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Repressive Crackdown on the Railways

Chronology of the events on the Belarusian railways since August, 2020

Belarusian Railways is a state organization, subordinated to the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Belarus. It is composed of 66 organizations with the legal entity status and three representations offices.

Belarusian Railways include 320 passenger stations, 19 large railway stations, 646 intermediate stopping places.

The route network covers more than 2100 population centres. About 60000 people work at the Belarusian Railway, the average salary in 2020 was about 1600 Belarusian rubles (appr.578 Euro).

Belarusian railway employees joined the peaceful protest actions (protests unfolded on the whole territory of Belarus starting from the day of presidential elections on August 9, 2020, right after the polling stations were closed and the preliminary voting results were announced).

On August 13, 2020, the Belarusian Railway employees came out to the Railway Cultural Centre in Minsk to protest against violence.



According to the information available from data base of *Our House*, public sources and received from former Belarusian railway employees for the years 2020-2021:

1. **Cases of dismissal.** During the period of protests from August to November, 2020, 1105 employees were fired. 3 dismissal lists of Belarusian Railway workers not supporting the regime of Lukashenka were prepared (*the lists are not publicly available*).
2. **Dynamics of the change in the number of Belarusian Railway employees:**
 - as of February 1, 2019 - 74681 employees;
 - as of February 1, 2020 - 74140 employees;
 - as of August 1, 2020 - 71005 employees;
 - as of November 30, 2020 - 69900 employees.

The number of employees in the period from January 1, 2019 till November 30, 2020, decreased by **4781** persons.

3. **Criminal cases have been launched** against 17 people under charges of terrorist acts on the rail roads (not Belarusian Railway employees).
4. As of the date of preparation of this report, **three railway workers are incarcerated political prisoners:**
 - **Siarhei Dziuba**, a train movements controller at Belarusian Railway.
 - **Maksim Sakovich**, a senior power dispatcher at Belarusian Railway.
 - **Hanna Ablab**, a graphic designer at the operational control centre of Belarusian Railway.
5. **Detained “railway partisans”, recognized political prisoners, 15 people.** (Not employees of Belarusian Railway):
 - Siarhei Hlebka
 - Dzmitry Ravich
 - Dzianis Dzikun
 - Aleh Malchanau
 - Siarhei Kanavalau
 - Siarhei Pliashkun
 - Yuryi Selvich
 - Yauhen Minkevich
 - Dzmitryi Klimau
 - Uladzimir Auramtsau
 - Aliaksei Shyshkavets
 - Yahor Mikhailau
 - Siarhei Shabunia, released upon expiry of the term of imprisonment
 - Pavel Fedukevich, released upon expiry of the term of imprisonment
 - Siarhei Rozum

6. 15 Belarusian Railway employees, who supported the strike:

- 1) Aliaksandr Paliakou, NOD-4 (Gomel department of Belarusian Railway);
- 2) Uladzimir Uhlianitsa (Brest power supply division);
- 3) Dzmitry Barejscha (Gomel railway car station);
- 4) Dzmitry Kalenik (diesel multiple unit depot, Minsk);
- 5) Vadzim Semeniuk (locomotive depot, Minsk);
- 6) Vadzim Semeniuk (locomotive depot, Minsk);
- 7) Andrei Kuptsou (Design and Technical Centre);
- 8) Dzianis Berhin (Design and Technical Centre);
- 9) Siarhei Dziuba (Movement Control Centre);
- 10) Ihar Kastrou, NOD-4 (Minskdepartment of Belarusian Railway);
- 11) Artsemi Stashevich (diesel multiple unit depot, Minsk);
- 12) Maksim Azarko (Zhlobin permanent way division);
- 13) Aliaksandr Korvel (Gomel power supply division);
- 14) Valery Naumau (Polotsk railway car shed);
- 15) Raman Popok (Movement Control Centre).

There were no mass strikes on the railway, only individual. Those who decided to join the strike, **were fired** for “*non-fulfillment of the office obligations*”.

The historic **strike of railway workers happened on April 24-26, 1991 in Orsha** (a district centre in Vitebsk region). The protestants blocked the railways to protest again the increase of prices and the decrease in the starndard of living. The decision to block the railways in 1991 was taken spontaneously on the meeting held on April 24, where people came to protest.

The protestants blocked the railways on April 25, and the blockade was lifted on April 26.



