaksandr Bahdanau described the arrest: «About ten GUBOPiK members showed up at the doors of Korpus. They put us on the floor, searched us, and the next thing we knew we were taken to the GUBOPiK office (where repentant videos were recorded), they kicked us and beat us with truncheons, and raided our homes with a dog. Then we sat in the police department in "boxes" until nightfall. It was really scary and, since I was beaten pretty badly, it hurt a lot. As it turned out later, they broke three of my ribs and tore my spleen<sup>71</sup>».

64. [Serbia, Montenegro, Norway and four other countries join the air boycott of Belarus](#) // "Mediazona in Belarus" – mediazona.by (21.06.2021)

65. All sanctions introduced after this incident are still in effect (as of 25.10.2022)

66. [EU imposes sanctions on Belarusian economy. Press release](#) // Council of the European Union – /www.consilium.europa.eu (24.06.2021)

67. [The EU Council approved sectoral sanctions against Belarus](#) // Grani.Ru - grani-ru-org, appspot.com (24.06.2021)

68. [List of the repressed. Raman Pratasevich](#) // Human Rights Center Viasna. Official website - prisoners.spring96.org

69. [A court in Hrodna sentences Russian national Sofia Sapega to 6 years in prison](#) // «Mediazona in Belarus» - mediazona.by (05/06/2022)

70. [We demand the immediate release of political prisoner, blogger Raman Pratasevich](#) // Human Rights Center «Viasna». Official website - spring96.org (24.05.2020)

71. [«It was really scary and, since I was beaten pretty badly, it hurt a lot.» What's up with the DJ who threw a rave at a street rally in 2020?](#) // Zerkalo - zerkalo.io (24.04.2022)



They beat Aliaksandr to get the password to his phone, and also to make him read out a statement written by the officers for a «repentant» video. «I did not agree, so I got some. My disagreement didn't last long, though. At one point they told me that they had been supplied with condoms for six months already. They asked if I knew why. They took out a baton, a condom, and asked, "Will you talk now?" – I answered, "Now I will. I was not ready for this kind of violence"».

**The «rail war» in the spring and summer of 2022:** the reaction of Belarusians to the regime's complicity in Russia's war against Ukraine. On 9 March 2022, Viasna spoke about the involvement of the GUBOPiK agency in the detentions of «rail guerrillas» in Vitebsk and Asipovichy<sup>72</sup>. On the night of 30 March 2022, the officers used weapons to detain three Bobruisk residents near the railroad<sup>73</sup>. After arrest, they were shot at the knee joints, although they showed no resistance<sup>74</sup>.

In an interview with Malanka, Aliaksandr Azarau (aka Aleksandr Azarov), a representative of BYPOL, spoke about the divisions that fight the guerrillas: «These are GUBOPiK and KGB. They are assisted by SOBR and one of the Spetsnaz units. We know that Belarusians detained in the "rail case" were shot in the legs. We know that it was Karpiankou who gave the order to shoot people after they were detained<sup>75</sup>».

## FORCED REPENTANCE

The first videos with people apologizing for taking part in the protests appeared even before the Election Day, in the summer of 2020. Forcing repentance on video is a way to humiliate and discredit detainees and intimidate dissenters. In most cases, detainees agree to be filmed under extreme pressure, often under torture, as was the case with Mikalai Dziadok and Aliaksandr Bahdanau<sup>76</sup>.

