

Frunzenskoye RUVD of Minsk. Torture of detainees in August 2020

Public inquiry

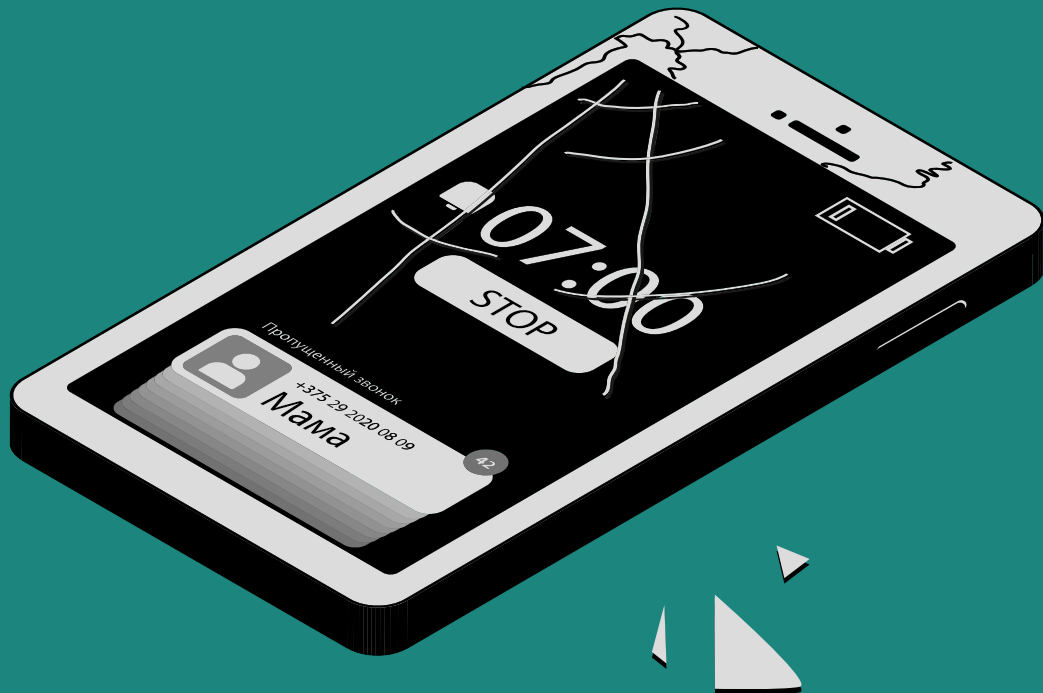


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BRIEFLY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED IN THE FRUNZENSKOYE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Fraudulent presidential elections in 2020 led to mass protests by Belarusian citizens. The protesters encountered unprecedented brutality of security forces during arrests and severe beatings when transported to places of temporary detention (district departments of internal affairs, or RUVDs). RUVDs turned into places of mass abuse, torture, and cruel treatment.

One of the harshest places of detention was the Frunzenskoye RUVD in Minsk, where hundreds of Belarusian citizens, as well as foreign nationals (Poland, Russia, etc.) were brutally abused and tortured from the very beginning of the crackdown.

On August 9-13, 2020, detainees were constantly delivered to the Frunzenskoye RUVD of Minsk. There were different people among them: the young, the elderly, those who attended the rallies deliberately and random passers-by, as well as journalists, including foreign reporters.

All those brought in were first chased through the corridor of OMON officers standing on both sides, who struck them with batons. They were held mostly in the RUVD gym, while a smaller part of them were held in several overcrowded cells, a shooting range and the RUVD garage.

In the gym and garage, most of the time the detainees were handcuffed or kept in tight plastic zip ties. They were brutally beaten and insulted. Some were marked with paint: this meant that they were supposed to be beaten with extreme cruelty. They were beaten with batons, legs, hands; some were also electrocuted. Many had traces of beatings in the face and head, legs, buttocks, and lower back area.

There were traces of blood and urine on the floor and walls of the RUVD building. Bleeding people with their hands tied behind their backs were lying or kneeling on the floor. According to eyewitnesses, several people who showed no signs of life were carried out of the gym and taken away by ambulance.

The detainees were forced to shout: «We love Belarus», «We all love our president Lukashenka», «We will not smash the city anymore», «We love OMON», etc. Those who hesitated or kept silent were violently beaten.

People were not taken to the toilet during the night. Also, they were not fed all the time they spent in the RUVD, and often were refused drinking water. Their personal belongings — cell phones — were smashed.

Every once in a while, each detainee was taken out of the gym to other offices for inventory of belongings, signing protocols, filming and plain beating. Some were required to sign blank sheets of paper. Others were beaten again for trying to read the papers drawn up on them.

Those who went out to protest consciously and admitted it were charged under Article 23.34¹ (Violation of the procedure for organizing or holding mass events), and passers-by — under Article 17.1 (Petty hooliganism) of the Administrative Code.

On the way from the RUVD building to the paddy wagons, the detainees were again chased through a «corridor» of police and OMON, who kicked and clubbed them.

As a result of numerous beatings during arrest, transportation and detention at the police station, as well as psychological stress, many people needed medical assistance. They asked for ammonia and medicines. Many had damaged ligaments and bones of the arms and legs. All requests to call a doctor were ignored. **No medical assistance was provided to the detainees in the premises of the police department.**

1 Article 24.23, in the new Code of Administrative Offences

Judging by the accounts of the victims, one can assume that approximately **400 to 600 people** suffered cruel and humiliating treatment in Frunzenskoye District Police Department of Minsk (RUVD) these days.

This investigation revealed that it was not only the employees of the Frunzenskoye RUVD who beat and tortured people on August 9-13, 2020, but also officers of other units and law enforcement agencies.

METHODOLOGY OF OUR INVESTIGATION

Crimes against humanity have no statute of limitations. For over 18 months the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus has been collecting information on the facts of such crimes from various sources. Experts search for and process victims' testimonies, analyze information from open sources, and review documents provided by civic initiatives and individuals.

This inquiry closely examined, analysed and summarized interviews with survivors of the torture and mistreatment in the building of Frunzenskoye RUVD on August 9-13, 2020 in Minsk. Fifty-eight victims' statements were processed in this way.

We have put together a chronology of what happened in the premises of the Frunzenskoye District Police Department of Minsk from August 9 to 13, 2020. Criminal acts of individual officers that fall under the category of torture have been a priority in this inquiry, as witnesses provided descriptions of the officers in question. Despite the fact that most of the law enforcers hid their faces under masks and balaclavas, many of them were identified by the victims. We do not disclose the personal data of the witnesses for security reasons.

The investigation provides a legal qualification of the actions and a detailed list of perpetrators.