Year 2020

August, 14

Railway employees in Vitebsk went out to the March of Liberty, that gathered about 7 thousand of Vitebsk residents in Victory square. People expressed their disagreement with the arbitrariness of the authorities, violence and severe suppression of protests in Belarus.



August, 20

The collective of Vitebsk Division of Belarusian Railway wrote a collective appeal to the regional and city administration, as well as to their own management. Among other things, the railway workers demanded Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Lidia Yermoshina to resign, and to declare the elections null and void.

“We, the employees of the UP “Vitebsk Division of Belarusian Railway”, signing the present petition, are extremely concerned about the situation happening in the country since August 9, 2020, after the presidential elections in the Republic of Belarus. With pain and regret we observe the events leading to an increasing number of victims, that participated in peaceful protests, innocent bystanders, drivers, bicyclists”, - the appeal of Vitebsk Division railway employees says.

Almost 1150 people signed the appeal, which then was sent to the Council of Ministers, the Supreme Court, Minsk Regional Executive Committee, Minsk City Executive Committee. The Trade Union Committee of the Vitebsk Division of Belarusian Railway refused to support the petition of the employees.

August, 29

Aliaksandr Paliakou, electronics engineer of Gomel Division of Belarusian Railway participated in a protest action in Gomel. Zheleznodorozhny District Court of Gomel imposed him a fine in the amount of 20 basic units (170 Euro). The regional court upheld the ruling.

September, 27

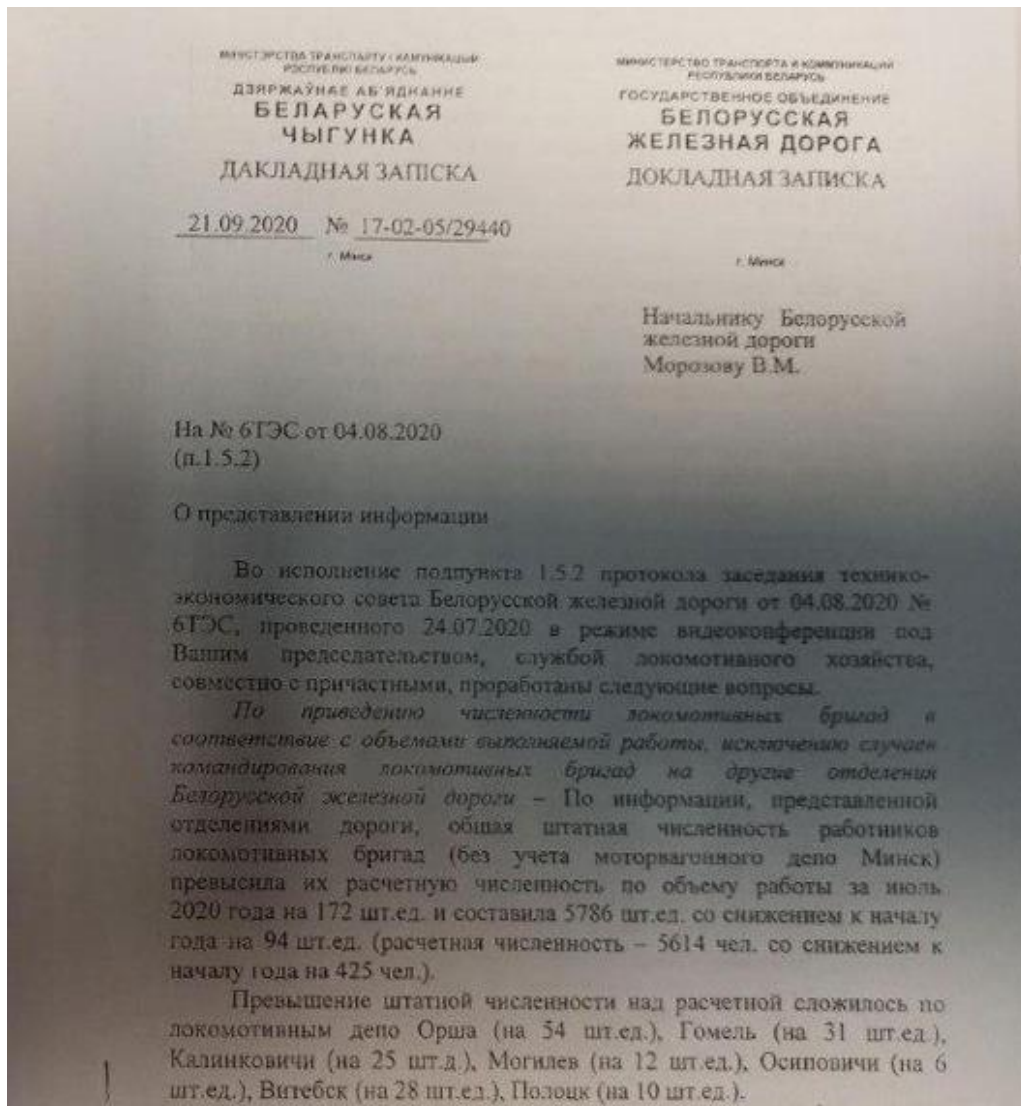
Gomel. Arrest. **Dzmitry Barejsa**, 54 years old, occupational safety engineer of Gomel railway car station of Belarusian railway participated in peaceful protest actions in Gomel. He was detained and sentenced to 15 days of arrest under Article 23.34 (Violation the order of organization and (or) execution of mass gathering events).

