



# REPORT ON WORK IN 2022

THE INTERNATIONAL  
COMMITTEE  
FOR INVESTIGATION OF  
TORTURE IN BELARUS

# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF TORTURE IN BELARUS. REPORT ON WORK IN 2022

*Belarus faced record levels of violence in 2020. Only from August 9 to 12 authorities detained 7,000 peaceful protesters. Repressions do not stop up to this day.*

*In response to the wave of violence, a group of human rights activists united in the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus.*

## WHO ARE WE?

**The International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus** collects, systematizes and stores evidence of the regime's crimes in order to bring the perpetrators to justice in the future.

## What are we doing?

### Gathering evidence of crimes

We document and save histories of victims into a single database

### Fighting for the rights of victims of the security forces

We help to open a criminal case in another country with the help of universal jurisdiction

### Talking about what's going on in Belarus

We make reports and conduct investigations based on documented stories

**Our goal** is to record as many cases of torture as possible and preserve the evidence until the creation of fair courts in order to bring all those responsible to justice in the future.

**«The more facts and evidence, the more guilty will be held accountable for their actions!»**

The International Committee works in accordance with international standards and is part of the International Accountability Platform (IAPB) for Belarus.

## Our principles:

**We care about the safety of the victims**

**We store the collected information in a single database**

**We adhere to international standards**

## OUR WORK IN 2022

In 2022, the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus worked in the following **areas**:

**Documentation**

**Universal  
jurisdiction**

**Education**

## DOCUMENTATION

**Documentation** is the main and most voluminous part of the work of the International Committee.

We strive to prove that the mass torture of civilians that took place in Belarus in 2020 and continues to this day is a **crime against humanity** and must be punished both under domestic and international law.

In order to bring to justice every guilty representative of the authorities and law enforcement agencies, we collect **evidence** — we document the stories of the victims.

### Here's how it goes:

*We are looking for victims who are willing **to share their story***



*Each victim is **interviewed** by a representative of the International Committee — **a documenter***



*The documenter asks **questions** that allow you to get a complete picture of what happened — a description of the events, the names of the criminals and other details that may be **important for the investigation***



***The evidence** that the victim has — photos, medical certificates, extracts from courts, articles in the media*



*History is combined with evidence, encrypted and stored in **a single database***

108

cases of torture we documented in 2022

64

of which are the stories of victims of anti-war protests

Our number one priority is **the safety** of the victims. To provide it, we:

**Follow information security** rules

Our documenters **are not located** in Belarus

We use **secure messengers**

**We encrypt** personal data and stories of victims

We store important information **in the cloud**

We do not use Belarusian and Russian **servers**

We know how hard and painful it can be for people to talk about what they have gone through. In order to **avoid re-traumatization** of the victims as much as possible, the documenters of the International Committee:

**Work according to the international methodology**

The methodology was created on the basis of work with victims in Syria and Iraq

**Upon request, an interview is conducted with a psychologist**

A psychologist monitors a person's condition during an interview and can issue a medical report

**Improve skills through training**

Training and seminars help documenters to develop empathy and communication skills

## UNIVERSAL JURISDICTION

Mass torture, when carried out as part of a widespread or systematic attack on a civilian population, is **a crime against humanity**. Along with genocide, they are international crimes.

Atrocities of this magnitude affect everyone. Therefore, due to the principle of **universal jurisdiction**, any country can judge and punish for them.

Mass torture during and after the 2020 protests is no exception. Anyone who has been ill-treated for their political position can apply to the law enforcement agencies of another country.

### 1

#### **a general criminal case has already been opened in Lithuania**

We help victims to add their stories to the overall investigation — we document, collect evidence, draw up documents, pay for travel and accommodation, provide a lawyer.

In 2022, we handed over **dozens of** cases to Lithuanian law enforcement agencies (we have no right to name the exact number in the interests of the investigation).

## EDUCATION

We believe that talking about what is happening in Belarus is no less important than collecting and documenting information about it. The world community should know that torture in our country does not stop. As well as the Belarusians themselves should not forget this.

### **We talk about it through:**

**Reports and investigations**

**Events**

**Social networks and media**

#### **Investigations and reports**

Investigations and reports are our main tools for showcasing events in Belarus. We analyze hundreds of cases in order to create a real picture of what is happening and show it to society.