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72. [At least 8 «rail guerrillas» detained since the beginning of the war: what do we know about the «rail war» in Belarus](#) // Human Rights Center «Viasna». Official website - spring96.org (9.03.2022)

73. [Three «rail guerrillas» wounded by security officers, one of them is in hospital](#) // Euroradio - euroradio.by (6.04.2022)

74. [The names of the detained «rail guerrillas» from Babruisk disclosed](#) // Euroradio - euroradio.by (6.04.2022)

75. [Aliaksandr Azarau - about the «rail war» and reinforcing the borders of Belarus](#) // MALANKA - malanka.media (22.04.2022)

76. See section «Detentions and Abduction of Dissenters.»

«After the interrogation, they told me: "Let's make a video. Of course, you can refuse, but it will most likely be recorded anyway. The only thing that depends on your answer is your physical condition on the video",<sup>77</sup>» **Mikhail Tsyhankou** (aka Mikhail Tsygankov) recalls in a conversation with Deutsche Welle. On 28 January 2022, he was arrested by GUBOPiK.

Law enforcers explain, the purpose of such videos is to prevent further violations by the «repentant citizen», a kind of safety net against re-engagement in political activism, and an alternative to harsher punishment. However, later the videos appear without warning on national TV channels and in Telegram accounts of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. «The hero who repents in front of the camera is still fined or sent to jail,» says Mediazona in its article from 2020<sup>78</sup>.

Over the course of two years, the repentant video-making procedure has been «improved» and has acquired the nature of inhuman mockery of the detainees, a kind of psychological torture. In the process of filming, people are forced to talk about their sexual preferences and give out the names of their partners (outing); those who have a mental health record – to specify their diagnosis (violation of medical privacy). They put white-red-white stickers on the foreheads of the detainees, make them stomp on protest symbols (inciting social hatred), and add mocking special effects and animation to the videos<sup>79</sup>.

In addition, the remarks of the regime's propagandists on state TV about the videos are clearly insulting, untruthful, and humiliating. Propagandist Ryhor Azaronak (aka Grigory Azarenok) often descends into dirty insults and slander in his stories, using such videos for propaganda purposes (discrediting opponents of the government).

Most of these videos were published on the GUBOPiK Telegram channel, which is associated with the agency. In addition to the unlawful practice of «repentant» videos, the channel administrators often resort to the use of hate speech in their posts. «So, GUBOPiK announces Penitential Monday! The "oppies" will make a pilgrimage to the blessed law enforcement officers today in order to fix their troubled life<sup>80</sup>», Belsat quotes the GUBOPiK Telegram

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77. *Tatsiana Harhalyk*. [How "repentant" videos with opposition members are filmed in Belarus](https://www.dw.com) // Deutsche Welle – www.dw.com (7.07.2022)

78. *Aliaksei Ivashkevich*. [Repentant state of mind. How Belarusians are taught to apologize in front of the camera](https://mediazona.by) // "Mediazona in Belarus" – mediazona.by (4.11.2020)

79. *Yauhenia Broukina*. [«Dress up the opp.» How the genre of apologies in front of the camera has evolved](https://mediazona.by) // «Mediazona in Belarus» - mediazona.by (11.10.2021)

80. [«GUBOPiK announces Penitential Monday.» A wave of arrests in Homel](https://belsat.eu) // BelSAT-TV – belsat.eu (25.10.2021)

channel the day a group of activists was arrested in Homel. In 2022, the Telegram administration deleted the GUBOPiK channel and subsequently blocked all attempts to restore it (about 10 times)<sup>81</sup>.

## PROPERTY SEARCHES AND VANDALISM

According to BYPOL, it was the GUBOPiK members who searched the office of former presidential candidate **Viktar Babaryka**. During this search, which took place on September 9, 2020, among other things, the officers seized the lists of signatures for Babaryka's nomination as a presidential candidate. «These very lists are currently being used by the regime to carry out reprisals against dissenters, especially those from the security bloc and civil servants. This attack was carried out by members of the first directorate of GUBOPiK supported by Almaz Special Anti-Terrorism Unit», BYPOL says<sup>82</sup>.

On 16 February 2021, law enforcers carried out mass searches at the homes and offices of journalists and human rights activists throughout Belarus, seizing computer equipment, documents, and human rights papers.<sup>83</sup> The next day, the official Telegram channel of the Belarus Ministry of Internal Affairs posted a statement that employees of GUBOPiK conducted about 90 searches in the homes of members of unregistered organizations Viasna, REP Workers Trade Union, as well as representatives of the BAJ and protest-focused media<sup>84</sup>.