October, 16

An internal report was published in Mass Media, addressed to the Head of Belarusian Railway, Vladimir Morozov, saying that the headcount of locomotive crews should be adjusted to the work performed. According to the information provided by Belarusian Railway divisions, the total headcount of locomotive crews needed for the unimpaired operation of the railway has increased the estimated number in the terms of the work amount. (Due to strikes and diversions on the railway, the amount of work has lessened; therefore, the headcount in the divisions should be decreased).

The excess in the number of staff of locomotive depot is as follows:

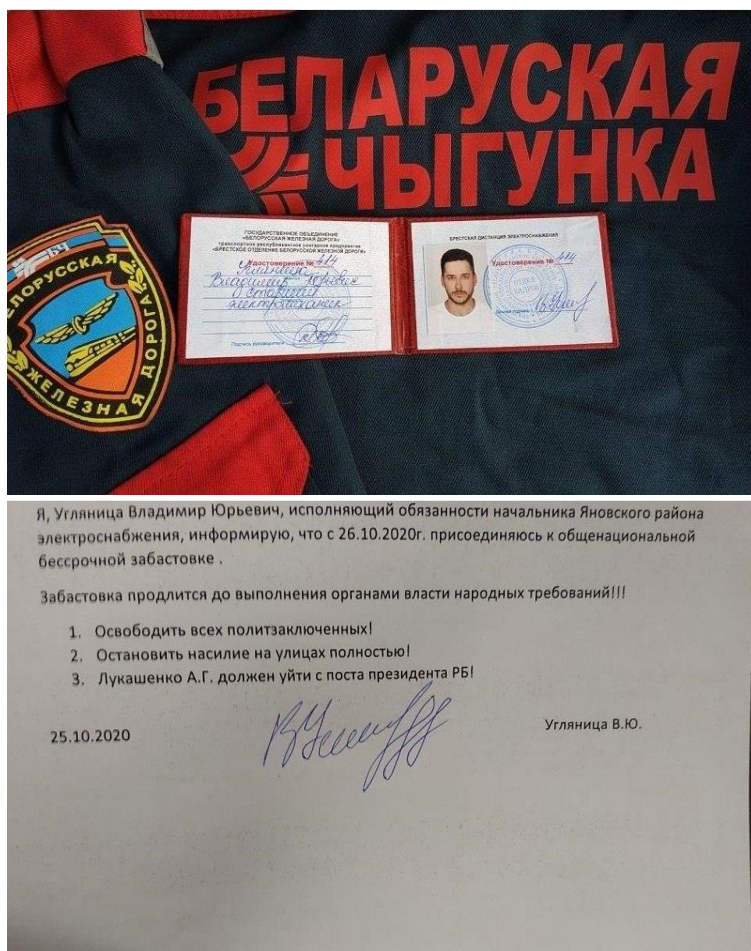
Orsha - 54 excess workers
Gomel - 31 excess workers
Kalinkavichy - 25 excess workers
Mogilev - 12 excess workers
Osipovichy - 6 excess workers
Vitebsk - 28 excess workers
Polotsk - 10 excess workers



October, 25

Uladzimir Uhlianits, 31, from Ivanava (Brest region), more than 4 years of working experience at Brest power supply division of Belarusian Railway. Most recently he was an acting head of Yanovsky power supply region. On October, 25 he wrote a statement about joining the open-ended strike.





