



BELARUS PLATFORM URGES OSCE STATES TO ADOPT DOMESTIC MEASURES TO ACTIVELY SUPPORT ACCOUNTABILITY FOR BELARUS CRIMES

The IAPB urged members of the OSCE Human Dimension Committee to adopt stronger domestic measures to hold alleged perpetrators of crimes under international law accountable as it met in Vienna today. Despite continued deterioration of the human rights situation in Belarus and its role in the Ukraine conflict, few investigations have been commenced and survivors' opportunities for accessing justice continue to narrow.

The OSCE Human Dimension Committee met as the IAPB released its most recent [progress report](#), detailing its most recent efforts to support criminal justice authorities and international human rights bodies.

“The increasing number of complaints by victims from multiple repressive or conflict contexts being filed in European States are not being met with sufficient resources to investigate and prosecute their claims,” said Kate Vigneswaran, Head of the IAPB. “Documenting alleged international crimes committed in Belarus is vital for ensuring future prosecutions, but that goal can only be realised if states dedicate resources to make it happen.”

During the April to September 2023 period, the IAPB made detailed submissions to criminal justice authorities in two additional States, bringing to three the number of European States which have received support from the IAPB for potential investigations into alleged international crimes committed in Belarus. The submissions contained factual and legal analysis of the underlying acts and contextual elements of crimes against humanity in Belarus, as well as the role of state security structures involved in their commission.

The IAPB also supported the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Examination of the human rights situation in Belarus, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Moscow Mechanism Rapporteur, Professor Hervé Ascensio, including by providing access to witnesses, cases in its collection and information on state security structures, sexual and gender-based crimes and accountability needs.

The IAPB's support for the OSCE Moscow Mechanism rapporteur contributed to his [findings](#) that a range of human rights violations had been committed by State actors in Belarus and led to his call on the international community to do more to hold perpetrators accountable, and to continue to support survivors, civil society and others involved in pursuing accountability.

“According to our latest survey, survivors and other witnesses are located in more than 30 countries. The OSCE Moscow Mechanism rapporteur as well as the UN High Commissioner have recommended that states work towards accountability through national proceedings based on accepted principles of extraterritorial and universal jurisdiction,” said Victoria Federova, representative of IAPB co-lead, International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus. “We urge states to show political will, allocate additional resources to investigating authorities, initiate changes in legislation.”

These requests for assistance were met at a time when the human rights situation in Belarus continued to worsen. By today’s count, 1,475 political prisoners remained in prison. Political prisoners Mikalai Klimovich, a Belarusian blogger, and Ales Pushkin, a Belarusian artist, died in custody in unknown circumstances during the reporting period. Well-known opposition politicians, including Maria Kalesnikava, Mikola Statkevich, Siarhei Tsikhanouski and Viktar Babaryka, were held incommunicado for prolonged periods. The KGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs recognised 148 entities as extremist formations, including IAPB co-lead organisation, the Human Rights Center “Viasna”.

“In the face of resistance from the Belarusian authorities, we continue to collect, process, and systematise evidence of alleged crimes against humanity. This is happening amid widespread repression against survivors and pressure on us as human rights defenders,” said Pavel Sapelko, Viasna representative on the IAPB Steering Committee. “Our collective efforts to overcome impunity should bear fruit if democratic states demonstrate the political will to investigate and prosecute perpetrators. The range of alleged crimes committed by the regime is widening and this needs an adequate response.”

The IAPB has secured funding to continue its work for another three-year period, from October 2023 until September 2026, during which it will use its established infrastructure and expertise to pursue a proactive approach to pursuing accountability and bolster its survivor-centred approach.

About the IAPB

The IAPB is an innovative civil society platform that collects, preserves and analyses information and evidence of serious human rights violations constituting crimes under international law allegedly committed in Belarus in the context of the August 2020 presidential election and its aftermath, with the aim of supporting accountability bodies and ensuring Belarusians and other survivors have access to remedies and reparations. Since April 2021, the IAPB has collected information and evidence of torture, rape and other acts of sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, extrajudicial killings and other inhumane acts committed by state actors in Belarus, which may constitute crimes against humanity. The IAPB collects information and evidence from victims and witnesses both inside and outside Belarus, providing them with access to information and to referral pathways for mental health and psychosocial support irrespective of their location.

The IAPB is led by **DIGNITY** (Danish Institute Against Torture), the **Human Rights Centre “Viasna”**, the **International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus** and **REDRESS**.

The IAPB’s mandate is supported by the European Union and states including Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the USA. Recognising the importance of the IAPB’s work, the IAPB’s mandate, which started on 24 March 2021, was extended in 2022 until September 2023, and has more recently been extended for a third phase until September 2026.

In recognition of its contribution to the promotion of human rights in Belarus, Viasna was awarded the Clooney Foundation for Justice **Albie Award** in September 2022 and its founder, Ales Bialiatski, the **Nobel Peace Prize** in October 2022. In January 2023, the International Committee was awarded the **“Human Rights Campaign/Initiative of the Year 2022”** award.