CHRONOLOGY OF TORTURE

AUGUST 9 - 13, 2020

August 9, 2020

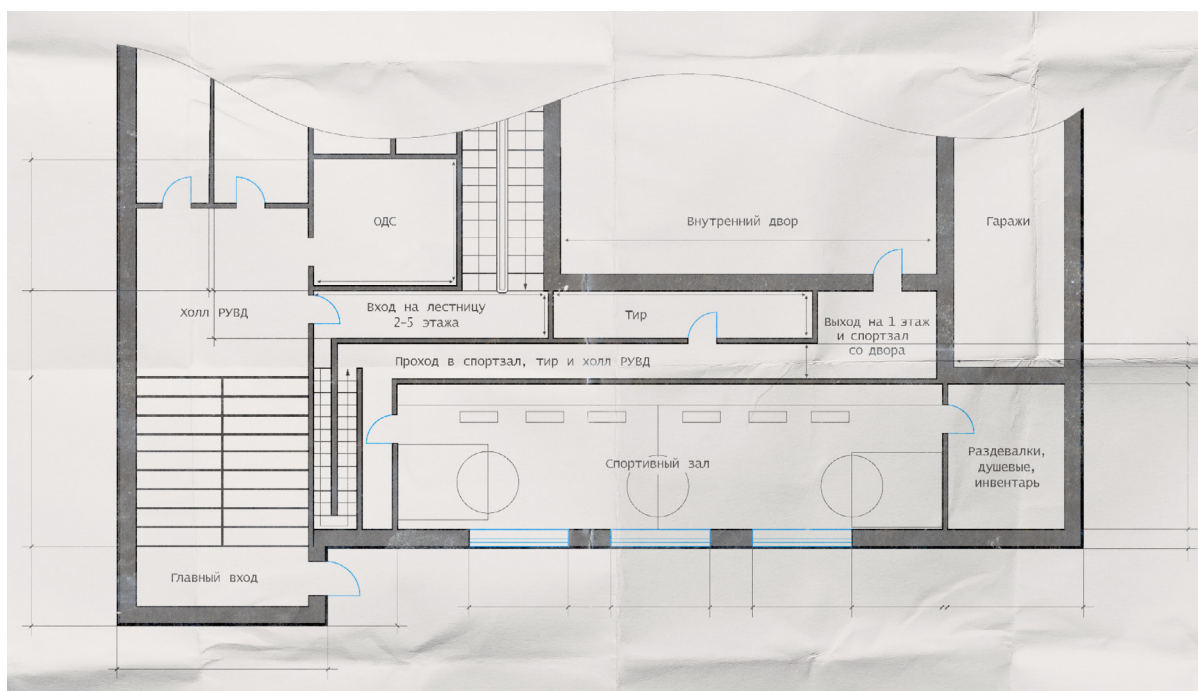
21:00 ñ 24:00

Eyewitnesses say that people arrested at polling stations and the streets of Minsk began to be delivered in large numbers to Frunzenskoye RUVD in the evening of August 9, 2020. Leaving the paddy wagons, the detainees had to run through «human corridors» of the police officers who beat them heavily. Detainees were further beaten in the building of the police department, and then almost all of them were placed in the RUVD gym.

August 10, 2020

00:00 ñ 04:00

The police kept bringing new detainees to the gym all night. According to eyewitnesses, after midnight there were more than 100 people there, all lying on the floor. They were severely beaten; the beating was accompanied by mockery and abuse. Guys with long hair got their hair cut, dreadlocks cut off. An unknown man who did not want to talk to the officers was tortured: he



was suspended on a mop with handcuffs. With threats and violence, people were forced to sign fabricated protocols. (**Witness S., Witness M.**)¹

04:00 ñ 08:00

Some detainees were held in the rooms of the police department. **Witness S.** notes that there were 8 people in the room with him, all of them were lying on the floor and the officers walked right over them. A female investigator demanded that detainees sign blank sheets of paper, and they were beaten if they refused to sign.

16:00 ñ 20:00

Arriving people were literally thrown out of the paddy wagons one by one in the RUVД yard, surrounded by officers in black were; they were forbidden to raise their heads. Through the door they were chased into the basement, where men in black beat them with clubs, directing them to the gym. In the gym, there were police officers, some of them in uniform and sitting at tables, all wearing face masks. There were about 20 people in the gym, but more and more people were brought in constantly, and soon they were already 40.

According to **Witness V.**, he was ordered to lie along the wall on his belly with his face down, his hands were tied with a cable tie. He received a punch

¹ Here and further, the names of the victims are replaced with letters, a new letter for each name.

to the neck for trying to lift his head. Then they lifted him up and brought him to a table where they asked his full name, date of birth, marital status, photographed him, clarified where he was and what he was doing at the time of arrest, why he went out on the streets. They suggested that he sign the protocol, which did not correspond to reality, but he signed it under the threat of being beaten. Each person was assigned a number. Everyone went through this procedure.

Detainees who were found to be carrying something inflammable, as well as foreign nationals, whom the officers referred to as «puppeteers,» were treated particularly harshly.

No mercy was also shown to the individuals who were found to have historical national symbols — white-red-white flags, images of the coat of arms «Pahonia» on their clothes, white-red ribbons, etc.

There were a lot of beaten people in the gym. Witnesses watched as officers beat a man who was wearing a T-shirt with the image of a «Pahonia». After the interview, they put him on the floor, twisted his arms, put him on his feet and beat him with clubs. (**Witness T., Witness Sh., Witness B., Witness Y., Witness V.**)

20:00 ñ 24:00

New detainees continued to be brought in to the RUV in the evening. The procedure was the same as before: passing through a «live corridor» of people in balaclavas with batons, accompanied by beating; being taken to the gym with subsequent beating, staying in the gym with tied hands, kneeling face down for 6-7 hours; forced signing of protocols; beating right at the tables where protocols were drawn up, and ignored requests for medical assistance. Requests to loosen the ties on the hands were followed by blows with a baton. (**Witness T., Witness S., Witness B.**)

Witness Sh. explained that he had gone through the procedure described above and was in the gym by 21.00. «They brought me into the gym and ordered me to fall face down on the floor, threatening to beat me if I moved or turned my head, I had cable ties on my hands. After that, the officers stood on people's bodies and lifted the detainees up so that a policewoman could record them on video, and they had to give their full name and year of birth.» An officer with a short haircut, in his late 40s, noticed a white bracelet on him and demanded to «eat» it.

The officers especially abused a man who was found in possession of a canister of kerosene. A teenager who was lying on the floor was forced to kiss a policeman's boots before being let home.

August 11, 2020

00:00 ñ 04:00

There were a lot of people in the gym, some were standing around the perimeter, others were lying on the floor. The men who were lying down were beaten and insulted with foul language by officers in black and in civilian clothes. Women were insulted on an equal basis with men. The witness directly observed how the officers beat his acquaintances on the knees — Raman Ch.², and brothers Aliaksei and Viktar. The latter was practically unable to walk, and the officers dragged him across the floor. There was a shift change in the morning, and newly arrived officers started beating people again (**Witness T.**).

Later, **Witness T.** and his friends were placed on their knees near the wall, their hands tied with cable ties. The brothers Aliaksei and Viktar, who were standing next to him, were beaten again. Aliaksei was sick, vomiting, and constantly fainted. Viktar, like many others, asked for medical help, but they could hear only foul language in response. Raman was given a sniff of ammonia and beaten again. Men asked to go to the toilet, but they were not allowed. **It was clear from the smells that someone wasn't able to hold it. Everyone was forced to chant «Lukashenka is our beloved president.»**

All detainees were interrogated. A typical interrogation looked as follows. Before the interview with the officer, a detainee was photographed. If officers noticed any unusual details on the body or in appearance (tattoo, long hair, etc.), they would strike some blows. People were forced to sign the protocols without reading them. There was a case when an elderly man was rigorously beaten for 10 minutes right on the office floor for refusing to sign a protocol without reading it. (**Witness T.**)

A detailed account of the events of the night of August 11 in the police department can be found in the testimony of **Witness L.** Like all other detainees, the witness passed through the «live corridor» and was taken to the gym, where there were 200 people already, all of them either lying on the floor or standing. Then the witness and his friends were thrown face

² The names of all the victims have been changed, as people are in Belarus and can be exposed to reprisals.

down on the cold floor. People were lying very tightly, sometimes almost on top of each other. To organize the space in the gym, those lying on the floor were dragged right by their handcuffs, the handcuffs digging into their hands and causing terrible pain. The detainees were lying on the floor in rows, they were different people: men and women, young and elderly, very young girls and boys. Officers walked between the rows and beat the people with and without a reason. They made the blows mainly on the back and the legs. A witness saw three employees beating a young girl. They were especially cruel to the Polish citizen Witold Dobrowolski, who was beaten precisely because he was from Poland. One of the detainees, who had kidney issues, begged to call an ambulance, but was also just clubbed in response.

