



BELARUS: PRISONER RELEASES WELCOME, BUT REPRESSION CONTINUES AND ACCOUNTABILITY REMAINS URGENT

19 December 2025 —The International Accountability Platform for Belarus (IAPB) welcomes the release from prison of 123 political prisoners by the Belarusian authorities on 13 December. Those released include members of the IAPB’s co-lead organisation Human Rights Centre Viasna, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Ales Bialiatski and lawyer Uladzimir Labkovich, and prominent opposition leader Maria Kalesnikava.

These long-awaited releases bring relief to those freed and their families, ending prolonged periods of arbitrary detention and exposure to harsh prison conditions, and allowing many individuals to reunite with their loved ones after years of separation. However, as noted by [UN experts](#), those released were effectively subjected to forced exile, with some placed at the risk of statelessness given the confiscation of their identity documents.

More than 1,100 political prisoners remain behind bars, and repression against civil society and political opposition persists, in violation of Belarus’ international human rights obligations.

Several prominent human rights defenders were excluded from the group released, notably Valiantsin Stefanovic, a senior member of the Human Rights Centre Viasna, who has spent more than four years in prison. Marfa Rabkova, detained since September 2020, and Nasta Loika, detained since September 2022, also remain in prison, alongside journalists, lawyers, and activists convicted on the basis of politically motivated charges and imprisoned following unfair trials.

Various human rights institutions, including the UN Committee Against Torture, have documented systematic and widespread ill-treatment and torture in detention, including severe beatings, serious medical neglect, and prolonged solitary confinement, with stricter regimes imposed on those labelled political prisoners.

It is also essential not to lose sight of the fact that repression in Belarus continues unabated, and that justice will only be achieved when all arbitrarily detained individuals are free, the perpetrators of human rights violations have been held accountable, and victims have been provided access to redress.

As summarised in the [IAPB’s latest Progress Report](#), covering the period from April to September 2025, the human rights situation in Belarus remains critically repressive, characterised by systemic political persecution, arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and expanding transnational repression. Authorities continue to prosecute those perceived to be disloyal to the regime, weaponise extremism and terrorism legislation to silence dissent, and escalate efforts to target Belarusians abroad, including with trials in absentia.

UN experts [have concluded](#) that there are reasonable grounds to believe that President Lukashenko and other senior officials are responsible for crimes against humanity of political persecution and imprisonment as part of an organised repressive apparatus.

Impunity for human rights violations remains absolute at the national level, reinforcing the urgency of national and international accountability mechanisms, including extra-territorial and universal jurisdiction investigations, and the importance of evidence preservation and analysis for future prosecutions.

The IAPB urges the international community to maintain pressure, closely monitor developments in Belarus, and pursue all available accountability avenues to address ongoing and past human rights violations. Our report '[Paths to accountability for Belarus](#)' provides an in-depth mapping of accountability mechanisms capable of addressing serious human rights violations and breaches of international criminal law in Belarus.

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