

12 April 2021

Belarus: Woman human rights defender Enira Bronitskaya designated as a witness in criminal investigation

On 6 April 2021, law enforcement officers searched the home of woman human rights defender **Enira Bronitskaya** in Minsk as part of a criminal investigation on the charge of ‘mass riots’. The following day, the woman human rights defender was summoned for questioning by the Investigative Committee. At present, Enira Bronitskaya has been assigned a witness status in the investigation and has signed a non-disclosure agreement, preventing her from discussing details of the case.

[Enira Bronitskaya](#) is a woman human rights defender and a member of the human rights organization Human Constanta, which works to promote the protection of the rights of foreign citizens and stateless persons in Belarus, as well as digital freedoms and advocating against discrimination. The woman human rights defender is also a member of the Supervisory Board of the Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and a consultant for the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

On 6 April 2021, law enforcement officers searched the home of woman human rights defender Enira Bronitskaya as part of a criminal investigation on charges of ‘mass riots’ (Article 293 of the Criminal Code). The officers presented a warrant for the search and informed the woman human rights defender that they were investigating the actions of the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus, which she was not aware of prior to the search. Enira Bronitskaya and her two children were present in the apartment during the search, during which the officers confiscated money, her laptop and other work devices, as well as her children’s devices. The officers also confiscated her phone, meaning she was not able to inform her lawyer about the search.

On 7 April 2021, the woman human rights defender was summoned to the Investigative Committee’s central office for questioning as a witness. At present, Enira Bronitskaya is restricted from providing further information by a non-disclosure agreement.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the inclusion of woman human rights defender Enira Bronitskaya in the criminal investigation and the search of her home, as it believes that she is being targeted solely as a result of her work, promoting and protecting human rights in Belarus. Since the results of the 2020 Presidential elections were announced on 9 August 2020, there has been a significant increase in the incidents of judicial harassment and acts of reprisal against human rights defenders and journalists from law enforcement officials in the country. Front Line Defenders expresses concern that these actions may have a chilling effect on the promotion and protection of human rights in Belarus, and may be conducive 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. Remove Enira Bronitskaya from the investigation as it is believed that she is being targeted solely as a result of her work, promoting and protecting human rights in Belarus;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee physical and psychological security and integrity of Enira Bronitskaya;

3. Immediately return all items confiscated during the search of Enira Bronitskaya's apartment;
4. Stop the practise of judicial prosecution of human rights defenders providing help, informational and educational support to the representatives of vulnerable groups in Belarus;
5. 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.