One of the ways to put pressure on people who oppose the Lukashenka regime, especially those who left Belarus, is to trash their homes. «Zerkalo» quotes journalist **Katsiaryna Pytleva's** (aka Ekaterina Pytleva) Facebook post about the first such search of her apartment on September 7, 2021: «They broke down not only the front door, but also the door to the bedroom, for no reason, as there were no locks on the bedroom doors. They slashed the speakers, smashed hedgehog figurines with a hammer, cut up wedding photos, ruined the vinyl collection and scattered cereals and flour all over the apartment. I'm not even talking about the boxes we put all our stuff in before leaving<sup>85</sup>». Pytleva's apartment was trashed in a similar way again, in the same month.

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81. *Tatsiana Harhalyk*. [How "repentant" videos with opposition members are filmed in Belarus](#) // Deutsche Welle – [www.dw.com](http://www.dw.com) (7.07.2022)

82. [GUBOPiK](#) // BYPOL. Official website - [bypol.org](http://bypol.org)

83. [Searches of journalists and human rights defenders's homes](#) // Mediazona in Belarus - [mediazona.by](http://mediazona.by) (18.02.2021)

84. [Searches carried out at the homes of activists of unregistered organizations and BAJ // Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus](#) - Telegram channel (17.02.2021)

85. [«We are talking about the creation of an extremist formation here.» Police searches Katsiaryna Pytleva's apartment for the second time](#) // «Zerkalo» - [zerkalo.io](http://zerkalo.io) (25.09.2021)

GUBOPiK published the results of their raids on its Telegram channel, with videos of similar searches resulting in trashed apartments of activist **Yanina Sazanovich**<sup>86</sup>, former restaurateur **Vadzim Prakopyeu** (aka Vadim Prokopyev)<sup>87</sup>, blogger **Andrei Pavuk** (aka Andrei Pauk)<sup>88</sup>, and representative of «Cyberpartisans» **Yuliana Shemetavets**<sup>89</sup>.

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86. [The empty apartment of the editor of «Punishers of Belarus» was vandalized by GUBOPiK](#) // «Euroradio» - euroradio.by (6.04.2022)

87. [GUBOPiK trashed the apartment of Vadzim Prakopyeu](#) //Euroradio - euroradio.by (16.05.2022)

88. [GUBOPiK bragged about smashing up Andrey Pavuk's apartment](#) // Euroradio - euroradio.by (27.05.2022)

89. [GUBOPiK trashed the apartment of a «Cyberpartisans» representative](#) // REFORMATION - reform.by (8.06.2022)

## INDIVIDUAL CASES (INTERVIEWS WITH SURVIVORS)

This section presents the most egregious facts of criminal actions of the GUBOPIK officers, as described by the victims interviewed by the International Committee for Investigation of Tortures, which should be used in future prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators. As mentioned above, the experts thoroughly analyzed the **statements of 33 victims** who in one way or another had suffered from the actions of GUBOPIK members.

### ABDUCTIONS OF CITIZENS BY GUBOPIK OFFICERS

Of the 33 interviewees, three people **were abducted** by the GUBOPIK officers. The victims remained in a difficult psychological state from several hours to several days. They were beaten and humiliated, and they were also threatened with physical violence.

**Victim 872.** On September 9, 2020, at lunchtime, GUBOPIK officers brutally arrested the victim on the way to work, put a bag over his head, dragged him into a car and tied him up there. That's how he was driven into the woods. In the woods the victim was threatened with death: «You'll be drowned, you should know yourself why you're being drowned. The abductors mixed concrete grout in a bucket, took off his sneakers, and put his feet into the bucket. Then they brought a huge stone».