There were nine masked policemen and officer **Karina Valuyskaya** without a mask in the gym. They beat people with batons and feet. Less often with gloved hands. They called a baton «73 cm of happiness». Those lying down were required to have their heads turned strictly downward; if it was noticed that someone had lifted their head, they were kicked in the head.

As it dawned, there was an order to get up. Those who could, got up by themselves, and those who could not – were lifted with the «help» of a baton. The battered girl was also lifted by force, her face expressing no emotion, she was indifferent to everything. Lined up along the wall and ordered to kneel, back up, head to the floor. Soon the legs and arms grew numb causing unbearable pain. In an attempt to somehow alleviate the suffering, people tried to move their arms and legs, but this was harshly forbidden. They were not given anything to drink and were not allowed to go to the toilet. If someone was persistent in his requests, he was simply beaten. Laughing mockingly, they said: «Soil yourselves. Now we are going to beat you, and if you make a mess here, we will kill you altogether.»

Moreover, they demanded that everyone shouted the phrase «Our president is Alexander Grigoryevich Lukashenka.» However, only 10-20 people obeyed this order, the policemen were furious, and they vented their anger on those who did not shout the phrase.

Officer **Karina** demonstrated particularly sophisticated cruelty and malice. She was constantly walking among the detainees and kept saying: «You motherf*ckers, I can't sleep for three nights in a row because of you bitches». She found chicken eggs in one of the stopped cars, brought them to the gym, and then ordered the men to stand up and squat. Battered people with blue legs could not do it and fell down, and Karina laughed and kicked them with her feet. **Karina kicked those who fell in the face, forced them to get**

up, and threw chicken eggs at them. She threw eggs in the groin area, in the torso, in the face, and then took a baton from other officers and furiously, with a terrible scream, hit them.

The witness and all other detainees stood by the gym wall for nine hours in this atmosphere.

Another witness (**Witness N.**), also brought in at night, was not in the gym for long. He and two others, including a minor, were taken out into the corridor and laid on the floor. They were lying on their stomach, their hands behind their backs in handcuffs. They were ordered to lie with their legs spread wide apart, it was forbidden to raise their heads. After an hour and a half, some people came and began to interrogate them. The main question they were interested in was how much they had been paid to participate in the rally. The witness denied both taking part in the protests and receiving money, and therefore was beaten with a baton: they beat him on the back and legs. I saw how an underage guy was beaten, too. The officers accused the witness that he received 50 BYN for participating in the rally, and threatened that he would be put into jail. They claimed that they had detained the coordinator and they knew everything. If they heard the smallest objection, they began to make the blows. The interrogation ended with a video recording, after which the officers left. He and another man lay in the corridor on a cold tile until morning, only then he was transferred to the gym.

Witness G. was taken to the Frunzenskoye RUVD at about 2 a.m. At the entrance, the officers forced him to lie on the floor, hit several times with a baton, put handcuffs on, insulted him, accused that the protesters had caused chaos and destroyed the city. Then they brought him to the gym and ordered to lie down. At the entrance, he saw about 20 or 30 broken phones. I heard and saw how people were beaten.

Witness P. and two other citizens were taken to the RUVD at about 2:30 a.m. Everyone who was brought into the gym (including them) was beaten by police officers standing in a line. He and the others were put face down on the floor and handcuffed – very tightly tightening their arms behind their backs. When he was lying on the floor, a police officer, who answered to the patronymic «Petrovich», came up to him, stepped on his head with his foot, asked him some questions, and hit him in the face with a truncheon, splitting his lip.

Many other detainees were beaten too: for talking, asking for water or medical help, for turning or changing their position, for their appearance, for having any protest symbols. This went on all night. There was a young

man in the gym who repeatedly said that he had only one kidney, that he had recently had surgery, that he couldn't be in the position he was in now, and who was in pain. He asked to call an ambulance many times, but they kept beating him in response.

04:00 ñ 10:00

Witness A., who was brought to the Frunzenskoye RUVD at 4 a.m., said that everyone was brutally beaten. They did not beat the girls, but one girl was mistaken for a guy and an officer started beating her on her back and buttocks with a baton. A guy stood up for her, and they started beating him in the face. She described the beating of a young man with one kidney and confirmed that people were not taken to the toilet.

She saw a detainee being dragged down the hallway, covered in blood, leaving a streak of blood behind him. At 4 a.m., she and some of the other detainees were taken out of the gym one by one and photographed. In the hallway, an officer in a black uniform kicked them in the legs and asked, «Will you still go to rallies?» One of the guys was charged under a criminal article, and he was beaten even harder in the hallway. After signing the documents (she was not allowed to read them), she was taken to the police station cell («monkey house»), where there were seven people, although the cell was designed for four.

Witness P. says that in the morning a young police officer lined everyone up, putting them on their knees, face to the floor. He beat those who asked to go to the toilet, or asked for medical assistance, asked any questions, sometimes beat them for no reason at all. He forced the detainees to chant: «We love Belarus», «We all love our president Lukashenka», «We will not crash the city anymore» and other phrases. Those who did not chant were beaten with a baton. A police officer, presumably Karina **Valuyskaya**, approached **Witness P.** and others, humiliating and insulting him in every possible way. She was stuffing chicken eggs that she had taken from the car into their pockets. After that, she struck where the chicken egg was so that it would break. She also made blows on the face and on the legs. He and other detainees were taken for interrogations, during which they were beaten. They received blows on the knees, on the feet, and on the shins.

In the morning there were about 80 people in the gym, including 8-10 girls. They were given some relief: people were allowed to go to the toilet and drink water, some people had their handcuffs loosened, those who were standing were allowed to sit down (**Witness N.**).

With a shift change around 8 a.m. the horror started all over again. All the detainees were again put on their knees head down in two rows along the gym wall. No moving, no water, no toilet. There was an employee named Karina in this shift. She found some «suspicious» objects in the bag of one of the detainees and started beating him with a bat. She beat him very cruelly and accompanied the beating with a shrieking scream. A man in his 40s or 50s was nearby and asked not to hit him as he had a bad back. Some could not stand on their knees for a long time and begged: «Better kill me, I can't kneel like this anymore.» For any requests and even remarks, the detainees, including the girls, received a series of blows. Then the OMON officers came into the gym and began to force the detainees to shout that the best president is Alexander Grigoryevich Lukashenka (**Witness N., Witness G.**).