## 2 reports and 1 investigation

we released in 2022

**Belarusian participation in the war in Ukraine: the regime and the people** — a report on the regime's fight against those who opposed Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. On February 27 and 28, the security forces detained more than 1,100 people. At least 630 of them ended up behind bars in inhuman conditions. In the report, we detail the following events: the «rail war», guerrilla activities, the regime's response to popular resistance, and the torture of detained at anti-war protests.

**GUBOPiK — the punitive unit of the regime to combat dissent** — a report on the criminal actions of the power unit GUBOPiK. The facts we have collected prove that the department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which should be responsible for fighting crime and corruption, intimidates, kidnaps and tortures civilians because of their political views.

**Torture in the Frunzensky District Department of Internal Affairs August 9-13, 2020** — During the suppression of protests in 2020, the employees of the Frunzensky District Department of Internal Affairs were especially brutal. We conducted a public investigation — we collected a chronology of the events of August 9-13, compiled a list of criminals and gave a legal assessment of their actions.



**Belarusian participation in the war in Ukraine: regime and people**

Report



**GUBOPiK — punitive unit of the regime to combat dissent**

Report



**Torture in the Frunzensky District Department of Internal Affairs on August 9-13, 2020**

Investigation

## Events

Events are an opportunity not only to talk about the problem, but also to involve people in the process of solving it. We try to be active, communicate with people in an informal setting and talk about our work from different angles.

### Week against torture

From June 20 to 26, the International Committee, together with the Legal Initiative, held **The Week Against Torture** — a series of events dedicated to the International Day for the Protection of Victims of Torture.



Our goal was to draw attention to the human rights crisis in Belarus. In order to increase the coverage of the event and tell the maximum number of people about the problem, we attracted **partners** and held events in **Warsaw, Vilnius** and **online**.

The Week was attended by Legal Initiative, HRC «Viasna», Human Constanta, Belarusian Helsinki Committee, RADA Youth Council, Dissidentby and Politzek.me initiatives.

**16**

**events were organized together with partners — film screenings, lectures, discussions, «Shchyryia razmovy» and even a concert**

**835**

**people took part in the events**

**1030**

**euro raised to help Ukraine at the charity concert**



### **Offline events held by the International Committee:**

**Presentation of the anti-war report**

**Screening «White Sun of Red Summer»**

**Discussion: «Why should we talk about torture?»**

**«Shchyryia razmovy» about tortures**

**A charity concert**



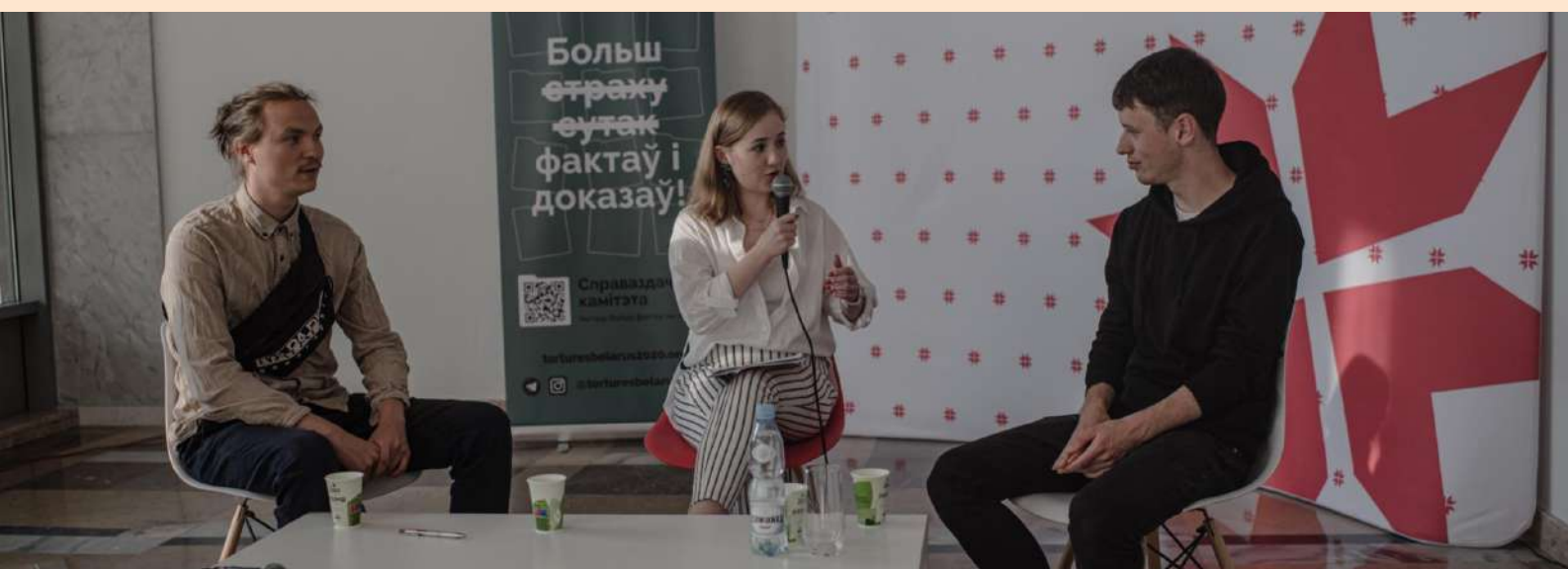
## Presentation of the anti-war report of the International Committee