«They just put me on the ground, put a huge rock on my chest and duct-taped it to me». The abductors tried to stage the process of execution: they prepared the victim for drowning, blindfolded him, and carried him tied up with a stone taped to his chest. After that, they played with a pistol slide near his temple for some time.

The detainee was forced to «repent» on camera for participation in protest rallies. One of the security officers said: «I will give you a chance to record your last words to your parents. In a year, when everything settles down, we will pass on your video to them».

After filming the video, the officers left the guy in the forest and drove off.

## **SEARCHES IN DWELLINGS, DETENTIONS AT RALLIES AND IN PUBLIC PLACES, INTERROGATIONS AT THE GUBOPIK HEADQUARTERS**

What the victims have in common is that all of them were **detained by the officers of the third directorate of GUBOPIK**. They arrested people in their homes, at protest rallies, on the streets, on bus stops and in other public places. The officers acted brutally, they beat and insulted the people they detained.

During transportation of detainees to district police stations or GUBOPIK headquarters, the law enforcers beat the victims and threatened them with physical violence and rape with truncheons. Women and girls reported constant insults in the course of transportation, foul language, and threats of sexual violence.

The vast majority of the victims felt real threats to their health and life at these moments.

During **apartment raids**, GUBOPIK officers did not introduce themselves, did not provide their police IDs, and often failed to produce documents authorizing them to perform procedural actions. The searches were carried out in an atmosphere of violence, fear and threats. In most cases, searches turned into rampant vandalism.

**Victim 574** was detained in October 2020 in his apartment in Minsk by GUBOPiK employees for posting a fake photo on the Internet. They broke into the apartment, started strangling and beating the victim, handcuffed him, and demanded he give them his gun. The victim explained that it was a joke, that the photo of a gun he posed was downloaded from the Internet. The beating lasted 4 or 5 minutes.

*«They beat me on the legs, on the back and [delivered] glancing blows on the head. I wouldn't say they hurt – I may have been in pain, but I just didn't feel anything because of the stress. I remember seeing a man in leather gloves hit me on the head».*

Then the victim was taken to GUBOPiK's office at 3 Revalutsyinaya Street, where he was interrogated. The officers demanded he admit his participation in the mass riots in September and threatened to «drill his heels» with a drill and make him «run through the corridor» [of policemen with batons].

In August 2020, **victim 1030** was interrogated by the GUBOPiK officers in the pre-trial detention center in Brest.

*«During the interrogation, they insulted me. One of the officers began to hint at my participation in some gang. [In response] to my indignant denial, he lunged on top of me and began to choke me, doing that for about ten seconds. Then he let go, he said that I was too brazen, and they should put me in the basement. He gave me a kick in the ass, and the guards picked me up».*

After this interrogation, the detainee had suicidal thoughts:

*«I was thinking at the time that I need to find a shoelace or a blade to have a chance for suicide if need be».*

**Victim 1594** was detained by GUBOPiK in Minsk near his building on August 11, 2020, and taken to their office at 3 Revalutsyinaya Street. There they interrogated him for a long time, beat him and pressured him to confess to organizing the protests. In the process, he was threatened with rape.

*«They threatened that now some other people would show up, who I would definitely tell everything, and I'd better tell it to them than to the special guys who would beat me bad. They promised to put me in a cell where I would be screwed».*

**Victim 1470** was detained in Mahiliou in March 2021 by several GUBOPiK officers and thrown into a bus. There he received about five blows to the temple with a fist.

*«... but his was fist like a sledgehammer – the blows were so heavy that it made my vision cloudy».*

After the interrogation and the search, the victim felt sick and was taken away by an ambulance.

*«I was admitted to hospital and diagnosed with a hypertensive crisis. At the same time, the hospital discharge form reads: "Mild concussion, soft tissue hematoma". They came to my ward to take tests and to do a cardiogram. They said I should stay in bed all the time».*

After that, the victim periodically experiences headaches.