"I said that I will not work until all the demands of the strike participants are met. Thus, they told me to resign. I did not want other people to get fired because of me, and I was hoping that it would stimulate other railway employees to take action, so I agreed. I gave my notice and left.

After lunch my superior called me and offered me to think twice. I responded that they had two papers to choose from: strike or resignation. Now I am unemployed".

Uladzimir Uhlianitsa is married with two kids: one girl is 5 years old, the other girl is 1 year old. The family remained without any means of survival.

October, 27

Wire War started (railways were blocked by wire put on the rails). The police informed about more than 20 cases of metallic wire put on the rails to block transportation, which constituted about 40% of the total number of railways blocking since the beginning of the year.

In total, since the beginning of 2020, more than 160 cases of metallic wire put on the rails with the aim to slow down or block movement of trains have been discovered in the country.

October, 29

Dzmitry Barejsha, occupational safety engineer of Gomel railway car station, joined the national strike on October, 29. Fired.



“He wrote a notice to the management, in which he expressed his disagreement with the results of presidential elections and informed that he was going to join the strike on October, 29. On that day Dzmitry remained at his working place, but did nothing. Then a videocamera was placed there to record everything. During his working day, Dzmitry was brought two work directives which he refused to fulfil.

The following day Dzmitry was called and told he was fired for “non-fulfilment of the office obligations by a person having disciplinary record”. Dzmitry got the disciplinary record during an inspection that arrived after his arrest. After his dismissal, Dzmitry was summoned to the police station for a “prophylactic conversation”.

Aliaksandr Paliakou, electronics engineer of Gomel Division of Belarusian Railway, presented a notice to his employer and started a personal strike on his working place.



Video appeal:

<https://youtu.be/yhjUIvHE8mc>

Year 2021

January, 31

Arrest.

Yahor Mikhailau, 26 years old, from Minsk, was accused of “throwing a Molotov cocktail” (an incendiary bottle - a general name for the simplest air-fuel explosive grenades) to a tank T-72 in a troop train at the railway station in Stepianka.

February, 9

Arrest. Trial. Dismissal. Polotsky district.

Anatoli Kokhanchyk, 62 years old, a resident of the village of Aleshcha of Polotsky district. His house is situated near the railway, it is well seen from the trains. Anatoli was convicted under Article 23.34 of the Administrative Offences Code (Violation of the order of organization or execution of mass gathering events) for painting his house red and white - the colours of the Belarusian resistance flag. Sentenced to 7 days of arrest.

After that he was fired (38 years of work at the railway).



April, 28

Trial. Pukhovichsky district.

Siarhei Rozum, political prisoner. Detained on December 15, 2020 for committing a crime against railway transportation safety. He put a wire on the rails. Convicted under Part 1, Article 309 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus for deliberate disablement of a vehicle or railroads. Sentenced to 2 years of prison colony.



May, 3

Trial. Molodechno.

Pavel Fedukevich, political prisoner. Arrested on November 11, he tried to execute a dog chart of the railways. Convicted under Article 309 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus for deliberate disablement of a vehicle or railroads. 1 year and 9 months of prison colony. Released on April 7, 2022.



Trial. Molodechno.

Siarhei Shabunia, political prisoner. Arrested on November 11, he tried to execute a dog chart of the railways. Convicted under Article 309 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus for deliberate disablement of a vehicle or railroads. 1 year and 9 months of prison colony. Released on April 7, 2022.



July, 26

Trial. Minsk.

Yahor Mikhailau, political prisoner, arrested on February 13, 2021. Accused of “throwing a Molotov cocktail” (an incendiary bottle - a general name for the simplest air-fuel explosive grenades) to a tank T-72 in a troop train at the railway station in Stepianka with the inscription ОГСБ (an abbreviation standing for self-defence militia) at the night of January, 31. Convicted under charges of “act of terrorism” under Part 1, Article 289 of the Criminal code of the Republic of Belarus.
10 years of prison colony.



September, 21

Arrest. Minsk.

Maksim Sakovich, political prisoner, a senior power dispatcher at Belarusian Railway. Accused under Article 356 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, “appeals to actions aimed at harming the national safety of the Republic of Belarus”. Maksim supported the national strike and made part of *Rabochy Rukh* movement (Defense of civil and labour rights and freedoms of workers of Belarus).



September, 22

Arrest. Minsk.

Hanna Ablab, political prisoner, an employee of Belarusian Railway. Charged under Article 356 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, high treason. She supported the strike and made part of the initiative *Rabochy Rukh*.



