United Nations A/HRC/WG.6/50/BLR/3

General Assembly

Distr.: General
25 August 2025

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review
Fiftieth session
Geneva, 3–14 November 2025

Summary of stakeholders' submissions on Belarus*

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

I. Background

1. The present document, prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21 taking into consideration the periodicity of the universal periodic review and the outcome of the previous review,[1] is a summary of the submissions received from 35 stakeholders[2] for the State under review.

II. Information provided by stakeholders

A. Scope of international obligations[3] and cooperation with human rights mechanisms

2. JS5 recommended that Belarus re-accede to human rights treaties denounced over the last 5 years and ratify the ICPPED, the ICRMW, the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.[4]

3. JS5 and the Human Rights Foundation (HRF) recommended that Belarus ratify the ICCPR-OP 2.[5]

4. Human Rights Watch (HRW) recommended that Belarus ratify the OP-CAT and the Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court.[6]

5. JS7 recommended that Belarus ratify the Istanbul Convention.[7]

6. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) urged Belarus to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as a matter of international urgency.[8]

7. JS3 recommended that Belarus re-engage with the United Nations human rights system.[9] JS7 recommended that Belarus comply with obligations to ensure protection from reprisals for individuals cooperating with international mechanisms.[10]

8. HRW recommended that Belarus issue an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture.[11] The European Center for Not-for-Profit Law Stichting (ECNL) recommended that

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Belarus issue a standing invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.[12]

9. Legal Initiative and JS5 recommended that Belarus engage with the Group of Independent Experts on the Human Rights Situation in Belarus, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus and implement the views of the UN Human Rights Committee on individual complaints submitted before Belarus' withdrawal from the ICCPR Optional Protocol 2, including interim measures related to the death penalty.[13]

10. JS5 recommended that Belarus cooperate with UN treaty bodies and OSCE.[14] JS 5 and Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP) recommended that Belarus fully implement all outstanding recommendations of the ILO Commission of Inquiry, supervisory bodies and Article 33 of the ILO Constitution legal mechanism.[15]

11. JS8 recommended that Belarus strengthen constructive engagement with OHCHR.[16] JS8 and ECNL recommended that Belarus restore the position of a human rights adviser in Belarus.[17]

B. National human rights framework

1. Constitutional and legislative framework

12. The Venice Commission Final Opinion on the Constitutional Reform in Belarus adopted by referendum held on 27 February 2022,[18] noted that given numerous procedural, substantial and structural deficiencies in the constitutional reform, a holistic revision of the whole Constitution appeared to be indispensable, provided that the conditions for free and pluralistic debate and fair expression of the popular will were reinstated. In the Urgent interim opinion on the draft constitutional amendments published on 27 December 2021, the Venice Commission was of the view that these amendments failed to correct the strong unbalance of powers which already existed under the current Constitution and indeed may even aggravate it. The Venice Commission invited the authorities to undertake a constitutional reform which would correct the current unbalance of powers and introduce appropriate checks and balances, including with respect to the procedure of amending the Constitution, in line with international standards.[19]

13. JS6 and ICAN noted that on February 27, 2022, Belarus held a referendum on constitutional amendments that, among other actions, cancelled Belarus's nuclear weapon free status. Human rights defenders deemed the referendum non-transparent and illegitimate. In addition, JS6 noted that the constitutional amendment rescinding Belarus's status as a nuclear free zone to allow for deployment of nuclear weapons in Belarus is a violation of the obligations of Belarus under human rights law as expressed by the Human Rights Committee in General Comment 36. ICAN and JS6 stressed that Belarus should rescind the agreement on nuclear sharing and take immediate steps to remove nuclear weapons from its territory.[20]

14. JS7 noted that, Article 32 of the Constitution of Belarus contains a special clarification, introduced in 2022, that marriage is a union of a man and a woman, even though same-sex civil unions had never been legal in the country. It stated that the inclusion of such a provision in the Constitution appears to align with the consistent course towards increasing State oppression of the LGBTQ+ community. Following the adoption of Resolution No. 24 of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Belarus in 2024, the concept of "pornography" was expanded to include the demonstration of "non-traditional sexual relations and/or sexual behavior'' In turn, the list of "non-traditional sexual relations" includes "sexual relations between people of the same sex''. This allows the use of Article 343 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus against LGBTQ+ community members and activists.[21]

15. JS7 recommended that Belarus: (a) repeal the provisions of Resolution No. 18 of the Ministry of Culture and cease active attempts to ban the dissemination of information concerning LGBTQ+ people; (b) repeal the amendments to the Article 37 of the Law on the Rights of the Child and cease using manipulative references to the interests of children in relation to information concerning gender and sexuality; (c) repeal the amendments to the Article 343 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus to and cease equating

information about homosexual, bisexual relationships and transgender identities with pornography.[22]