GUBOPiK officers detained **victim 1682** in July 2021 in Minsk and took him to his apartment for a search. In the apartment, the detainee was forced to kneel facing the wall, with his hands behind his back and handcuffed.

*«All this time they periodically shouted, cursed, and yelled insults. They took my phone and computer. They kicked me from time to time. At one point, a senior officer (he was the boldest) came up, put a cellophane bag over my head, and started to strangle me. He said something along the lines of, "Isn't it scary in there? Let's make it scary for you"».*

At the same time, the officers threatened to throw the victim's dog out.

In May 2021, in the Minsk region **victim 93** was detained by 6-7 GUBOPiK officers, all in masks and tracksuits.

*«They started beating me in front of passers-by. There were eight or ten people there who saw it all. Then they pulled me into a civilian car. In the car, they handcuffed me and beat me with a stun gun, and just beat me. Then they took me home for a search. They didn't have a search warrant».*

**Victim 1004** was captured in September 2020 by GUBOPiK members in Minsk.



In the van, he was mocked, beaten, threatened with rape, and pressured to admit that he was the coordinator of the protests from Poland.

*«As soon as they laid me on the floor in the van, they started kicking me. I just couldn't understand what was going on. When I tried to say something, I would be hit in the face right away. As soon as the door closed, I was immediately hit several times in the face. The first time they hit me, my nose started bleeding [the diagnoses read nose fracture]... They also hit me on my thigh, and in my stomach. I remember they hit me not with truncheons, but with their fists, in gloves... They kept demanding the password to my phone, and I told them I didn't know it... I heard a phrase: "Let's leave him without children", after which they tried to kick me between the legs several times, as I remember, but I held my legs tightly, so it was my legs that got hit, not what they actually targeted... One security guard said: "If you don't tell us the password to your phone now, we'll shove this truncheon down your throat and then rape you. Guys, go ahead", he handed the truncheon to those sitting closest to me. They started pulling off my shorts – naturally, I started screaming that, honestly, I didn't know the passwords. I tried to somehow defend myself with my legs and arms – at least somehow, something. He started threatening me with his truncheon, and tried to shove it in, roughly speaking. I used my legs not to let him do it. I got a couple more blows, and they kind of calmed down».*

**Victim 1031** was detained in September 2021 in Minsk by the law enforcement officers of GUBOPiK and taken to Revalutsyinaya Street, 3. There they began to look at his phone, got access to the account, found that he actively participated in the Lebyazhy 97 chat.

*«They then handcuffed me and started beating me. One of the officers took out a gun, put it to my temple – he tried to get something from me that way. They beat me hard on my legs, and on my back. Also, higher-ranking officers came in, they also beat me on the legs».*

**Victim 1197** was detained at a protest rally in November 2020 by GUBOPiK forces. During the arrest, he was severely beaten. He received a head injury and was sent to the emergency hospital.

*«They just pushed me with boots into a paddy wagon, where they started beating me with truncheons, fists, and knees. One of them beat me with a truncheon, then he threw me at another officer, and he hit me in the jaw as hard as he could».*

**Victim 506** was brutally detained in October 2020 by GUBOPiK in Minsk.

*«He knocks me off my bike with a baton. Five people ran up to me and started beating me. Then they notice people who are filming, and one of them says: "Under the bridge, let's continue there". Then they threw me into a van and said, "Now we'll squeeze your eye out, you'll be a cripple for life, no one will ever fuckin' want you". They took out a condom, put it on a baton, and threatened me with rape».*

After the arrest, the victim was handed over to OMON police, whose officers continued to beat him. It was not until the police station that they called an ambulance, which took him to the hospital.

**Victim 1415** was detained in October 2020 in Minsk by the GUBOPiK security forces. He received several blows and was thrown into a van, where he saw a guy who was badly beaten.

