

Freedom on the Net 2025 - Belarus



Key Developments, June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025

Internet freedom in Belarus declined further during the coverage period. The government continued to suppress online speech, including by blocking independent media outlets and information sources, and using legislation to criminalize online materials produced by what it deemed to be “extremist” or “terrorist” groups and individuals. The government also arbitrarily arrested remaining media workers, online activists, and others.

- The Operation and Analytical Center under the President of the Republic of Belarus issued an order to internet service providers (ISPs) to restrict access to websites hosted outside of the .by domain from January 25 to January 27. The order effectively blocked most foreign websites during the country’s tightly controlled presidential election, held on January 26.¹ Earlier, on January 10, reports had emerged that YouTube, Twitch, Telegram, TikTok, and Discord were blocked. The state telecommunications agency Beltelecom and the telecommunications company MTS the same day said they were conducting technical work (A3 and B1).²
- In September 2024, Marat Markau, the minister of information, announced that over 14,000 “web resources” were blocked in Belarus, including 5,000 websites that were deemed “extremist.” The list included the websites of independent media outlets and human rights organizations (B1).³
- In the lead-up to the January 2025 elections, several online media outlets deleted content about training sessions for election commissioners (B2).⁴
- January 2025 amendments to the guidelines “On Registration of Domain Names in the National Zone of Belarus” allowed administrators of the national domain to cancel the registration of domains that harm the “national interest of Belarus,” and add them into a new ban list (B3).⁵
- Throughout the coverage period, the Belarusian authorities pursued criminal charges against human rights defenders and journalists in exile. In July 2024, a Minsk court sentenced 20 people who had supported Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya online, including journalists Yury Drakakhrust and Hanna Liubakova, to 10 years in prison in absentia (C3).⁶
- In October 2024, Andrei Parotnikau, a military blogger who was extradited from Moscow, was sentenced to 10 years in prison on a host of charges, including treason and the “promotion of extremist activities” (C3).⁷

- In May 2025, it was reported that Valiantsin Shtermer, who was sentenced to prison in 2023 for comments critical of the Kremlin’s invasion of Ukraine, had died in the Škloŭ penal colony earlier in the year. He had reportedly suffered a stroke prior to being sentenced (C3 and C7).⁸

Political Overview

Belarus is an authoritarian state in which elections are openly rigged and civil liberties are severely restricted. Security forces have violently assaulted and arbitrarily detained journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens who challenge the regime. The judiciary and other institutions lack independence and provide no check on President Alyaksandr Lukashenka’s power.

This report has been abridged for Freedom on the Net 2025 due to [ongoing budget constraints](#). Please consider making a [donation](#) to support future editions of this vital resource.

For additional background information, see last year’s [full report](#).

A Obstacles to Access

A1 0-6 pts

Do infrastructural limitations restrict access to the internet or the speed and quality of internet connections?	5 / 6
---	----------

A2 0-3 pts

Is access to the internet prohibitively expensive or beyond the reach of certain segments of the population for geographical, social, or other reasons?	3 / 3
--	----------

A3 0-6 pts

Does the government exercise technical or legal control over internet infrastructure for the purposes of restricting connectivity?	3 / 6
---	----------

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because the government ordered the blocking of all websites hosted outside of the .by domain during the January 2025 election.⁹

A4 0-6 pts

Are there legal, regulatory, or economic obstacles that restrict the diversity of service providers?	1 / 6
---	----------

A5 0-4 pts

Do national regulatory bodies that oversee service providers and digital technology fail to operate in a free, fair, and independent manner?	0 / 4
---	----------

B Limits on Content

B1 0-6 pts

Does the state block or filter, or compel service providers to block or filter, internet content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards? | 1 / 6

B2 0-4 pts

Do state or nonstate actors employ legal, administrative, or other means to force publishers, content hosts, or digital platforms to delete content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards? | 1 / 4

B3 0-4 pts

Do restrictions on the internet and digital content lack transparency, proportionality to the stated aims, or an independent appeals process? | 0 / 4

B4 0-4 pts

Do online journalists, commentators, and ordinary users practice self-censorship? | 0 / 4

B5 0-4 pts

Are online sources of information controlled or manipulated by the government or other powerful actors to advance a particular political interest? | 1 / 4