Representatives of the International Committee presented the report «Belarusian participation in the war in Ukraine: the regime and the people» — they spoke about the «rail war» and repressions against Belarusians after the start of a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.



## Discussion: «Why should we talk about tortures?»

Together with the documenters of the International Committee and the victims, we talked about what the term «torture» means, what our work is, how the documentation process is going, and why it is important to talk about torture and record all cases.



### «Shchyryia razmovy» about tortures

«Shchyryia razmovy» is a format that allows, through a personal conversation, to highlight the topic of torture from different angles. The event was attended by Heroes — a lawyer, a victim, a psychologist and a documenter.

### 2 screenings of the film «White Sun of Red Summer» in Warsaw and Vilnius

«The White Sun of the Red Summer» is a film by young Belarusian directors Polina Idrisova, Gleb Asmolovsky and Yanina Sianyuta about Belarusians and Belarus after August 2020.



### Concert «Fed up with violence»

Charity concert at which Belarusian bands RSP, Lera Yaskevich, Iva Sativa and Intelligency performed. At the concert, fundraising was organized in support of Ukraine — we managed to get 1030 euros.



## «Guchna — fest» by Free Belarus Center

On July 10th we participated in **Guchna-fest** — a festival of modern Belarusian culture in Warsaw. We talked about the work of the Committee, distributed brochures and stickers.

## Solidarity Festival

On July 30 we talked about our work at **the Solidarity Festival**. At this music festival, volunteers, musicians and activists came together to protest the regimes of Putin and Lukashenko.



## SOCIAL NETWORKS AND MEDIA

Our third way to talk to people about torture is through social media and the media. Being present in the information and online space, we are constantly in contact with the audience. This means that we can quickly convey the most important things.

### Instagram and Telegram

This year, the International Committee has become active in social networks. In our **Instagram** and **Telegram accounts**, we talk about what is happening in Belarusian prisons, talk to the audience about human rights, share events and important information.



# 2 times

our social networks have grown this year

## Corporate style

This year we have developed a corporate identity. Now our [website](#) and social networks look like this:



This helps us to be more visible and convey important and often complex information in a clear and accessible way.

## Released media products

During this year, we collaborated a lot with the media and talked about our work in the media — we broadcasted, published information about investigations and reports, and gave interviews.

But they also began to write articles themselves about what we think is important. You can read them on our [website](#).





## COOPERATION AND INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

### IAPB platform meeting with Svetlana Tikhanovskaya

On June 10, 2022, the representative of the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus, **Viktorija Fedorova**, took part in the meeting of **the International Accountability Platform for Belarus** (IAPB) and the president-elect president of Belarus, **Svetlana Tikhanovskaya**.