*«They smashed his head in there, too. When I bent down to look, I saw that there was a pool of blood. He's lying there behind me, and he's bleeding from his head».*

Then they were taken to the GUBOPiK office at 3 Revalutsyinaya Street. There they were put against the wall and periodically beaten. The entire time he and two other detainees were there, they heard insults and threats.

*«Right after they brought us in, one of them said: "If there's anything you don't tell me, I'm going to punch your nose right through the opposite side of your skull"».*

**Victim 1478** was detained in Minsk in November 2020 by the GUBOPiK security forces. They threw him into a van, put him on his knees and began to beat him. The blows came from all directions. All this time they tried to find out his phone password.

*«Someone started pulling me back by my nostrils. Then they started frying my ears with a stun gun. And they would use the stun gun on the ears, and then would slightly touch my temple, or my head».*

Then the victim was taken to 3 Revalutsyinaya Street. There he was taken to one of the rooms, laid on the floor, and they began to severely beat him on his legs and buttocks in order to get the password to his phone.

*«I asked to talk to someone more senior ... One says to me, "Well, I'm head of the entire division", – well, he beat me like everybody else, with a truncheon. I still didn't tell them the phone password. They were deciding whether to take me outside and pour pepper gas in my eyes, or they asked each other for a condom so they could rape me with a truncheon. Eventually they found a condom and put it over the truncheon. They say: "Let's put it in his mouth first". Well, I gave up, I told them the password».*

**Victim 1308** was detained in December 2020 by the GUBOPiK security forces at the entrance of his house together with friends. When he began to ask neighbors to inform his mother about what had happened, one of the officers began to strangle him and threw him, semi-conscious, into a paddy wagon. All the detainees there had their phones taken away. They found a photograph of the victim with a white-red-white flag on his phone, called him an "oppie", painted a white spot on his hair, and sprayed pepper spray in his face. When the paint mixed with the pepper liquid, his eyes swelled up and he couldn't see very well.

*«They poured pepper all over me, the paint from my hair went into my eyes, I couldn't see anything for almost half a day».*

All the time while the victim and his friends were in the paddy wagon, they were beaten with truncheons.

*«When they led my friend to the paddy wagon, they punched him in the nose. [His] nose was all swollen, his back was all blue. They forced another friend to put his legs under a paddy wagon bench and hit his legs. As a result, he tore the ligaments on his legs. They hit me with a truncheon on my back, and I couldn't see anything. When the person next to me got hit, I also felt the blows».*

**Victim 792** was detained by the officers of GUBOPiK in Minsk in October 2020. He was knocked down on the ground with a kick and received several blows to the stomach and legs. As they led the detainee to the bus, he was repeatedly punched and kicked in the back and head. As a result of these beatings, he was later diagnosed with a fractured vertebra and a bruised kidney.

*«While I was being led through the forest, they stopped once, told me to raise my arms, and punched me in the stomach again. They hit with their hands, but they wore special gloves. The second one kept kicking me in the back with his knee, which resulted in a fractured vertebra. He hit with a knee in my lower back. After that, he hit me in the kidney area with his hands, bruising my kidney. While we were walking 500-600 meters through the forest, he constantly hit me in the head with his hand, saying that I was a fascist and so on».*

Any attempt to object was stopped by blows. On the bus, all the detained men were laid on the floor in the aisle.

**Victim 811** was detained in October 2020 near the Riga supermarket and taken to the Savetsky District Police Department of Minsk. There he was interrogated by GUBOPiK officers, who demanded his phone password. He was beaten with a truncheon in the face and also punched and kicked for refusing to say the password.

*«I'm lying, they come up to me, and try to elicit the password. They keep beating me for about fifteen minutes. My adrenaline or something kicked in I guess, it didn't really hurt anymore. I understood that they could injure me even more. I realized that there was nothing important in my phone, and I told them the password».*

**Victim 698** was detained in Minsk in November 2020 by the GUBOPiK security forces. On the way to the paddy wagon, he was beaten and strangled with a truncheon. The beating was accompanied by filthy insults. The victim was punched in the head and not given a chance to breathe as they pressed a mask over his mouth and nose, and when he was exhausted and could not walk they dragged him along the ground. Eventually, he was picked up by an ambulance from the police department and taken to the hospital, where he had surgery on the same day for a closed fracture of the right fibula. In addition, the victim was diagnosed with a closed craniocerebral injury, concussion, contusion of the right parietal bone, lip and nose injuries.