2. Institutional infrastructure and policy measures

16. JS5 noted that the establishment of a national human rights institution (NHRI) had not been considered by the authorities, and there had been no public discussions thereon. It stated that existing state institutions were not independent and could not replace an NHRI. JS5 recommended that Belarus establish an independent NHRI in accordance with the Paris Principles.[23]

17. JS5, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Legal Initiative recommended that Belarus establish a national preventive mechanism for independent oversight and torture prevention.[24]

18. ECNL recommended that Belarus adopt the Plan for the implementation of UPR recommendations.[25] JS5 recommended that Belarus adopt and effectively implement comprehensive national human rights plans and programs, ensuring meaningful cooperation with independent CSOs at all stages.[26]

C. Promotion and protection of human rights

1. Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law

Equality and non-discrimination

19. JS5 noted that Belarus lacked comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. While the principle of equality was enshrined in the Constitution and laws, it remained too vague to be effectively applied in discrimination cases. It stated that the anti-discrimination provisions in the Labor Code and the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, had a very limited scope. JS5 recommended that Belarus adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and ensure effective enforcement and redress mechanisms.[27]

20. JS7, JS14, TG House and the University of Notre Dame International Human Rights Clinic stressed that, in Belarus, LGBTQ+ individuals faced significant challenges due to the absence of legal protections against discrimination in employment, housing, and public services.[28] JS7 noted that transgender and queer women faced discrimination in the context of parenting, including pressure from guardianship authorities and threats of loss of parental rights.[29] JS7, JS14 and TG House recommended that Belarus adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, including protection on the basis of SOGI.[30] JS14 and TG House recommended that Belarus improve access to medical services for transgender individuals by ending discrimination and removing bureaucratic obstacles to gender-affirming procedures.[31] JS7 recommended that Belarus create an independent mechanism for considering complaints of discrimination on the basis of SOGI, including with the participation of human rights organizations working with LGBTQ+ people.[32]

Right to life, liberty and security of person, and freedom from torture

21. JS1 noted that, on 21 February 2023, the House of Representatives of Belarus adopted amendments to the Criminal Code, significantly broadening the application of Article 356 "High Treason". JS1 stressed that these legal changes enable the application of extreme punitive measures, including the death penalty, in contexts that fall far short of the "most serious crimes" threshold defined under Article 6 of the ICCPR. It stated that the vague and broad language used in the legislation allowed for arbitrary application to a wide range of individuals, including conscientious objectors, whistleblowers, and those assisting others in avoiding conscription.[33]

22. HRF and JS1 recommended that Belarus abolish the death penalty. JS1 recommended that Belarus abolish it in all circumstances, including for military personnel and individuals accused of desertion or treason, and repeal Article 356 of the Criminal Code.[34]

23. JS5 noted that, between 2020 and 2024, six death sentences were issued. It stated that, in all cases where communications were submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee, the authorities disregarded requests for urgent measures and did not suspend executions.[35]

24. JS5 recommended that Belarus establish a moratorium on the death penalty as a first step toward full abolition and ensure full transparency in death penalty cases, including timely notification to convicts and their families regarding sentences and executions.[36]

25. JS5 stated that at least 4 persons had reportedly died due to the disproportionate use of force by law-enforcement personnel during the post-election protests of 2020. Additionally, 7 political prisoners died in custody between 2020 and 2024.[37]

26. JS5 noted that in 2020 Belarus used unprecedented violence in response to the mass protests, accompanied by arbitrary arrests, torture and other forms of cruel treatment, which continued to this day during arrests, administrative detentions, and in places of confinement. Typical forms of torture included beatings, strangulation, forcing people to remain in a static position for long periods, impacting sensory receptors, use of tasers, sexualized violence, confinement in an overcrowded cell, prolonged solitary confinement in a punishment cell, *incommunicado* detention, and others. The lack of independent monitoring mechanism further intensified these violations.[38]

27. JS5 recommended that Belarus amend the Criminal Code to criminalize all acts of torture in full compliance with the Convention Against Torture and grant independent monitors unrestricted access to all detention facilities.[39]

28. Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Legal Initiative noted that law enforcement officers routinely forced detainees in politically motivated cases to "repent" for their "crimes" on camera. At least seven political prisoners had been held incommunicado since February-April 2023. HRW, JS5 and Legal Initiative recommended that Belarus end the practice of *incommunicado* detention.[40]

Human rights and counter-terrorism

29. JS9 noted that the Government has weaponised vague and overly broad anti-extremist and anti-terrorism legislation to criminalise dissent, silencing opposition voices. PEN Belarus reported in August 2024 that, since 2020, more than 400 individuals had been added to the state's terrorist list, while over 4,000 people had been designated as 'extremists' under the "List of Citizens of the Republic of Belarus, Foreign Citizens, or Stateless Persons Involved in Extremist Activities". By February 2025, this number had risen to 4,900, with 90 new additions recorded in January 2025 alone. JS9 recommended that Belarus cease the use of counterterrorism, counter-extremism, and other laws to suppress dissent, and take meaningful steps to protect freedom of expression, assembly, association, and religion.[41]