B6 0-3 pts

Are there economic or regulatory constraints that negatively affect users' ability to publish content online? | 0 / 3

B7 0-4 pts

Does the online information landscape lack diversity and reliability? | 1 / 4

B8 0-6 pts

Do conditions impede users' ability to mobilize, form communities, and campaign, particularly on political and social issues? | 1 / 6

C Violations of User Rights

C1 0-6 pts

Do the constitution or other laws fail to protect rights such as freedom of expression, access to information, and press freedom, including on the internet, and are they enforced by a judiciary that lacks independence? | 0 / 6

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 to reflect the passage of laws in recent years that further undermined protections for freedom of expression.

C2 0-4 pts

<p>Are there laws that assign criminal penalties or civil liability for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?</p> <p>C3 0-6 pts</p>	<p>0 / 4</p>
<p>Are individuals penalized for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?</p> <p>C4 0-4 pts</p>	<p>0 / 6</p>
<p>Does the government place restrictions on anonymous communication or encryption?</p> <p>C5 0-6 pts</p>	<p>1 / 4</p>
<p>Does state surveillance of internet activities infringe on users' right to privacy?</p> <p>C6 0-6 pts</p>	<p>1 / 6</p>
<p>Does monitoring and collection of user data by service providers and other technology companies infringe on users' right to privacy?</p> <p>C7 0-5 pts</p>	<p>0 / 6</p>
<p>Are individuals subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor in relation to their online activities?</p> <p>C8 0-3 pts</p>	<p>0 / 5</p>
<p>Are websites, governmental and private entities, service providers, or individual users subject to widespread hacking and other forms of cyberattack?</p>	<p>1 / 3</p>

Footnotes

- ¹CSOMeter, “Belarus: Weekend of unfree elections marked by internet and VPN blocking,” January 26, 2025, <https://csometer.info/updates/belarus-weekend-unfree-elections-marked-i...>
- ²“С 1:30 ночи в Беларуси блокируют доступ к YouTube, Twitch, TikTok, Telegram и Discord [Access to YouTube, Twitch, TikTok, Telegram, and Discord has been blocked in Belarus since 1:30 a.m.],” Molotko.help, January 10, 2025, <https://molotko.help/ru-news/s-130-nochi-v-belarusi-perestal-rabotat-vo...>
- ³Belarusian Association of Journalists, “Mass Media in 2025, 2025, <https://baj.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/mm2024-en.pdf>; “Мининформ: в Беларуси ограничен доступ к 5 тыс. экстремистских интернет-ресурсов [Ministry of Information: Access to 5,000 extremist internet resources has been restricted in Belarus],” Belta, September 20, 2024, <https://belta.by/society/view/mininform-v-belarusi-ogranichen-dostup-k-...>
- ⁴The Belarusian Association of Journalists, “E-newsletter: MASS MEDIA IN BELARUS No.1 (79) 2025,” May 8, 2025,” <https://baj.media/en/aglyady-manitoringi/mass-media-in-belarus-2025/>
- ⁵The Belarusian Association of Journalists, “E-newsletter: MASS MEDIA IN BELARUS No.1 (79) 2025,” May 8, 2025,” <https://baj.media/en/aglyady-manitoringi/mass-media-in-belarus-2025/>

- ⁶The Belarusian Association of Journalists, “MASS MEDIA IN BELARUS 2024,” May 8, 2025, <https://baj.media/en/aglyady-manitoringi/mass-media-in-belarus-2024-2/>.
- ⁷Viasna Human Rights Center, “Andrei Parotnikau,” accessed August 2025, <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en/person/andrei-parotnikau>; “Former Belarusian Police Officer-Turned-Blogger On Trial For Treason,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Free Liberty, October 16, 2024, <https://www.rferl.org/a/former-police-officer-blogger-parotnikau-treaso...>
- ⁸“He could barely walk after a stroke, and they threw him into a punishment cell.” Political prisoner Valiantsin Shtermer died,” Viasna, May 27, 2025, <https://spring96.org/en/news/118028>.
- ⁹CSOMeter, “Belarus: Weekend of unfree elections marked by internet and VPN blocking,” January 26, 2025, <https://csometer.info/updates/belarus-weekend-unfree-elections-marked-i...>