## REPENTANT VIDEOS

GUBOPiK members did not shun making videos based on their own scripts, forcing detainees to «repent» for their real or imaginary actions. These videos were distributed on social media and Telegram channels affiliated with the security agencies, and were aired on state TV in order to humiliate, damage the reputation and create a negative public image of the detainees.

In December 2021, GUBOPiK officers broke into the apartment of Victim 964. They demanded to unlock the phone, and started torturing the victim for refusing to tell them the password.

*«They started twisting my fingers and punching me, trying to unlock the sensor on my phone with my finger. At first I resisted, then they started kicking me. I figured it was useless to struggle, relaxed, and they unlocked the phone with my finger».*

After that, he was taken to the GUBOPiK building at 3 Revalutseyinaya Street, where the torture continued.

*«I don't remember very well what they asked me, mostly they wanted me to confess that I took part in the protests, or organized something. They closed the door and one officer started beating me with a truncheon. Some others could randomly give me a kick, or a cuff on the nape, but mainly it was one person who beat me and choked me with the hood of my jacket».*

As a result, two repentant videos were recorded with the victim, which were later posted on Telegram channels.

*«There was some new information they told me to say on camera, under the threat that if I didn't say it, they would open a criminal case. I said everything they told me to».*

In February 2021, 10 GUBOPiK officers tried to break into the home of victim 1559 with a search. He opened the door for them himself. Among those who stormed into the apartment was **Raman Mikalayevich Kizhapkin** (aka Roman Kizhapkin), **deputy head of the third division of the third directorate of GUBOPiK**. In order to get the password to the phone, they handcuffed the victim's wrists very tightly, so he had to tell the password.

After the search, the victim was taken to the office of GUBOPiK, where he was beaten with the tacit approval of the same officer – deputy head of the third division of the third directorate of GUBOPiK. After that, they forced the victim to record a repentant video and «confess» of being an active member of the Grushevka Telegram chat.

**Victim 1014** was brutally detained by law enforcement officers of GUBOPiK in Minsk in August 2020. After the arrest, he was taken to Revalutsyinaya Street, 3. In the building, he was interrogated about his involvement in the protests, constantly punched, kicked, beaten with a truncheon, put in a «swallow» position, and subjected to strong psychological pressure.

*«...we have the right to kill you all, we'll bury you in the woods and no one will look for you," etc. [They said] that they had carte blanche to do whatever, and that such serious people were dealing with me. He said: "Look, everyone here is at least a major"».*

*«They beat me non-stop. But there was one man, the biggest. He clearly specializes in inflicting damage. He loves this job. You could see how much he enjoyed it. He was physically huge, and even that covid mask didn't fit on his face – it was so tight. He kicked me, punched me, and hit me with a rubber truncheon. Mostly on the lower part of the body: legs, rear surface, calves, soles – not so much on the head».*

They made a repentant video with the victim, and they told him to say that he had coordinated the riots. When he started telling the truth, the cameraman stopped filming, and they started beating him again. The edited repentant video was shown a few days later on state TV.

**Victim 33** was detained in August 2021 in Minsk and taken to the building of GUBOPiK at 3 Revalutsyinaya Street. In one of the rooms he was laid on the floor. At the victim's request for an attorney, Officer **Talchkou** (aka Tolchkov), whom the victim later recognized, began kicking him in the head, including on the teeth. He kept demanding the password to his phone, and when the victim refused, Talchkou and other officers beat him with a truncheon. As the victim continued to request an attorney, they ridiculed him, beat him with a truncheon, insulted him, cut off his dreadlocks, and mockingly told him that the truncheon was his attorney.