Administration of justice, including impunity, and the rule of law

30. JS4 noted that none of the recommendations supported by Belarus during the UPR sessions regarding the justice system had been implemented.[42]

31. JS5 and JS9 noted that the Belarusian authorities had entrenched impunity, allowing those responsible for gross human rights violations to evade accountability in Belarus. The authorities had never publicly condemned torture or warned of criminal liability for such actions. Instead, officials had publicly endorsed law enforcement's actions. Torture was not recognized as a separate crime, and complaints were not promptly or effectively investigated. Courts were not required to initiate an inquiry on torture claims, and victims faced delays in forensic exams and questioning. The Criminal Procedure Code did not include a provision for suspending a criminal case until an allegation of torture by the accused has been fully investigated. Officers accused of torture were not suspended from duty during investigations, and there was no safe mechanism for detainees to file complaints.[43]

32. JS5 recommended ensuring impartial investigations into all deaths in custody and deaths from excessive force, enforced disappearances, *incommunicado* detentions, and holding those responsible accountable.[44] JS5 also recommended that Belarus ensure independent, prompt, effective, and impartial investigations of all torture and ill-treatment allegations.[45]

33. JS3 recommended that Belarus investigate and prosecute all instances of violence and harassment, including those occurring in detention facilities and journalists in exile.[46] JS5 recommended that Belarus end the practice of *incommunicado* detention and guarantee timely access to legal representation, family, and judicial oversight for all detainees.[47]

34. A number of stakeholders noted with concern that the Government control over judiciary and legal profession has created a hostile environment for lawyers, with bar associations used against those defending dissidents, human rights defenders, and independent journalists.[48] JS4 noted that the amendments to the Law on the Bar of May 27, 2021, significantly expanded the Ministry of Justice's control over the legal profession. Among key changes was the power of the Ministry to establish the rules governing professional ethics for lawyers.[49] The International Observatory for Lawyers in Danger (OIAD) noted that lawyers face growing obstacles, including arbitrary arrests, disbarments, unfair trials, and tighter control over the profession. This systematic crackdown on legal defenders threatened their existence and access to justice in Belarus.[50]

35. JS4 recommended that Belarus amend the Law on the Bar to guarantee the independence of the bar associations and cancel the control of the Ministry of Justice over the election and appointment of bar leaders.[51] JS4, JS11 and OIAD recommended that Belarus ensure an independent judicial system enabling lawyers to exercise their profession in appropriate conditions and without interference.[52] OIAD recommended that Belarus build an institution of free legal aid on the terms of compliance with the generally recognized principles of accessibility, full provision of the right to defence, and sufficient financial security from the state budget.[53] JS11 recommended that Belarus ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all lawyers who have been arbitrarily detained or prosecuted for carrying out their legitimate professional activities and guarantee lawyers' fundamental rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association.[54]

Fundamental freedoms

36. ADF International, Christian Vision for Belarus, Forum 18 and the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) noted that a steady increase in religious freedom violations had been observed since the 2020 presidential elections. These included, inter alia, the imposition of arbitrary obstacles on the activities of registered and non-registered religious communities, restrictions on the locations for religious events, barriers preventing religious communities from using or reclaiming their places of worship, including bans on in person worship, state censorship of religious materials. Furthermore, there have been numerous cases of detention of members of clergy in relation to perceived political activities as well as violations of political prisoners' freedom of religion or belief.[55]

37. ADF International and Christian Vision for Belarus recommended that Belarus: (i) review and amend all national legislation relevant to freedom of religion or belief to ensure their full conformity with relevant international human rights law; (ii) enable clergy and missionaries to carry out religious activities in the country without restrictions.[56]

38. Connection e.V. noted that the right to conscientious objection to military service, inherent to the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, was not adequately recognised in Belarus. It recommended to amend legislation to adequately recognize the right to conscientious objection to military service without discrimination as to the nature of the beliefs.[57]

39. Scholars at Risk (SAR) stated that the 2020 presidential elections marked a significant increase in attacks on academic freedom in Belarus. Belarus increasingly targeted academics through arrests, dismissals, and institutional control. Imprisonments and prosecutions of students and scholars were widespread. SAR had reported excessive use of force and arrests of students and scholars for nonviolent expression.[58] The University of Notre Dame International Human Rights Clinic noted that, as of May 17, 2021, at least 466 students had been detained. Many were placed under administrative detention or fined. At least 153 students had been arbitrarily expelled from universities and many have fled to neighbouring countries fearful for their safety.[59]