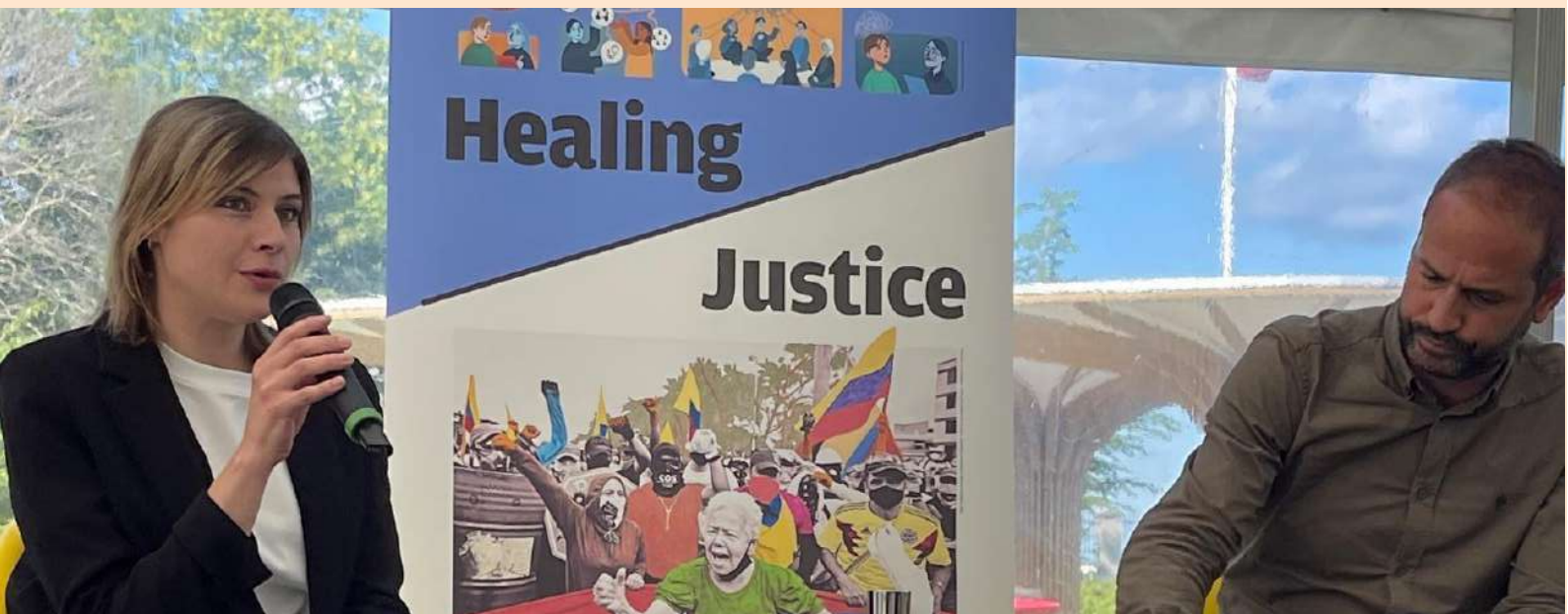
At the meeting, the results of the work over the past year, as well as joint activities aimed at supporting efforts to hold perpetrators accountable for human rights violations in Belarus were discussed.

**The IAPB** is a coalition of Belarusian and international independent organizations that was established in March 2021 to collect, verify and preserve evidence of gross human rights violations committed by the Belarusian authorities during and after the August 2020 presidential elections.

The meeting took place in Copenhagen. It was attended by representatives of the Human Rights Center «Viasna», the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus, the Danish Institute against Torture DIGNITY and the IAPB secretariat.

### Meeting «Justice Starts with Truth»

On June 21, the International Committee participated in the meeting «Justice Starts with Truth» — a conversation with documentation experts, activists and psychologists in honor of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.



IRCT is one of the world's leading torture documentation organizations. At the meeting, activists and civil society representatives from around the world discussed how it is better to expose and hold states accountable.

**Universal Jurisdiction Event in Germany «Justice Across Borders: Victims and Civil Society Perspectives on Universal Jurisdiction in Germany»**



On June 29, a meeting of representatives of civil initiatives from Germany, Syria, Belarus, Gambia and Kashmir was held in Berlin. The guests spoke about the situation in their countries and shared their experiences.



The event concluded a two-day workshop titled «A Critical Exchange on Universal Jurisdiction and the Reduction of Civic Space: Towards Unifying Struggle and Co-creating Counterstrategies».

### **Round table on universal jurisdiction in Lithuania**

In August Lithuania hosted a Round Table on Universal Jurisdiction organized by the People's Crisis Management team.



The International Committee took part in it and, together with experts and lawyers from the NAU, the Office of Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, the human rights center «Viasna», foreign human rights activists and activists of the Belarusian diaspora, joined the working group and developed a plan to bring to justice the perpetrators of mass torture.

## AWARDS

In 2022, the International Committee became a laureate of the Belarusian House of Human Rights award «Human Rights Initiative of the Year».



We hope that this award will once again draw attention to the problem of torture in Belarus. And for those who are left face-to-face with the regime in the country, it will make it clear that they are not alone and that we are working to ensure that all the perpetrators answer for their crimes.