

3 November 2020

Belarus: Woman human rights defender Marina Kostylianchenko administratively arrested

On 2 November 2020, woman human rights defender **Marina Kostylianchenko** was sentenced to 15 days in detention for “violating the procedure for holding a protest” and “disobeying the legal order of an officer of public authority”. She had been detained in a cafe three days earlier along with seven other people.

[Marina Kostylianchenko](#) is a journalist and woman human rights defender at Human Rights Centre Viasna (HRC Viasna). She gathers information on human rights violations in Belarus, particularly since the unrest in the wake of the August 2020 Presidential election results and has worked on publications for the HRC Viasna website.

On 30 October 2020, Marina Kostylianchenko was detained together with seven other people at a cafe in Minsk by officers from the Main Directorate for Combating Organised Crime and Corruption (GUBOPiK), who were wearing civilian clothes and masks. Earlier that day, Marina Kostylianchenko and the seven other individuals visited the detention facility at Okrestina Street to meet their friend Aleksandr Belov, who was being released after serving his 15-days administrative arrest. During the court session, which took place on 2 November 2020, several of the detained described how the GUBOPiK officers used violence and tear gas during the detention operation.

On 2 November 2020, Zavodskoy District Court sentenced Marina Kostylianchenko to 15 days administrative arrest for “violating the procedure for holding a protest” (article 23.34(1) of the Code of Administrative Offences) and “disobeying the legal order of an officer of public authority” (article 23.4 of the Code of Administrative Offences).

According to the record of her administrative offences Marina Kostylianchenko took part in a rally on 30 October 2020 at the address Bogdanovicha 102 shouting slogans “Tribunal”, “Long live Belarus” and “Out”. The record also indicates that the woman human rights defender refused to enter the officials’ vehicle and grabbed an officer’s uniform, thereby “disobeying legal orders or requests of the officer of the public authority”.

Marina Kostylianchenko told the court that she did not participate in the rally on 30 October, did not shout any chants and does not know where Bogdanovicha 102 is located. Marina and her lawyer filed a motion to question the police officer who prepared the record of administrative offences and another to call other detainees as witnesses, but the motions were denied. No photo or video evidence of the picket at Bogdanovicha 102 on 30 October were presented in the court.

Marina Kostylianchenko, her lawyer and other detainees filed a motion to retrieve the video from the cafe, which according to them, would prove that they did not resist their detention, and would also show that the timeline of the record does not correspond to reality. The motion was denied.

HRC Viasna volunteer Aleksandr Poplavsky was detained while monitoring the court proceedings of the detained alleged participants of the rally. A record was drawn up against him under Art. 17.1 of the Administrative Code (petty hooliganism) for allegedly refusing to leave the courtroom by order of a judge during a break in the court session. As a result, the volunteer was detained pending the consideration of the case by the court and spent the weekend in detention at the

Central Inspectorate of the Internal Affairs Directorate of the Minsk City Executive Committee. On 2 November 2020, the Moscow District Court of Minsk postponed the consideration of his case until 17 November 2020, and Aleksandr Poplavsky was released, pending trial.

Members of HRC Viasna have been under pressure since early May 2020, with many local representatives arbitrarily detained and subjected to judicial harassment or administrative arrests. Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the administrative arrest of Marina Kostylianchenko and detention of Aleksandr Poplavsky. These events follow a number of acts of reprisal against and judicial harassment of human rights defenders from law enforcement representatives in Belarus since the 2020 Presidential elections, including the cases of woman human rights defender and HRC Viasna coordinator [Maria Rabkova](#) and environmental defenders [Irina Sukhiy](#) and [Marina Dubina](#). Front Line Defenders expresses concern that these actions are having a chilling effect on the promotion and protection of human rights in the Belarus, and may be uncondusive to the creation of a safe and enabling environment in which defenders can carry out their work.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Belarus to:

1. Take all necessary measures to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of Marina Kostylianchenko and guarantee her physical and psychological security and integrity;
2. Immediately drop all criminal proceedings against Marina Kostylianchenko and Aleksandr Poplavsky as it is believed that the charges are solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Belarus are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Front Line Defenders Board of Directors

Denis O'Brien, Jim Conway, Maria Mulcahy, Kieran Mulvey, Mary Jane Real (Philippines), David Sykes, Arnold Tsunga (Zimbabwe), Verónica Vidal (Uruguay)

Front Line Defenders International Advisory Council

James L. Cavallaro, Maryam Elahi, Michel Forst, Hina Jilani, Mary Lawlor

Front Line, The International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders trading as Front Line Defenders, is registered in Ireland as a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. Registered Office: Second Floor, Grattan House, Temple Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, A94 FA39, Ireland.

Company No. 593190; Registered Charity No. 20204494; CHY 22404