40. SAR recommended that Belarus: (i) restore and protect academic freedom, including by implementing the Principles for Implementing the Right to Academic Freedom, per the

recommendation of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education in her report on academic freedom; (ii) refrain from further use of criminal sanctions to punish the nonviolent exercise of the right to academic freedom and freedom of expression; (iii) immediately reverse sentences of scholars and students who have been imprisoned because of academic activity or nonviolent political expression, including those charged in connection with protests of the 2020 elections; and pending their release, ensure their due process and humane treatment.[60]

41. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) noted that the legislation related to freedom of the media contain the potential of excessive restrictions of the right to freedom of expression and the freedom of the mass media. RFoM recommended that Belarus: (i) abandon the numerous restrictive measures proposed by the draft laws in respect to the activities of the media, which create preconditions for disproportionate interference with freedom of expression; (ii) revise suspension and termination procedures: administrative measures in respect to the mass media, including those distributed via the internet, should be excluded from the law, the imposition of the relevant restrictions based on a court decision should only be admissible in exceptional cases.[61]

42. JS3 noted that Belarus had failed to implement the UPR recommendations it accepted in 2021 related to press and media freedom, the right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and the protection of journalists. The widespread application of anti-extremist laws, transnational repression of exiled journalists, and targeted persecution of media workers and their families illustrated an alarming disregard for fundamental human rights.[62]

43. JS3 recommended that Belarus take steps to end arbitrary detention of journalists and to guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association.[63]

44. ECNL stressed that since the last review, there had been notable legislative and practical transformations leading to the violation of freedom of association in Belarus. ECNL recommended that Belarus: (i) reinstate the registration status of all Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that were forcibly dissolved between 2021 and 2025, thereby ensuring their ability to operate freely; (ii) amend the Law on Public Associations to remove the ban on the activity of unregistered public associations; (iii) release all members of public associations who have been charged in connection with their legitimate activities to protect human rights and withdraw all related charges.[64]

45. Lawtrend noted that CSOs were significantly restricted in their ability to seek, receive, and utilize resources to achieve their goals, both at the legislative level and in law enforcement practices. Restrictions applied to foreign funding and donations from Belarusian corporate donors, while private donations from individual Belarusian residents were less restricted. Public associations were prohibited from independently engaging in entrepreneurial activities. They were also forbidden from holding bank accounts and storing funds abroad. Access to resources for CSOs had been severely restricted as a result of the mass liquidation campaign against non-profit organizations from 2021 to 2024.[65]

Right to privacy

46. JS5 noted that the situation with the right to privacy was characterized by widespread violations, including increased government surveillance, restrictions on privacy at borders, and politically motivated repression against the relatives of individuals seen as politically disloyal.[66]

47. JS5 recommended that Belarus: (i) ensure independent enforcement of privacy laws and prevent misuse of personal data for political persecution; (ii) introduce judicial oversight for surveillance technologies, including facial recognition and data retention; (iii) stop practice of arbitrary border checks of personal electronic devices without clear legal safeguards; (iv) restrict government access to financial and transportation data without explicit user consent.[67]

Prohibition of all forms of slavery, including trafficking in persons

48. The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) noted that Belarus was a country of origin, transit and destination for trafficked persons.

Sexual exploitation remained the prevalent form of exploitation of identified victims, but the methods of traffickers had changed, with an increased use of online recruitment and exploitation. GRETA concluded that Belarus had not only failed to prevent trafficking of foreign nationals through Belarus, but had actively encouraged it and in doing so, may have contributed to trafficking in human beings.[68]

49. GRETA considered that Belarus should consolidate the coordination of anti-trafficking activities at national level by ensuring regular exchange of information between all public bodies involved in the prevention of THB, the identification and assistance to victims, and the prosecution of traffickers. GRETA considered that Belarus should examine the possibility of establishing an independent National Rapporteur for monitoring the anti-trafficking activities of State institutions and making recommendations to persons and institutions concerned.[69]

Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work

50. BKDP, JS5 and JS 10 noted that independent trade unions had been forcibly liquidated by the State in July 2022. They stressed that only State-backed trade unions, that carry out the official policy of the State were recognized in Belarus, and trade unions must be registered to operate legally. Independent trade unions could not legally function in Belarus. Those involved face criminal charges and up to 7 years' imprisonment for pursuing union goals or related human rights work. As a result of the forced dissolution in the country, BKDP now operates from exile.[70]

51. JS5 and JS10 recommended that Belarus restore all independent trade unions and permit their re-registration and protect workers from politically motivated dismissals.[71]

52. JS10 recommended to immediately stop prosecutions and intimidations against the trade unions, labour organisations as well as their leaders and to releases all trade unionists and activists who have been prosecuted for exercising their legitimate trade union activities, drop all the related charges and provide them an effective remedy.[72]

