



STATEMENT: IAPB WELCOMES LITHUANIA'S REFERRAL OF CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY BY BELARUSIAN OFFICIALS TO ICC

(1 October 2024)

The International Accountability Platform for Belarus (IAPB) welcomes the referral of the situation in Belarus to the International Criminal Court (ICC) by the Government of Lithuania on 30 September 2024.

“The referral marks a significant first step towards investigating and prosecuting international crimes committed by the government of Belarus since May 2020”, says Andrea Huber, Head of the IAPB. “But we must also acknowledge that this referral, if accepted, would cover only some of the crimes committed in Belarus.”

With its referral, the Lithuanian government requests the ICC to examine whether it has jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute crimes against humanity, including deportation, persecution, and other inhumane acts, committed by Belarusian senior officials since 1 May 2020.

According to Article 14 of the Rome Statute, as an ICC member state Lithuania can submit the referral because part of these crimes occurred on Lithuanian territory, bringing them within the Court's jurisdiction. This builds on a previous ICC decision to accept jurisdiction over a non-ICC member state in the context of deportation (the Myanmar/Bangladesh situation).

According to the Lithuanian government in its statement of 30 September, “the [Belarusian] regime has forcibly displaced hundreds of thousands of lawful residents of Belarus to the territories of neighbouring Lithuania, and other States Parties (...), without grounds permitted under international [law](#).”

“The IAPB has supported the efforts of criminal justice authorities to address the international crimes committed in Belarus. We hope that the ICC will assume jurisdiction and open an investigation, and we look forward to providing all available evidence to the ICC”, says Viktoria Fedorova, representative of the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus, IAPB's co-lead.

“Torture, gender-based violence, unlawful detention and other crimes must not go unpunished. Hence, we strongly encourage national prosecution authorities to continue investigating and prosecuting international crimes committed in Belarus”, says Andrea Huber.

Pavel Sapelko from Viasna, another IAPB co-lead, also stresses the need for additional steps.

“In order to enable accountability of crimes committed against Belarusians, Viasna and International Committee have interviewed over 2,500 victims and witnesses about events between 2020 and 2024”, Pavel Sapelko says and continues:

“These witness statements, alongside open-source information, has been collected to a criminal law standard and can be made available to prosecution authorities willing to help us counter the impunity of Belarusian perpetrators for grave human rights violations and international crimes.”

About the IAPB:

The International Accountability Platform for Belarus (IAPB), created in March 2021, is a consortium of Belarusian and international NGOs that collects, consolidates, verifies, and preserves evidence of gross human rights violations allegedly committed by Belarusian authorities and others in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and its aftermath.

The IAPB supports investigations of national prosecutors and international accountability bodies by providing access to the collected evidence and analytical products.

Since its establishment, the IAPB has received eight requests for assistance from five different states, four requests for information from the UN Examination of the human rights situation in Belarus of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), one from the OSCE Moscow Mechanism Rapporteur, as well as several requests from civil society organisations and lawyers working towards the investigation of crimes committed in Belarus.