The phones of the detainees were in plastic bags that they held behind their backs. Officer **Valuyskaya**, when she heard phone sounds, would take the phone and throw it on the floor and into the walls until it broke, and then into its owner. Someone asked her to switch their phones off, and she would come up and switch them off. She said, «If I hear even one sound of a phone, they will be in the same place as those first ones.» **Witness C** was able to turn off his phone through the plastic bag. But many had alarm clocks on, and when they started playing, she also «fixed» them. So, she smashed about 10 phones with a baton and returned the broken phones to the owners (**Witness C., Witness K., Witness H.**).

In the morning, **Witness G.** and two others were taken to sign the protocols. The head of the police **department, Polulekh Alexander Vladimirovich**, entered the room in a white shirt. He shouted and insulted them. He hit everyone's head against the wall. Officer **Karina Valuyskaya** came up to the witness, took an inhaler out of his pocket, let him breathe, and periodically gave him ammonia to sniff, as he felt very unwell. Later she came up and said that he had to say on video camera that he participated in the protest march, admitted his guilt, and did not want to commit any violent actions. She promised that after that **Witness G.** would be released. He had to accept the proposal and stated on camera what he had been told to say.

11:30 ñ 16:00

Those who were brought to the police department around 12 o'clock (**Witness R., Witness S.**), confirmed the beatings and added that everyone was forced to shout: «We will not destroy our country anymore», «We love our president», «Alexander Grigorievich Lukashenka is our only president».

Those who did not shout immediately received blows. One guy was put on a pedestal, had a helmet put on, and police officer **Karina Valuyskaya** started beating him on the head with a steel bat. The helmet was plastic, and the bat was steel. He falls, they pick him up by the collar, put him back up, and start beating him again.

The beating was very heavy. The guy fainted. The detainees shouted, «Call an ambulance, the guy is sick.» They came up to him, kicked him, he did not respond, they gave him a sniff of ammonia, and he came to his senses a little. The officers said: «Oh, you're not dead yet» and continued beating or kicking him as if to finish him off (**Witness R.**).

16:00 ñ 20:00

Witness Ch . she was taken to the Frunzenskoye police department, to the gym, at about 18.00. She was handcuffed and put on her knees face down. She personally saw the mass beating of men. The beaten detainees were forced to shout: «I love OMON.» A female officer **Karina Valuyskaya**, who beat the guys with a baton on the heads and other parts of the body, was particularly cruel. If they asked for medical help, it irritated the officers even more. The beatings were accompanied by filthy language and insults. Both men in black and police officers were involved in the beatings. There was a lot of blood on the gym floor, and the walls were splattered with blood.

21:00 ñ 23:00

According to **Witness Zh.**, he was taken to the gym and thrown face down on the floor. Two officers came up to him and started beating him with batons on the buttocks and the back. After hitting him with a baton, one of these officers sat on his back, rested his knee against the floor, and began punching him in the right side of his back. He struck at least 5 blows to the lung area, from which he began to choke and wheeze. Then the second officer stepped on his toe and stood on it until **Witness Zh.** started screaming, and then he stepped on his buttocks and jumped on him several times. There were nonstop insults («scarecrow», «stinkpot», «scumbag», and foul language). Everyone was forced to squat with their heads down, their hands handcuffed or tied behind their backs.

Witness Z. mentioned that he and other people delivered to the police department around 22.00 were marked with gray paint when they got out of the van: girls were marked only on their necks, and men — also on their

backs. In the gym, they handcuffed him tightly and put him on his knees face down. There were three young men nearby. One of them was beaten by about five officers. As he found out later, they had been trying to run away from the traffic police and OMON with their car. When they were arrested, they were kicked, clubbed, and electrocuted. It lasted for about 20 minutes. Later officers came up to them again and beat them again.

A traffic police officer brought him into a room. One of those in the room said, «We're going to interrogate you now.» **Witness Z.** was laid face down on the floor, and a police officer began beating him with a rubber baton on his legs and buttocks, sometimes hitting him on the back. After five or ten minutes, he said that his arm was tired. The beating was accompanied by the words: «It's no good to vote for Tsikhanouskaya, kiss the changes good-bye.» After a while, he was taken to the locker room. There were three officers in uniform: a black T-shirt, black pants, berets; and a black mask; two of them wore balaclavas. They made him state on camera everything they told him to. If he stumbled, they would come up, give him two blows in the legs on both sides and start the recording again. **Witness Z.** was forced to say that he took part in the rally and shouted slogans «Long live Belarus!», used foul language against OMON officers who were doing their duty on Pritytski Street, although in reality he was detained on Bielski Street. He had to say everything as they requested.

When he was handing over his things to two policewomen, a police officer passed by and kicked him with his foot in the chest. **Witness Z.** did not fall after the first kick, and then the officer struck two more blows. As he did not fall again, the officer hit him the fourth time. The fourth blow made him short of breath, **Witness Z.** fell down, began to gasp for breath, and could not inhale. He saw three guys lying in a blood pool which was one meter by three meters. **A little later he saw that three officers carried one of the guys out of the gym. He showed no signs of life and was covered in blood.** When **Witness Z.** was in the cell of the police department, he saw the traces of beating: Andrei S.'s legs and back were completely black, and three other beaten people had purple-colored buttocks and legs. The sixth — Zakhar — had a very large hematoma on his face, his eye drooping. He said that officers had beaten him after seeing he followed «NEXTA» Telegram channel: two officers held him in sitting position on the gym floor so that he would not fall down, and the third officer periodically kicked him in the head with a boot. After another blow, he blacked out.

Police officer **Karina Valuyskaya** and another officer «played baseball.» He threw a cell phone seized from the detainees at her, and she struck it back

with her baton. And that's how she smashed every phone that rang and prevented her from working quietly, as she put it. The witness did not read the administrative protocol, as they immediately warned him that he would be beaten for that.

Witness U. was brought to the police department on August 11 at about 21.00. When the detainees were unloaded, they ran through the «corridor» under the blows of OMON batons. They kneeled for about an hour in the yard of the RUVД. Then they were sent into a garage. There were only bare walls there. They were lined up along two walls in a pose facing the wall with their heads down. It was forbidden to talk to anyone or to look up. The ties were tightened quite strongly, for some people it really hurt. Many were brought covered in blood, with broken legs. People asked for medical help, and the officers rudely replied that no one would come to help them. But when they saw a person had fallen and could not get up, they promised to call for an ambulance. The witness notes that after the departure of the OMON officers, the police department officers were more loyal: they let him drink water, and allowed him to take his cigarettes from his personal belongings. From time to time, OMON officers brought new detainees. With their arrival, conditions changed drastically in comparison to what they had been with the police officers: no talking, no toilet, no water. Many had swollen hands from cable ties. A remarkable case: a person asked to loosen the ties a little bit — they came up and tightened them even more. When the OMON officers left, the police allowed the detainees to sit down. When OMON officers were there, everyone was either on their knees or in the above-mentioned position, it was absolutely not possible to sit down. This continued until the afternoon of August 12.



Witness C. was kept in the shooting range of the Frunzenskoye police department. At the door, a detainee was picked up by one of the officers and led to the basement, to the shooting range (there were targets on the walls, and that's what the officers called it). While running through the hallway of the police department, the officers passed the detainees to each other and each officer beat them with batons.