Right to health

53. JS12 noted that there were widespread violations of the rights of opioid substitution therapy (OST) patients, HIV+ people and other members of vulnerable groups who use controlled substances. They were discriminated against, closely monitored, subjected to pressure from law enforcement officials, and denied employment. People had been fired from their jobs because of their participation in the OST programme, and their medical details had been disclosed to drug control officials. Unfortunately, these cases were not publicly reported, as the victims refuse to make public statements due to the risk of further stigmatization and pressure. JS12 recommended that Belarus take measures to ensure the right to health, including the elimination of compulsory treatment for addiction, to ensure adherence to the principle of voluntary and informed consent to treatment, and to end discrimination and harassment of people who use psychoactive substances.[73]

Right to education

54. Broken Chalk noted that there was a need for reform in the educational sector's curriculum. The current education offered in the Belarusian higher institutions did not guarantee employment upon graduation, did not meet local labor market demands, and usually required extra training.[74] Broken Chalk recommended that Belarus reform vocational education to align with market needs by updating programs to include modern technologies and industry-relevant skills. Increasing public awareness about the value of vocational training and its potential for career growth could attract more students to these pathways. Expanding partnerships between vocational schools and businesses would also create possibilities for employment.[75]

55. JS 5 that the enrollment rates for Roma students at all levels of education remained low and discrimination against them persisted.[76] JS 5 recommended that Belarus address barriers faced by Roma students and ensure equal opportunities for all.[77]

Cultural rights

56. Artistic Freedom Initiative (AFI) and JS 13 noted that artists, cultural workers, and cultural institutions have faced repression that violates artistic freedom and the right to participate in cultural life. Belarus frequently targeted artists for producing artistic works deemed critical of the regime, alleging that they are extremist, threaten public order, or are treasonous.[78] AFI stressed that convictions were accompanied by serious penalties, including fines, imprisonment, and in some cases the death penalty.[79] AFI and JS 13 recommended that Belarus immediately and unconditionally release writers, cultural figures and others held solely for peacefully expressing their views and drop all charges against them.[80] AFI recommended to end harassment, professional blacklisting, and politically motivated evictions against artists and their families, and allow for safe return and reintegration of those forced to flee.[81]

The environment, business and human rights

57. Ecohome and JS14 noted that during the Law "On Environmental Protection" amended by July 17, 2023, excluded data on government decisions affecting the environment and genetically modified organisms, which means restriction of access to environmental information. The concept of public participation in environmental decision-making processes had been reduced to superficial discussions of reports or projects. In addition, no significant progress was made in developing climate change or disaster risk reduction legislation. Key points of the Paris Agreement Action Plan remain unfulfilled, including the approval of the Low Emissions Strategy until 2050, the Climate Adaptation Action Plan.[82]

58. JS14 and Ecohome recommended that Belarus: (i) align practices and legislation on access to environmental information, public participation, and justice with international standards; (ii) cease repression against environmental activists and NGOs; (iii)restore the registration of liquidated environmental NGOs, including "Ecohome". (iv) develop a Strategy and National action plan for climate adaptation and ensure public participation in developing and adopting climate change policies.[83]

2. Rights of specific persons or groups

Women

59. JS2 noted that Belarus had not established clear legislation that holds perpetrators of domestic violence accountable for their criminal acts. For example, there was no specific legislation that establishes domestic violence as a separate crime that would hold perpetrators liable for their actions.[84] JS2 recommended that Belarus: (a) adopt a comprehensive legislation to address gender-based violence against women and girls, especially concerning domestic violence; (b) eliminate barriers and stereotypes that impede victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence from seeking and obtaining support and justice; (c) develop and implement services that adequately address the necessities of victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence; and (d) establish a comprehensive, regularly collected and publicly available data collection system on gender-based violence, disaggregated by gender, age, residence, presence of children, disability of victims and relationship between the victim /survivor and the perpetrator, and legal outcomes.[85]

60. JS2 stressed that women, especially married women, were more vulnerable to different forms of violence due to policies and practices that prioritize preservation of the family unit over victim safety. Protection orders were inadequate to protect the victim in the long-term. Additionally, the Prevention Law states that the victim must experience an additional act of violence before her protection will be continued.[86]

61. JS2 recommended that Belarus extend the duration of protection orders to at least a year to allow sufficient time for the investigation and resolution of cases, and remove barriers to their issuance, such as the requirement for written consent.[87]

62. JS5 noted that despite formal commitments to gender equality, women faced significant discrimination in education and employment. Wage gaps, occupational segregation, and restricted access to leadership persist, reinforced by state policies and gender stereotypes. Women detainees, especially political prisoners, endured inhumane treatment,

including poor hygiene, medical neglect, forced labor, psychological abuse, and gender-based violence and lack of adequate legal protection, all exacerbated by the lack of independent monitoring and accountability. Marital rape and stalking were not recognized by law, and the Marriage and Family Code restricted divorce for pregnant women and mothers of young children, trapping victims in abusive relationships.[88]