*«They kept stepping over me, kicking me in the head, and kicked me five times in the teeth with a boot. They punched me in the head in such a way that it still slammed against the concrete floor at the same time. They demanded my phone password, I refused, after which the most senior GUBOPiK officer took a truncheon out of the closet and started beating me. He gave me about five blows on my back, on my ...thighs and buttocks, and then started asking for the password again. I refused again. The beating continued, but I did not give them the password. It went on for twenty minutes».*

At some point, the victim gave up and gave the password to the phone. Under the threat of further beatings, he was forced to say on video that he was an anarchist, that he had been «repeatedly prosecuted», as well as other details.

## LEGAL NORMS (QUALIFICATION). CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the materials collected by the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus on the activities of the GUBOPiK leads to the following conclusions of legal significance.

In 2020, the GUBOPiK, the main punitive agency of the regime, was given the right to act in absolute permissiveness with total impunity. They openly flaunt all their atrocities: they publish them in their Telegram channels and brag about the harassment of citizens in the state media, pursuing a policy of intimidation of the opposition-minded people in Belarus. The perverse brutality during arrests, searches, and interrogations is practiced with the approval of the top leadership, which is the Ministry of Internal Affairs under Ivan Kubrakou and personally Lukashenka, the person holding the post of President.

Active involvement of GUBOPiK as a punitive instrument in the violent suppression of peaceful protests, numerous arbitrary detentions, abductions, public beatings of citizens, barbaric vandalism of homes, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment during interrogations have been and continue to be massive and widespread. All these actions take place in order to obtain information from the detainees, to force them incriminate themselves or other people, to punish for their actions or to intimidate them.

In many cases, the acts of sophisticated cruelty reported by victims and



witnesses were committed in the central office of GUBOPiK in Minsk, Revalutysinaya Street, 3, while the leadership of the agency was among direct perpetrators.

At the same time, under the guise of imaginary legality and «saving the Motherland», the officers of GUBOPiK have literally turned into sadists and are willing to torture only to satisfy their sadistic urges, as confirmed by some victims' testimonies.

The activities of GUBOPiK as part of the state punitive mechanism is the most vivid manifestation of the repressive policy pursued by the state as a whole. Both the direct perpetrators and the masterminds – the most senior officials of the regime – are accountable for the GUBOPiK's crimes.

Under such circumstances, the tortures and other crimes against citizens committed by the GUBOPiK officers, as reflected in the records of the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus, are crimes under both domestic and international law.

These actions are fully covered by the elements of the crime stipulated by Article 128 of the Criminal Code of Belarus (crimes against security of humanity), according to which unlawful detention, torture or acts of cruelty committed in connection with political convictions of the civilian population shall be punished by imprisonment for seven to twenty-five years, or life imprisonment, or death penalty.

Under international criminal law, these acts of violence also fall entirely within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and, under article 7, (1) (e), (f) and (k), of the Rome Statute, are defined as imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law, as well as torture and other inhumane acts of a similar character by intentionally inflicting great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.

It should also be noted that in line with international criminal law and Article 6 part 3 of the Criminal Code of Belarus, criminal liability under Article 128 of the Criminal Code applies regardless of the criminal law, which was in force at the place of the act (the principle of universal jurisdiction).

This means that citizens of the Republic of Belarus, as well as foreigners who have committed crimes against the security of humanity in our country, may

be prosecuted for this crime not only in the Republic of Belarus, but also in another country on the basis of the principle of universal jurisdiction.

Given that the crime under Article 128 of the Criminal Code of Belarus refers to the most dangerous crimes against peace and security of mankind, Article 85 of the Criminal Code of Belarus stipulates that **those guilty of committing this crime shall not be exempt from criminal liability or punishment due to the statute of limitations.**