The witness says that when he was brought to the shooting range, there were about 10-12 people lying on the floor. They were placed on the floor about a

meter apart, face to the floor, hands behind their backs. **Three officers walked among them and struck them with batons and kicks on the legs, buttocks, and on the back. Many were screaming in pain, shouting «Stop!». But they didn't stop the beating. Each detainee received at least 20 blows.**

According to **Witness C**, when officers stopped beating them, they handcuffed the detainees and left them lie in the shooting range for about three hours.

During this time, the witness was taken out into the corridor for interrogations twice. The RUVD officers was interested in whether there were Russians or Ukrainians among the detainees. **Witness C**. said he was Russian. They lifted him up, dragged him into the corridor, and began to beat him with batons and fists in the stomach, ribs, and solar plexus. One officer held him, and another stroke the blows. So he received about five blows. The officers were interested in the reason for his arrival in Belarus and who was coordinating the riots.

The second time he was interrogated and tortured after his phone was examined. On the way to the hallway he was severely beaten, and his right leg was especially injured.

In the hallway, two officers placed a mop behind his back under his shoulder blades, his hands cuffed. So he was hanging on the mop. As his legs were badly injured, he could not stand. Two or three officers beat him with batons and kicked him. All this time another officer stood with his phone and shouted: «Come on tell me, show me all the numbers, how do you explain it?!». When it became very painful, the victim said: «Stop, I'll explain everything.» He immediately started shouting: «Give us the numbers, otherwise we will kill [you] now.»

After the shooting range, they were taken to the gym, where there were about 100 detainees. All of them were beaten, their faces and hands were covered in blood and bruises. The gym floor was covered in blood, people were facing the wall, some on their knees, resting their heads on the floor, some on their feet. The witness heard the screams, and blows with a baton. The officers approached the people and periodically struck them with batons, mostly on the legs and buttocks. The beaters were wearing masks (**Witness C, Witness K., Witness H.**).

There were three tables like school desks opposite the people, and female police officers in medical masks were sitting behind them. They made

inventory of personal belongings and drew up protocols. The detainees were called up one by one. The attitude of the officers was rude and insulting.

After that, everyone was made sit against the wall again, and they sat like that until 11am. They got to the gym at 3 am. Thus, the beaten detainees spent the whole night without sleep, in handcuffs.

There were not enough handcuffs for everyone, and many detainees had their hands tightened with cable ties. Often the handcuffs were tightened very tightly, turning the hands blue.

The officers filled a 1.5-liter bottle with water from the toilet tap, brought it to a detainee's mouth and let him make a couple of sips.

24:00

There were over 100 people lying on the gym floor. **Witness F.** had his cable ties removed and handcuffs put on. He had a hard time walking as his battered left leg hurt badly. Officers would come closer from time to time, some of them throwing punches. The detainees were on their knees, facing the floor, hands behind their backs. He was punched, lifted back to his feet and led to the locker room. On camera, they asked about his personal data, and how much he got paid for participation in the protests. He received several punches in the stomach. They brought him back to the gym, where later they made a list of his belongings.

He was picked up by a male officer in a red T-shirt and balaclava. Having brought him to the table, he struck a fist into the solar plexus, driving Witness F. to the floor. They didn't let him read the list, but struck another punch in the face. Later, when he was already lying on the floor, several officers would come up to hit him. One of them jumped on his right leg several times. At some point, he began to faint. He couldn't walk anymore, his head ached from the blows. An officer was giving him ammonia. Then they all sat down, leaning against the wall was not allowed. In the morning an ambulance was called, but no doctor was brought to him. Protocols were drawn up against him and the others. He had to sign it without reading.

Not all items were included in the inventory of seized property: 140-160 BYN were missing from the wallet; some credit cards had been broken apart. The phone was smashed against the table (**Witness F.**).

August 12, 2020

00:00 ñ 04:00

People arrested and brought to Frunzenskoye RUVD during the night continued to be placed in the gym. By midnight there were about 100 people there. The detainees say that they were beaten by both police and OMON officers: they put them on the floor and beat them with batons so hard that the batons broke. After the beating, they were put on the floor in handcuffs, periodically they were lifted up to stand along the wall. The officers constantly demanded passwords and to clarify the contents on their phones.

All the men were beaten and lying face down on the floor, the women were kneeling face down. The abuse continued the entire night and into the morning.

Women were rarely beaten, but they say that they were very scared because they saw men being beaten constantly right before their eyes. A detained girl was approached by a man wearing a blue and white sports uniform, heavy sneakers or boots. He was big and tall, about 50 years old. He hit the girl on the forehead with the heel of his boot and walked away without saying anything. A few hours later, the handcuffs were removed from the girls. She managed to have a glance at her protocol and saw that she was allegedly arrested at Kamennaya Horka at 1.50 (an hour later than her actual arrest) and that she shouted slogans: «Freedom to Statkevich», «Freedom to Severinets». She signed that protocol. Men were beaten with batons by people without uniforms, in sportswear or jeans and a T-shirt. They had masks or balaclavas on their faces (**Witness E.**).

About 2 a.m., a man was brought in, who claimed to have a disability. A swarthy-faced officer beat him to the point where he was taken away by an ambulance.

At about 2:30 a.m., one of the detainees was taken out of the police department building, as he felt unwell. However, the abuse did not stop outside. They took him to a paddy wagon and continued to beat him on the buttocks with a baton. After that, an officer in a balaclava took out a piece of paper, crumpled it up and ordered him to eat it, then he forced him to open his mouth and shoved the piece of paper in it. Between 2 and 3 am, the detainee was taken to the RUVD's shooting range. They put him face down, there were about 15 people there at that moment. There were officers in balaclavas and blue

uniforms. There was a girl in the shooting range, she was not handcuffed and was allowed to sit, and sometimes she could give them water to drink.

Outside, officers drove around the courtyard of the police department in a BMW jeep that belonged to the detainees (**Witness K., Witness Sh., Witness L., Witness Ya., Witness Ye., Witness E.**).

By **2 a.m.**, there were already about 200 detainees in the gym, including 10-15 girls. Everyone was lying along the walls, close to each other, face down, in handcuffs or ties. **The gym was covered in blood, there were also traces of blood on the way to the gym. The room, despite the open windows, smelled bad of sweat, urine, and blood.**

The police officer showed the female detainee a guy who had dirty pants and said: «You see, he has shit himself. And it's gonna be the same with you.» The OMON officers shouted: «We got the doctors!». (Later **Witness PP.** found out that they received bonuses for catching journalists or healthcare workers. From August 9 to 12 they had a «competition» to see which RUVD would detain the most protesters of these professions).

People were beaten in all the rooms of the police department. There were 6 or 7 people lying on the floor in one of the rooms, and 2-3 officers were beating them with batons, and kicking them all over their bodies. One guy was picked up from the floor and punched in the face. All these actions were filmed on camera. The girls were not beaten with batons, mostly with hands, and there was a lot of psychological pressure: they were threatened, intimidated, and insulted. Medical care was rudely denied.

The detainee and her friend E. were marked with a red and black cross. This meant more attention would have to be paid to them — they were hit harder. They found a walkie-talkie in the guy's backpack. For this he was beaten very badly: with a knee to the chest, to the stomach, the guy fell down and continued to be beaten with feet and batons.

Witness RR. saw a guy who had his jeans and underpants cut open from behind, beaten relentlessly on his buttocks and legs. He later said that he was beaten when he was arrested, and then constantly punched because he had a white-red-white flag as a screensaver on his phone. **Witness NN** also mentions this in his statement.

A girl was forced to sign papers without reading them, under threat of beating.