63. JS5 recommended that Belarus: (i) ensure equal access to education and employment, eliminating discriminatory policies and practices; (ii) improve protections for women detainees, ensuring access to healthcare, sanitation, and safeguards against abuse; (iii) adopt comprehensive gender-based violence legislation, including a dedicated DV law aligned with the Istanbul Convention.[89]

Children

64. JS1 noted that Belarus had established an environment in which children as young as three years old are introduced to structured military instruction and ideological narratives that may constitute early stages of recruitment into military-aligned pathways.[90]

65. JS1 recommended that Belarus end the forced militarisation of children, including through military-patriotic clubs, cadet schools, military summer camps, and compulsory military training in educational institutions; prohibit all military access to civilian schools.[91] JS1 also recommended that Belarus raise the minimum age of admission to the Minsk Suvorov Military School in accordance with international standards and cease defining students at military academies as members of the armed forces.[92]

Persons with disabilities

66. JS5 stated that the government's repressive policies had transformed disability organizations into government-organized NGOs that act in the regime's interests, both domestically and internationally. The national legislation addressed disability in a perfunctory paternalistic manner, falling short of the Convention's principles of respect for inherent dignity and equality.[93]

67. JS5 recommended that Belarus immediately release from places of detention all political prisoners with disabilities and health problems and immediately begin reviewing legislation that contains discriminatory elements based on disability.[94]

Minorities

68. JS5 noted that post-2020 repressive state policies directly targeted national minorities, particularly Poles, Lithuanians and Ukrainians, often as part of state propaganda portraying neighbouring states as enemies. Anti-Western narratives, labelling these states as external threats, fostered hostility towards these minorities in the country. Possession of foreign residency permits or analogous documents was becoming an independent basis for discrimination. Practices of targeted persecution, closure of cultural organizations and the progressive elimination of opportunities for education in minority languages took place together with other violations of minorities' rights. Various forms of discrimination against Roma communities, including ethnic profiling, also remained widespread.[95]

69. JS5 recommended that Belarus guarantee that all national minorities have equal access to the realization of their rights, including the right to participate in cultural life, regardless of the political context or diplomatic relations with neighbouring states.[96]

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons

70. JS7 stressed that in Belarus LGBTQ+ people were targets of administrative and criminal prosecution, arbitrary detention, discriminatory inspections and pressure, involuntary disclosure of their SOGI and/or HIV status and sexualised violence from the police, the Investigative Committee and the Prosecutor's Office. LGBTQ+ people also faced multi-layered violence from the State, society, families, partners, public and private institutions. Trans and gender diverse people, especially of young age and/or female self-identification, were particularly vulnerable to experience of domestic violence, social isolation, and barriers to accessing gender affirming care.[97]

71. JS7 recommended that Belarus ensure that transgender women and non-binary people are not placed in institutions that do not correspond with their gender identity and have access to the health care they need.[98]

Migrants and asylum-seekers

72. JS5 noted that Belarus still lacked an effective, transparent and accessible system for providing international protection. Applicants faced long wait times due to administrative backlogs and a lack of resources. Many were unable to even initiate the process, leaving them in prolonged legal limbo. Asylum seekers were detained in unsuitable facilities without automatic legal aid. The system discriminated based on nationality, and authorities forcibly return individuals to their countries of origin, ignoring ongoing armed conflicts and the scale of human rights violations in those countries, and without assessing migrants' protection needs. Belarus was no longer considered a safe country for transit migrants and asylum seekers. Authorities subjected them to violence, force them to cross borders, and trap them in harsh conditions without shelter, food, or medical care. At least 120 deaths had been recorded, though the true number was likely higher.[99]

73. JS5 recommended that Belarus: (i) address systematic shortcomings in migration procedures, including those related to international protection, ensuring that all procedures are properly implemented and migrants have equal access to them; (ii) address risk factors that directly or indirectly contribute to the disappearance of migrants and asylum-seekers, especially those arriving in Belarus in the current humanitarian crisis; (iii) fulfil international obligations to protect the human rights of migrants.[100]

Notes

[1] A/HRC/46/5 and the addendum A/HRC/46/5/Add.1, and A/HRC/46/2.

[2] The stakeholders listed below have contributed information for this summary; the full texts of all original submissions are available at: www.ohchr.org (one asterisk denotes a national human rights institution with A status).