Arrest. Minsk.

Siarhei Dziuba, political prisoner, an employee of Belarusian Railway. Charged under Article 356 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, high treason. He supported the strike and made part of the initiative *Rabochy Rukh*.



Year 2022

February, 27

Cyber Partisans started the Rail War (Belarusian decentralized group of anonymous hacker activists), they hacked and encrypted the servers of Belarusian Railway on February, 27. They were joined by railway workers and citizens of the villages situated near the railroads taken by trains with Russian military hardware.

Thus, diversions on the Belarusian railways started being created with the aim to incapacitate military hardware transported by the railway to participate in the warfare against Ukraine.

MIA of Belarus informed about three cases of destruction of signalling equipment and blockage of railways in Mogilev, Gomel and Minsk regions, which were defined as acts of terrorism. Belarusian railway was transferred to the manual control mode.

- Centralized traffic control Neman (a complex of railway automated and telemechanical devices consisting of railways automatic block systems at station-to-station blocks, electric interlocking of railway switches and signals at stations) was incapacitated. The related software is not working.
- At the stopping place of Siniavo, near the station Stolbtsy (Baranavichy Division of Belarusian Railway), the control cabinet of signalling arrangement was burnt (automatic train signalling device). Because of the diversion, all the traffic lights and railroad switches at the railroad section in question are out of service.
- At the station-to-station block Ostankovichy-Zherd (Gomel Division of Belarusian Railway) another relay control cabinet of signalling arrangement was burnt. Because of the diversion, all the traffic lights and railroad switches at the railroad section in question are out of service.
- The station-to-station block Mogilev-2 - Bujnichy (Mogilev Division of Belarusian Railway) had problems with rail traffic due to short-circuiting of rail track circuits.

As of the date of March 2, Belarusian Railway cannot provide safety and security of their infrastructure. *Military trains from the side of Russian Federation do not travel at night.* Locomotive crews became scared to take their shifts and drive trains.

February, 28.

Arrest. Mozyr.

Siarhei Pliashkun, political prisoner. Detained and taken to custody under Article 13 and Article 289 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (preparation to terrorism). According to the investigation, Siarhei was planning to destroy the military hardware of the Russian Federation during its transportation within the territory of Mozyrsky district.



Arrest. Mozyr.

Yuryi Selvich, political prisoner.

Detained and taken to custody under Article 13 and Article 289 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (preparation to terrorism). According to the investigation, Yuriy was planning to destroy the military hardware of the Russian Federation during its transportation within the territory of Mozyrsky district.

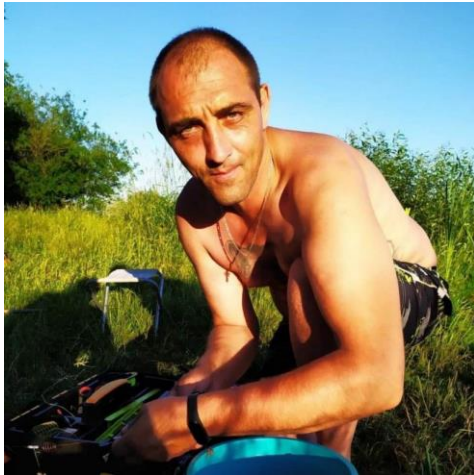


March, 2.

Arrest. Stolbtsy.

Siarhei Hlebka, political prisoner.

Siarhei burnt timber on railways, he is charged under Article 289 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus.



Arrest. Zhodino. A 35-year-old railway partisan detained; no details provided.

March, 3.

Arrest. Osipovichy.

Aliaksei Shyshkavets, political prisoner.

Suspected of “preparation of a diversion of the rail road”. Aliaksei is a 35-year-old individual entrepreneur, he also was a member of BYPOL. Charged under Article 361-1 of the Criminal code of the Republic of Belarus (Formation of extremist groups or active participation in such).

FYI: **BYPOL** is a Belarusian initiative created by former law enforcement employees to oppose the Belarusian regime.



March, 4.

Arrest. Svetlagorsk. **Dzmitry Ravich, political prisoner.**

Arrested for arson of a relay power signal box at the station “Zherd-Ostankovichy”, committed on February, 28; charged under Article 289 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (act of terrorism).