By the middle of the night, there were a lot of people, they were lying right next to each other. The beatings and insults did not stop: during the examination of phones, and during the signing of protocols. OMON officers struck people with batons. The detainees were filmed on camera when asked for their personal data (**Witness NN**).

04:00 ñ 08:00

At 4 a.m., there were 200 people in the gym. Officers were sitting at the four tables that stood in the middle. Officers in black uniform, wearing balaclavas and military boots, were constantly present in the gym (**Witness EN**).

Some of the detainees started signing protocols. Those who did not want to sign without reading them were beaten. Many detainees asked to call a doctor, but no one paid attention to them. Officer **Karina Valuyskaya** remained zealous. She behaved very aggressively towards the detainees: she smashed the ringing phones, made them do push-ups and squats, insulted them, and hit the girls in the face (**Witness L., Witness E., Witness RL**).

08:00 ñ 12:00

The detainees spent the night in the RUVD cell; there was no access to water or a toilet. At 8 a.m., they were woken up by a RUVD police officer, who allowed them to go to the toilet opposite the camera and drink water there.

Toward lunchtime, all those who remained in the cells (about 80 people) were brought to the gym and lined up facing the wall. Then they were divided into rows of 5 people and every 5 were taken outside. They had to run in a row, bent at 90 degrees, head down, one after another (**Witness NN**).

At about noon, everyone who had been documented in the gym was lined up and taken outside by running through the living corridor under beatings, placed in police vehicles and driven away (**Witness EN**).

16:00 ñ 20:00

The detainees were placed in a shooting **range** and put on their knees. Those who refused to give the password to the phone were beaten with feet and batons. One guy was beaten for about an hour, with terrible insults, and about 8-10 people took turns beating him (**Witness DD., Witness DE., Witness DV., Witness DA., Witness J**).

20:00 ñ 24:00

A detainee was brought to the Frunzenskoye RUVD at about 20:30. For three hours, he was tortured in a room that the RUVD police officers called a "torture room». They laid the detainee on the floor and began questioning him about the contents of his phone. During the answers, they struck him on the legs, back and buttocks with a baton and feet. They wanted to know who coordinated the protests and who paid for participation in them. In the presence of the detainee, they discussed how they would bury him in the ground (**Witness O.**).

The detainees were transferred from the shooting range to the **gym**. At that time there were about 50 people there. Officers continued to beat the men. A detainee says that her friend was beaten to such an extent that the police officers had to call an ambulance for him.

Some girls were interrogated with threats of using an awl, they were requested to name their accomplices, and were hit in the face during the interrogation (**Witness DD.**).

The detainees who were brought to the RUVD in the evening were also met by a «live corridor» of officers beating them as they entered the building. People were number-coded right on their backs, and their pant leg was cut open for the pace of their arrest to be written there. All the newly-arrived men were severely beaten with batons on the back and buttocks. People screamed, asked not to beat them, and were in shock. The floor smelled of feces and urine. «The security officers were especially brutal with the guy who did not scream during the beating. «You're a rock,» — and they beat him so bad, but he never screamed» (**Witness BB.**).

They were in the police department until the **late evening of August 12**. When they were forced to run to the paddy wagon, there was again a line of police and OMON officers, who beat them with batons (**Witness P.**).

August 13, 2020

00:00 ñ 04:00

At about 2 a.m., the detainees were led outside RUVD to be transported to Akrestsina. Outside, people were beaten again, before getting in the paddy wagon (**Witness DD., Witness FF.**).

CONSEQUENCES OF TORTURE

It is difficult to fully identify where specific injuries were sustained as detainees were beaten at all stages of the process (See **The sixth interim report of the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture: a coordinated policy of torture**¹) — arrest, transportation, RUVD and other places of detention. Medical care was not provided, except in rare, often critical cases.

On the night of August 14, people started to be released in mass numbers. In most cases, the victims sought medical assistance in public clinics, and some private centers also provided free services. At the same time, it became more difficult to undergo a medico-legal examination: the authorities canceled paid examinations. At that time, a medico-legal examination was only possible upon referral from the investigative committee, where most victims did not want to apply as they were afraid of reprisals for participation in the protests. The doctors, on the other hand, described the victims' injuries in as much detail as they could. During the same period, a group of medico-legal experts created a guide for physicians on how to properly describe injuries not to lose any information.

The main diagnoses made in those days were multiple abrasions, contusions, bruises and hematomas in the area of the back, buttocks and legs. (**Witness I., Witness F., Witness O., Witness RL., Witness EN.**). Most of them were

¹ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/14z5uutRO7t09lKpg85Otol3aoXJixNvT/view>

assessed as mild to moderate injuries, although recovery could take from several days to several weeks, but they caused no serious complications.

Many people point out knee injuries due to long kneeling (**Witness I., Witness T., Witness JK.**). Some of the respondents developed complications (**Witness F., Witness B., Witness N.**). Rib, back, and hand injuries were frequent, as were head injuries and complaints of kidney and chest pain. Some injuries had long-term effects and required prolonged recovery — up to several months, such as loss of sensation in the limbs, partial loss of hearing, heart problems, and vertebral fractures (**Witness I., Witness EN., Witness B., Witness TB., Witness F.**).

Some victims considered their injuries insignificant, so they did not seek help (**Witness G., Witness DD., Witness L., Witness FF.**). Also, some of the victims did not want to go to the doctors due to fear of further reprisals (**Witness JK.**).

Many survivors describe their emotional state after the incident as stable, but also add that at first, they were in shock, depressed, afraid of people in uniform and vehicles similar to those used by security forces during the arrest (**Witness G., Witness Z., Witness DD.**). Some spoke of being scared to be in the center of the city and the places where they had been arrested. «There was some kind of a small traffic jam on Pushkinskaya, that's where I locked myself in the car for the first time» (**Witness AM., Witness I.**). The victims who sought psychological help talked about such diagnoses as depression, neurasthenia, and post-traumatic syndrome. «The first days after being released we screamed in our sleep» (**Witness RR.**).

Some interviewees said that they considered leaving the country because they feared for their and their family's safety. Some of the victims were already outside the country at the time of the interview.

Sexual violence

There have also been cases of sexual violence. Women reported that they were exposed to various hints and insults («prostitute», etc.) and degrading treatment with a sexual connotation. They noted that «the attitude towards us was unacceptable and disrespectful precisely because we were women» (**Witness DD., Witness E., Witness T.**). The girls were harassed by police officers: «He first embraced me, then roughly touched my neck», «he started stroking my lips, face, hair and pressed me against himself» (**Witness D.D., Witness E.**). The women considered this behavior on the part of the officers as a real threat. Threats of sexual violence — «we will fuck you with batons» — were

also repeatedly used against men, usually followed by a series of beatings. (**Witness FF., Witness JW.**) For greater intimidation, officers could strip both women and men naked. (**Witness O., Witness E., Witness JW.**)

OFFICIALS OF THE FRUNZENSKOYE RUVD OF MINSK, ALLEGEDLY INVOLVED IN THE COMMISSION OF CRIMES

The scale of violence and torture on August 9-13, 2020 and afterwards was unprecedented in the history of Belarus. It has been established and reflected in various studies (see. **The Fourth Interim Report of the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus: Conditions in places of detention from August 2020 to May 2020**¹, that such actions were authorized and approved by top officials, including the person holding the office of President. To date², not a single member of the security agencies has been prosecuted for mass torture.