Civil society

Individual submissions:

A.F.I.	Artistic Freedom Initiative, Brooklyn, New York (United States of America);
ADF International	ADF International, 1202 Geneva (Switzerland);
Broken Chalk	The Stichting Broken Chalk, Amsterdam (Netherlands);
ChV	Christian Vision for Belarus, Vilnius (Lithuania);
Connection	Connection e.V., Offenbach (Germany);
ECLJ	European Centre for Law and Justice, The, Strasbourg (France);
ECNL	European Center for Not-for-Profit Law, Den Haag (Netherlands);
Ecohome	Ecohome NGO, MInsk (Belarus);
Forum 18	Forum 18, Oslo (Norway);
H.R.F	Human Rights Foundation, New York (United States of America);
HRW	Human Rights Watch, Geneva (Switzerland);
ICAN	International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Geneva (Switzerland);
Lawtrend	Human Rights Organization Lawtrend, Minsk (Belarus);
LIB	Legal Initiative, Vilnius (Lithuania);
OIAD	Observatoire International des Avocats en Danger, Paris (France);
SAR	Scholars at Risk Network, New York, NY (United States of America);
TGH	TG House, Warsaw (Poland);
UNDUPRC	University of Notre Dame UPR Clinic, Washington, DC (United States of America).

Joint submissions:

JS1	**Joint submission 1 submitted by:** Conscience and Peace Tax International, Grand Lancy (Switzerland); Center on Conscience and War Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI)European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO)Fellowship of Reconciliation USA (FORUSA)International Fellowship of Reconciliation International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Austria International

	Peace Bureau Mir France World WITHOUT War War Resisters' International;
JS2	**Joint submission 2 submitted by:** Advocates for Human Rights, Minneapolis (United States of America); The Advocates for Human Rights and The Belarusian Coalition of Organizations, Initiatives and Activists against gender-based and domestic violence;
JS3	**Joint submission 3 submitted by:** Belarusian Association of Journalists, Vilnius (Lithuania); Free Press Unlimited;
JS4	**Joint submission 4 submitted by:** Barreau de Paris., Paris (France); Human Rights Center "Viasna", the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the Law Society of England and Wales and the Paris Bar Association (Barreau de Paris);
JS5	**Joint submission 5 submitted by:** The National Human Rights Public Association "Belarusian Helsinki Committee", Minsk (Belarus); Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Belarusian Association of Journalists, Belarusian Association of Human Rights Lawyers, Belarusian Coalition of Civil Society Organizations, Initiatives and Activists against Gender-based and Domestic Violence, Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions, Human Constanta, Human Rights Center "Viasna", Lawtrend, Legal Initiative, Medical Solidarity Foundation (BYMEDSOL), Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, PEN Belarus, Respect-Protect-Fulfill;
JS6	**Joint submission 6 submitted by:** Basel Peace Office, Basel (Switzerland); Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace Basel Peace Office Citizens for Global Solutions International Centre for Civil Initiatives "Our House "World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy World Future Council Youth Fusion;
JS7	**Joint submission 7 submitted by:** Coalitions of fem-queer initiatives from Belarus, Warszawa (Poland); This submission was prepared and submitted by the Coalition of Fem-Queer Initiatives from Belarus — an informal network of feminist and queer initiatives that collectively discussed and contributed to the content of this report;
JS8	**Joint submission 8 submitted by:** Coalition of NGOs for UPR-Belarus, Paris (France); Association "FreeBelarusPrisoners", "The May 21 Foundation", Politzek.me, Medical Solidarity Fund of Belarus, Euro-Atlantic Affairs Agency, Medical Solidarity Foundation, association TaskForce Belarus;
JS9	**Joint submission 9 submitted by:** International Bar Association, London (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland); International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) Belarusian Association of Human Rights Lawyers (BAHRL);
JS10	**Joint submission 10 submitted by:** International Trade Union Confederation, Brussels (Belgium); Industrial Global Union Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP);
JS11	**Joint submission 11 submitted by:** Lawyers for Lawyers, 1007 JC Amsterdam (Netherlands); Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L), Belarusian Association of Human Rights Lawyers (BAHRL), Right to Defence Project;
JS12	**Joint submission 12 submitted by:** Civil Movement Legalize Belarus, Poznan (Poland); Civil movement Legalize Belarus Youth Bloc (Fundacja Białoruski Młodzieżowy Blok);
JS13	**Joint submission 13 submitted by:** PEN International, London WC1V 6ER (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland); PEN Belarus, PEN International and PEN America;
JS14	**Joint submission 14 submitted by:** Беларускі нацыянальны моладзевы савет "РАДА", Vilnius (Lithuania); The Belarusian National Youth Council "RADA" and the European Youth Forum.

Regional intergovernmental organization(s):

CoE	Council of Europe, 67075 Strasbourg Cedex (France);
OSCE-ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights/Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Warsaw (Poland).

