

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	176
Land:	Belarus
Kilde:	UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Titel:	Quarterly update on human rights situation
Udgivet:	21. januar 2015
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	16. juni 2015

Belarus - Country of Concern: latest update 31 December 2014

0.1 Latest Update: 31 December 2014

There was no improvement in the human rights situation in Belarus between October and December 2014. Persecution of journalists has increased.

The Belarusian authorities have stepped up harassment of independent media through increased arrests and detentions of journalists. Most arrests have been for non-accreditation or working with foreign organisations. Punishments are either substantial fines or imprisonment of up to 25 days. There have been over 10 such cases since the beginning of October.

A new law announced in December, coming into force on 1 January 2015, will regulate online media as well as tighten restrictions on other forms of mass media. There will be a new requirement for all companies disseminating printed, TV and radio media to register with the Ministry of Information. Online media outlets face warnings for content deemed inappropriate by law or court rulings and could be closed down if they do not adhere to requests to remove such content. Some independent media news websites were blocked in late December following critical reporting of the currency crisis. Of these, some were unblocked shortly after the holiday period but others remained blocked to the end of the year.

The government ordered the deportation of a director of a prominent non-governmental organisation (NGO), supposedly over a traffic violation. The Russian national has lived in Belarus for the past 30 years and is fighting the deportation order. Routine low-level harassment of activists and political opponents continues with short-term detentions for offences such as flying the old red and white Belarusian flag.

A further death sentence was carried out on 22 October, the third to be carried out in 2014. Aleksandr Gurnov's family were not notified of the completion of his execution until afterwards, and received a parcel containing his personal belongings prior to the formal notification letter. They have not been told where Mr Gurnov is buried. One person remains on death row and is appealing for clemency.

The UN Special Rapporteur for Belarus presented his [annual report](#) on Belarus to the UN General Assembly on 28 October. His report highlighted the lack of space for civil society and restrictions on freedom of expression. According to the report, NGOs and the journalism profession are over-regulated, which prevents many organisations from being able to operate in Belarus. Members of some organisations are under threat of arrest for operating without the correct licences.

On 19 December, one political prisoner, Eduard Lobau, was released at the end of his sentence. He was not rehabilitated but put under preventative surveillance for a year. Some political prisoners still remain.