The acts of mass violence and torture perpetrated against detainees (whose detentions were not justified) at the Frunzensky District Department of Internal Affairs in Minsk from August 9 to 13, 2020, were unprecedented. It is important to note that the violence was unprovoked and was applied to immobilized individuals, typically lying or sitting on the floor, with their hands in handcuffs or cable ties. Similar acts were committed in all police departments of Minsk. However, this RUVD surpassed all others in brutality and sophistication.

As a rule, detention and transportation of citizens to Frunzenskoye RUVD was carried out by OMON officers dressed in black uniforms. In some cases, interviewees described persons in civilian clothes wearing balaclavas, or olive green uniforms. They were involved in beating detainees when

¹ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BdRF2t5umJI7JTD9mT7RaxPmeJdMJpbi/view>
² As of the date of the inquiry. 17.05.2022.

discharging them from paddy wagons (forcing detainees to run through the «live corridor» and striking them with truncheons) and during their rather short presence in the police department itself, when they also beat detainees and denied medical assistance to them. The interviewees do not mention any specific characteristics of these individuals, as almost all OMON officers were wearing balaclavas. The majority of the time it was the police officers of Frunzenskoye RUVD who were in charge both in the gym and other premises of the police department. Most of them wore masks and plain clothes, making it difficult to identify them. Detainees most often gave only a brief description of their clothing and some distinctive personality traits. The following are explanations in the form and extent to which people detained on August 9 - 13, 2020 were able to describe the perpetrators of violence.

With regard to this inquiry, we consider it necessary to point out the highest **officials responsible for the breach of law in the premises of the Frunzenskoye District Police Department of Minsk and the failure to bring the perpetrators to justice.**

1. The person holding the post of President, **Alexander G. Lukashenka**
2. Former Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus **Yuri Kh. Karaev**
3. Former Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus **Alexander P. Barsukou**
4. Former Head of the Main Department of Internal Affairs of the Minsk City Executive Committee **Ivan U. Kubrakou** (currently Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus)
5. Commander of the OMON GUVD of the Minsk City Executive Committee **Dzmitry U. Balaba**
6. Former Prosecutor General of the Republic of Belarus **Alexander U. Koniuk**
7. Prosecutor General of the Republic of Belarus **Andrei I. Shved**
8. Prosecutor of the city of Minsk **Aleh U. Laurukhin**
9. Head of the Frunzenskoye RUVD of Minsk **Alexander U. Palulekh**

It has been unequivocally established, and indeed it has not been officially denied, that they were the ones who gave, enforced and passed on the orders for the use of ill-treatment and violence to their subordinates.

Persons allegedly directly involved in ill-treatment and torture, identified by witnesses detained in the Frunzenskoye RUVD on August 9-13, 2020³.

From the statements of individuals interviewed by the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus, we can highlight the following officials and their involvement in the torture of detainees on the territory and in the premises of the Frunzenskoye RUVD of Minsk on August 9-13, 2020.

³ Photos and names of the security officers were obtained through the Black Book of Belarus <https://telegra.ph/Frunzenskoe-RUVD-09-23>



FULL NAME

Palulekh
Alexander U

born on 25.06.1979

position, rank

Head of the Frunzenskoye RUVD of Minsk, Police
Colonel.

Involvement in torture



As the head of the agency, he is responsible for everything happening on its territory. He gave orders to beat the detainees. He did not take any action to prevent torture. He directly participated in the torture of detainees.

«This man was in the police department on the night of 10-11 August. He beat detainees, and his actions towards me directly consisted in the fact that some officers took me from the gym to a separate room, I think it's something like a locker room, where Alexander Palulekh came in and beat me with a rubber truncheon, for no reason at all, threatening and insulting me. It was such an act of intimidation. He also beat up the people who I had been arrested with.»



FULL NAME

Dzenisenya
Alexander M.,

born on 13.02.1984

position, rank

Deputy head of the Division for Law Enforcement and Prevention of Frunzenskoye RUVD of Minsk, Police Major.

Involvement in torture



He was present in the gym of the police department, where torture was committed in his presence, with his tacit consent.

N° 003



FULL NAME

Zachvitsevich
Alexander A.

born on 01.01.1977

position, rank

Deputy Head of the Frunzenskoye RUVD of Minsk, Police Colonel.

Involvement in torture



He was present in the premises of the police department, where torture was committed in his presence, with his tacit consent.



FULL NAME

**Auseyenko
Maksim S.**

born on 16.01.1990

position, rank

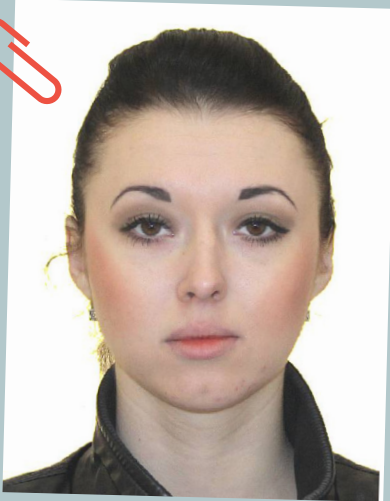
Head of the Division for Law Enforcement and Prevention of Frunzenskoye RUVD of Minsk, Senior Police Lieutenant.

Involvement in torture



He exerted pressure on the victim, demanding to sign a protocol of detention.

«This individual threatened me, raised his voice, said that if I were a man I would be without teeth by now, put all sorts of psychological pressure on me to get the protocol signed».



FULL NAME

**Valuyskaya,
Karina E.**

born on 03.11.1993

position, rank

Officer of the patrol and checkpoint service unit of the Public Security Police of the Frunzenskoye RUVD of Minsk.

Involvement in torture



She has been identified by a large number of victims. She behaved very aggressively, and committed mass torture and other illegal actions. She beat detainees, including girls, threatened, insulted, and put all kinds of pressure on people.

«One guy was put on a pedestal, had a helmet put on, and police officer Karina Valuyskaya started beating him on the head with a steel bat. The helmet was plastic, and the bat was steel. He falls, they pick him up by the collar, put him back up, and start beating him again.»

«She stuck chicken eggs in my jeans and sweatshirt pockets and hit me in the same areas, the eggs broke; she slapped me a couple times, insulted me, and exerted psychological pressure.»

«There were instances, while we were in a kneeling position, hands behind our backs, someone's phones were ringing, and alarm clocks rang in the morning. Many phones, when they're off, or dead, still turn on when the alarm clock goes off. And right in front of my eyes, two cell phones just flew off and broke to pieces, out of Karina's hands. She just walks over, takes the detainee's cell phone, either smashes it right here on the floor or throws it far away and it crashes there. She would come back for it, for this phone and hit it with a baton; she did this to several phones. I remember her smash at least 5 devices. ... I've heard stories that she hit guys on the genitals, maybe she took them somewhere and hit them on the genitals.»

"... she took people into a room, like a shower, everything was tiled, and hinted that she would carry out some procedures with water. There was such a dialogue about pouring water, or something. She was definitely there because she was the only woman on that day, August 11, who beat people up, and it was clear from her voice that it was her.»

"...She came in the morning. She beat both those who were lying on the floor, and new people who were brought in at dawn, or in the morning... She beat them to force them sign the protocol. Right near the wall, they weren't even taken anywhere else. I saw her when she was lifting people up and talking to them."