[3] The following abbreviations are used in UPR documents:

ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
OP-ICESCR	Optional Protocol to ICESCR
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICCPR-OP 1	Optional Protocol to ICCPR
ICCPR-OP 2	Second Optional Protocol to ICCPR, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
OP-CEDAW	Optional Protocol to CEDAW
CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
OP-CAT	Optional Protocol to CAT
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
OP-CRC-AC	Optional Protocol to CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict
OP-CRC-SC	Optional Protocol to CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
OP-CRC-IC	Optional Protocol to CRC on a communications procedure
ICRMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
OP-CRPD	Optional Protocol to CRPD
ICPPED	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

[4] JS 5, paras 1–2.
[5] HRF, para 35, JS 5, paras 1–2.
[6] HRW, p 10.
[7] JS 7, p 6.
[8] ICAN, p 2.
[9] JS 3, para 36.
[10] JS 7, p 7.
[11] HRW, p 10.
[12] (ECNL, p 6).
[13] Legal Initiative, p 5, JS 5, para 6.
[14] Legal Initiative, p 5.
[15] BKDP, p 6, JS 5, para 6.
[16] JS 8, paras 21–23.
[17] ECNL, p 6.
[18] CDL-REF(2022)034 and CDL-REF(2022)035.
[19] CDL-REF(2022)035, paras 51, 65 and 81.
[20] ICAN, p2, JS 6, pp 7–8.
[21] JS 7, p 3.
[22] JS 7, p 4.
[23] JS 5, paras 9–10.
[24] HRW, p.10; Legal Initiative, p5; JS 5, para 31.
[25] ECNL, p.6.
[26] JS 5, paras 9–10.
[27] JS 5, paras 11–13.
[28] JS 7, p 4; JS 14, paras 12–15; TG House, para 15; The University of Notre Dame International Human Rights Clinic, para 12.
[29] JS 7, p 4.
[30] JS14, p6; JS 7, p 5; TG House, paras 27–29.
[31] JS 14, p.6; TG House, paras 27–29.
[32] JS 7, p 5.
[33] JS 1, paras 44–45.
[34] JS 1, para 53, HRF, para 35.
[35] JS 5, paras 14–16.
[36] JS 5, paras 14–16.

[37] JS 5, paras 17–19.
[38] JS 5, paras 25–30.
[39] JS 5, para 31.
[40] HRW, paras 49–50; JS 5, paras 17–19; Legal Initiative, pp 2–3.
[41] JS 9, p 5, 6 and 17.
[42] JS 4, para 2.
[43] JS 5, paras 25–30; JS 9, pp 16–17.
[44] JS 5, paras 17–19.
[45] JS 5, para 31.
[46] JS3, para 36.
[47] JS 5, paras 17–19.
[48] JS 9, pp 16–17; JS4, paras 3 and 15; JS 11, paras 2–3; OIAD, para 4.
[49] JS 4, para 15.
[50] OIAD, para 4.
[51] JS 4, paras 35–36.
[52] OIAD, p 6; JS 4, paras 35–36; JS 11, p 9.
[53] OIAD, p 6.
[54] JS 11, p 9.
[55] ADF International, paras 2–4; Christian Vision for Belarus, pp 1–6. ECLJ, paras 1–22; Forum 18, pp 1–6.
[56] ADF International, para 32; Christian Vision for Belarus, pp 7–8; ECLJ, paras 21–22.
[57] Connection e.V., paras 6 and 33.
[58] SAR, paras 16 and 8.
[59] The University of Notre Dame International Human Rights Clinic, para 4.
[60] SAR, P7.
[61] OSCE/ODIHR and Representative of Freedom of the Media submission of information about an OSCE Participating State or Partner for Co-operation under Consideration in the Universal Periodic Review Process, paras 7–9.
[62] JS 3, para 33.
[63] JS3, para 36.
[64] ECNL, paras 1–24.
[65] Lawtrend, paras 5–7.
[66] JS 5, paras 60–64.
[67] JS 5, para 65.
[68] GRETA(2022)10, paras 16, 18–19.
[69] GRETA(2022)10, paras 25–26.
[70] BKDP, p1; JS 5, paras 77–81; JS 10, pp 2–3.
[71] JS 5, paras 77–81; JS 10, p 12.
[72] JS 10, p 12.
[73] JS 12, paras 60 and 65.
[74] Broken Chalk, paras 26–27 and 30.
[75] Broken Chalk, para 43.
[76] JS 5, paras 69–70.
[77] JS 5, para 71.
[78] AFI, para 4; JS 13, para 6.
[79] AFI, para 5.
[80] AFI, p 5 and JS 13, p11.
[81] AFI, p5.
[82] JS14, paras 19–27; Ecohome, p1.
[83] JS 14, p7; Ecohome, pp 3–7.
[84] JS2, para 7.
[85] JS 2, paras 1, 7 and 30.
[86] JS2, paras 12 and 22.
[87] JS2, para 30.
[88] JS 5, paras 87, 89 and 92.
[89] JS 5, para 93.
[90] JS 1, paras 3–7.
[91] JS 1, para 53.
[92] JS 1, para 53.
[93] JS 5, paras 102–108.
[94] JS 5, para 109.
[95] JS 5, paras 94–95.

[96] JS 5, paras 94–95.
[97] JS 7, p 5.
[98] JS 7, p6.
[99] JS 5, paras 110–112.
[100] JS 5, para 114.