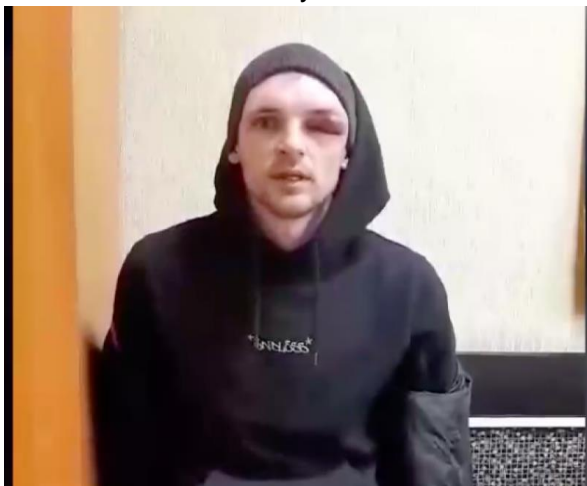


Arrest. Svetlagorsk. **Dzianis Dzikun, political prisoner.**

Arrested for arson of a relay power signal box at the station “Zherd-Ostankovichy”, committed on February, 28. In the result, all the traffic lights and railroad switches at the railroad section in question got out of service. Charged under Article 289 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (act of terrorism).



In the regime’s Telegram channels a repentance video with Dzianis Dzikun appeared, on which he looks severely beaten.



Arrest. Svetlagorsk. **Aleh Malchanau, political prisoner.**

Arrested for arson of a relay power signal box at the station "Zherd-Ostankovichy", committed on February, 28, in the result, all the traffic lights and railroad switches at the railroad section in question got out of service. Charged under Article 289 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (act of terrorism).

No photo available.

March, 6.

Arrest. Vitebsk. **Siarhei Kanavalau, political prisoner.**

Employee of Vitebsk Signalization and Communication Division. Accused of planning and performing disablement of railway security systems. Charged under Article 289 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (act of terrorism).



March, 16.

At the station-to-station block Farinovo-Zagatje (Vitebsk Division of Belarusian Railway) a relay control cabinet of signalling arrangement was burnt (automatic train signalling device).

March, 25.

Inflammation of the automatic train signalling device between railway stopping places of Berezina and Nemanitsa (Minsk region) at the station-to-station block "Novosady'Borisov", near the village Ugly of Borisovsky district, Minsk region.

Alarm system damaged in the result of the fire, no victims.

March, 28.

At the station-to-station block between the railway stopping place of Sovetsky and the station Verejtsy (Minsk region), in the area of neutral section, intermediate colour lights signal No 2 (up train) and No 3 (down train) were turned off. Automatic train signalling devices at the railroad section in question were disabled. The reason was arson of two relay control cabinet of signalling arrangement.

March, 30.

Arrest. Bobrujsk. **Yauhen Minkevich, political prisoner**, athlete.

Arrested on suspicion of creating a diversion on the railway. According to the investigation, he was involved with destruction of two relay control cabinets of signalling arrangement. Charged under Article 289 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, act of terrorism.



Arrest. Bobrujsk. **Dzmitryi Klimau, political prisoner**.

A taxi driver and a former policeman. Arrested on suspicion of creating a diversion on the railway. According to the investigation, he was involved with destruction of two relay control cabinets of signalling arrangement. Charged under Article 289 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, act of terrorism.



Arrest. Bobrujsk. **Uladzimir Auramtsau, political prisoner**, athlete. Arrested on suspicion of creating a diversion on the railway. According to the investigation, he was involved with destruction of two relay control cabinets of signalling arrangement. Charged under Article 289 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, act of terrorism.



- In the first month of war (February-March) 42 persons were arrested on suspicion of creating a diversion on the railway.
- In total, over 80 diversions were created on the Belarusian railway since the attack of Russian Federation against Ukraine.

April, 15

Belarusian partisans made a statement about successful diversions created on the railway in Russian border areas. Automatic train signalling devices were destructed in Smolensk and Briansk regions.

April, 27

Parliament in Belarus votes for death penalty in relation to “railway partisans”.

On April 27, the Parliament approved the draft law on adding greater punitive measures for attempted terrorist acts up to death penalty.

June, 22.

The 3rd list of “ideologically incorrect” employees was compiled and approved at Belarusian Railway, meaning of employees who express opinions and ideals of political subjects: parties and social movements, different from the Belarusian regime. They are subject to be fired in the near future.

New dismissals are awaiting the employees of the Movement Control Centre and of the Administration of Belarusian Railway. (There no publicly available exact lists).