FULL NAME

Khvainitski
Andrei A.

born on 27.08.1999

position, rank

District police inspector of Division for Law Enforcement and Prevention of Public Security Police at the Frunzenskoye RUVD, Police Lieutenant.

Involvement in torture



He was present in the gym and eyewitnessed all the tortures. He did not take any action to prevent torture by other officers.

"He helped me at some point. He gave me ammonia when I fainted and brought me water. And, I think, he took me to the toilet. The only person who didn't do anything. At least to me... and that night I didn't see him doing anything to anyone."



FULL NAME

**Dziashko
Siarhei I.**

born on 27.07.1994

position, rank

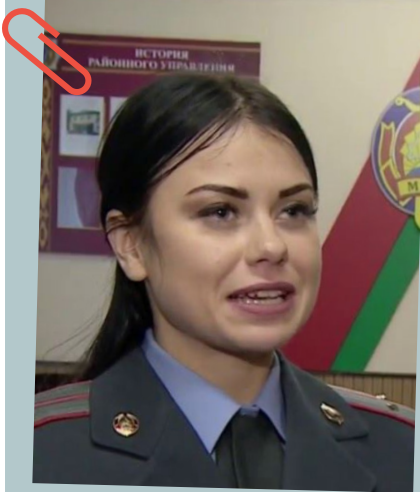
District police inspector of Division for Law Enforcement and Prevention of Public Security Police at the Frunzenskoye RUVD, Senior Police Lieutenant.

Involvement in torture



He made an inventory of the detainees' belongings on the morning of August 11. He beat detainees, created conditions for the cruel detention of people (failure to provide medical care, failure to provide water, refusal to allow them to use the toilet).

"I saw him directly in front of me without a mask. He has a rather memorable appearance, thick eyebrows, a lot of moles, ears of a specific shape. At about 8 a.m. this man put a balaclava on his head and lined up everyone in the gym along the walls in an extremely uncomfortable position, namely, on their knees, with their hands behind their backs, some in handcuffs, some with their hands tied with clamps, some uncuffed, but nevertheless, their hands had to be kept behind their backs, on their knees, with their heads on the floor and against the wall. This position is extremely uncomfortable. He would beat those who refused to take it or were too slow. He struck these people with a truncheon; there were several such episodes, I heard it all — the typical sounds of blows, immediately afterwards the screams or groans of people, some of these scenes I observed personally. One of the detainees could not hold this position, and was repeatedly beaten for that. Siarhei Dziashko kept hitting this detainee for absolutely no reason. He also denied people medical care, although they asked him for it, and beat people for asking to use the toilet and for some water to drink.»



FULL NAME

Zhyliankova
Liliana G.

born on 11.04.1996

position, rank

Chief Inspector of the Information and Public Relations Group. Official representative of the Partizanski RUVD of Minsk.

Involvement in torture



She was in the premises of the Frunzenskoye RUVD, witnessed and encouraged the torture of detainees. She failed to take any action to prevent torture by other officers.

"... she was walking around with a phone, laughing loudly and filming everything that was happening. I understand that some pieces of the video on tortures were definitely shot with her phone... the phone she was using to film us."



FULL NAME

Navitski
Viktar B.

born on 28.12.1973

position, rank

Senior inspector; Division for Law Enforcement and Prevention of Public Security Police at the Frunzenskoye RUVD, Police Major.

Involvement in torture



He drew up protocols of detention. He was present in the gym and eyewitnessed all the tortures. He did not take any action to prevent torture by other officers.

"He was sitting at the table at the moment when they called me to the table and gave me some papers to sign without reading them. I definitely recognize him."



FULL NAME

Birchanka
Alexander M.

born on 09.10.1976

position, rank

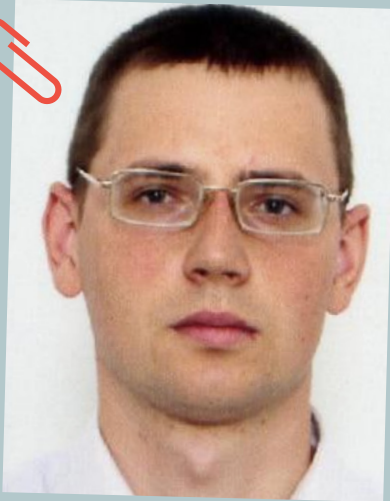
Deputy Head of the Crime Detection Division of the Criminal Police of the Frunzenskoye RUVD of Internal Affairs of Minsk, Police Lieutenant Colonel.

Involvement in torture



He drew up protocols of detention. He was present in the gym and eyewitnessed all the tortures. He did not take any action to prevent torture by other officers.

«The next person I saw was probably Birchanka, before I was called up to the desk and while we were all lying face down on the floor, he lifted me up and looked through my phone for the third time.»



FULL NAME

**Mikhailousky
Yauheni V.**

born on 30.08.1987

position, rank

District police inspector of Division for Law Enforcement and Prevention at the Frunzenskoye RUVD, Police Captain.

Involvement in torture



He drew up protocols of detention. He was present in the gym and eye-witnessed the tortures. He did not take any action to prevent torture by other officers.

“He just sat at the table and drew up the protocols on all people. I don't remember if he did my papers. I think, he did not. Let's say that he did not actively do anything, but honestly followed the orders and drew up the protocols».

QUALIFICATION OF ACTIONS OF FRUNZENSKOYE RUVD OFFICERS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The mass and systematic violent actions of the authorities against detainees listed above constitute crimes under both domestic and international law.

They are fully captured by the corpus delicti of **article 128 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus** (crimes against the security of humanity), according to which torture or acts of cruelty committed in connection with the political beliefs of the civilian population are punishable by imprisonment for a term of seven to twenty-five years, or life imprisonment, or the death penalty.

In terms of international criminal law, the acts of violence described above also fall entirely within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and, pursuant to article 7, 1 (f) (k) of the Rome Statute, **amount to torture and other inhuman acts of a similar nature, intentionally inflicting great suffering or serious bodily harm or serious damage to mental or physical health.**

As for officials who were present when torture and acts of cruelty were committed by others and failed to take measures to stop the commission of such crimes, their actions may fall under article 425, paragraph 2, of the Criminal Code («Inaction of an official»), as deliberate failure by an official, contrary to the interests of the service, to perform actions that he or she

should and could have performed by virtue of the duties entrusted to them, involving connivance at the crime that entailed grave consequences.

The statutory penalty for such connivance is imprisonment for a term of two to seven years.

However, criminal accountability for persons guilty of committing crimes against humanity is virtually impossible under the current political regime in Belarus, as the perpetrators are highly unlikely to prosecute themselves.

It is also nearly impossible to bring the perpetrators to the International Criminal Court.

It is well known that the Republic of Belarus is not a party to the Rome Statute, hence, only the UN Security Council can apply to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to initiate proceedings on the events of 2020 in Belarus.

However, in this particular case, it is unlikely that Russia, with its veto power in the UN Security Council, would agree to that.

From a practical point of view, the most promising in this regard is the use of the **universal jurisdiction mechanism**.

UJ mechanism allows citizens of the Republic of Belarus to be held criminally liable for the crimes that fall under Article 128 of the Criminal Code of Belarus not only on the territory of Belarus, but also in any other country that is a party to international conventions on international crimes.

Lithuania has already initiated criminal proceedings under universal jurisdiction, and preparatory work is under way in Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic.

