

Militarisation of Belarus and violations of the rights of Belarusian conscientious objectors

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If necessary, the Belarusian army can put out a resource of **500 thousand conscripts**, and we are talking about a prepared reserve.

Minister of Defense of Belarus Viktor Khrenin

Changes in Belarusian legislation proving that Alexander Lukashenko is preparing for war

- On **February 15, 2023** the Ministry of Justice of Belarus was concerned about the order of destruction of secret documents and archives in case of war or martial law.
- Before that, on **February 4, 2023**, the requirements to the health condition of citizens, related to military duty, were changed. *Now young men with overweight (obesity of the second degree), with myopia, with hemorrhoids without node prolapse, with a mild course of bronchial asthma, with some forms of flat feet and foot deformities, as well as with diseases of the endocrine system, nutritional disorders, diseases of the nervous system and heart, diseases of the skin and spine are taken into the Belarusian army.* In general, virtually everyone is taken into the army.
- On **February 21, 2023**, the death penalty was introduced for desertion abroad under the guise of "high treason". Now Belarusian can get up to **5 years** in prison for helping deserters.



On February 28, 2024 Belarus adopts the law "On amending laws on national security issues"

1. Cellular operators have to provide **military commissions** and the **KGB** with the phone numbers of persons liable for military service.
2. This is necessary in order to send **SMS notifications**, which will be considered official notification during mobilization or wartime.
3. Failure to report during mobilization or wartime is a criminal offence: the maximum term of imprisonment is **seven years**.
4. Prisoners or ex-prisoners can be recruited into the army.
5. The age limit for military service for women has been increased **to 48 years**.
6. The age limit for women (soldiers, sergeants and petty officers) to be in the reserve is also raised: from 45 **to 48 years of age**.
7. The concept of "**defence work**" is introduced, to which **minors under 16 years** of age may be engaged.
8. A new term "**reinforcement apparatus**" has also appeared. This will be used to refer to citizens who are employed to assist military commissions and the KGB in notifying, conscripting and sending mobilised persons.

law

"On the People's Militia" and established "the legal basis for voluntary participation of citizens in ensuring martial law".

1. In fact, formations of armed citizens under the control of local authorities are created.
2. The planned number of "people's militia" will be **100-150 thousand** people (*for comparison, the modern Belarusian army is 48 000 people*), and groups of "militia" are planned to be created in each district and to be given combat weapons in their hands.
3. Before the law Belarusian authorities started to launch "pilot projects" that functioned without any legal status.
4. Local defense councils are created for general management, which include the head of the executive committee and his deputies, the military commissar, heads of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, **KGB**, Ministry of Emergency Situations, and those appointed by the head of the local executive committee.
5. They have the right to murder people (*use physical force and weapons*) and maraud (*seize personal transport, personal belongings, conduct searches*).

PMC "Wagner" and Belarusian private military company «GardService»

- Since summer 2020, Belarus has the first private military campaign - PMC "GardService", associated with Viktor Sheiman. Viktor Sheiman is suspected of eliminating (organising disappearances and murders) of political opponents of Aliaksandr Lukashenka.
- On June 20, 2020, on the eve of the presidential election, Alexander Lukashenko signed Presidential Decree No. 227, by which "GardService" Ltd. can acquire ownership, store and transfer to its employees service and civilian weapons and ammunition for the provision of security services.
- The activities of "GardService" are classified by the decree of the Council of Ministers of Belarus.
- Since the summer of 2022, "Wagner" instructors have been training both instructors and ordinary employees of "GardService".
- Belarusian "guards" are taught to clear buildings, assault actions in the city, and conduct engineering training. Training with heavier weapons, such as hand-held anti-tank grenade launchers (RPGs), automatic grenade launchers (AGS), and Kalashnikov machine guns, has begun. A lot of time is devoted to tactical medicine.
- Now the company is almost closely training on military topics. At the moment, the company employs several hundred people - **up to 500**.
- "Wagner" instructors also train child soldiers in Belarus.
- According to statistics from the security agencies themselves, more than **18,000** children were trained in **480** paramilitary patriotic camps in the summer of 2022, where children from the age of 6 were taught firearms skills, etc.

What happens to Belarusian conscientious objectors?

- Forced slave labor of young men who graduated from the Military Academy has been legalised in Belarus. A young officer, after the Military Academy, has to serve in the army for at least five more years. If a man refuses to serve where he will be sent for 5 years, he is obliged to reimburse the state for all expenses, the amount of which can be up to 25 - 30,000 euros.
- An employer may not employ a man unless the man shows his military ID card.
- The Criminal Code has several articles that stipulate criminal liability for evading military conscription: evasion from call-up to military service on the mobilization, evasion of regular call-up to active military service, failure of a reservist or person liable for military service to appear for military training or special classes, avoidance of military registration by a conscript or person liable for military duty. The punishment is various: a fine, arrest, restriction of liberty for up to five years or imprisonment for the same term.
- Overall, in Belarus, the number of criminal cases related to evasion of both conscription and military service is not publicized, as it is classified information.
- Conscription is used as one of the frequent repressive practices of the Belarusian regime for young male protest activists.
- There are reports of propaganda, torture, and prohibitions, and family visits are infrequent. For instance, if a soldier is caught with a mobile phone, they can face punishment that includes 15 days in solitary confinement. Sadly, the oppressive environment, humiliation, and abuse in the Belarusian army have led to cases of suicide and extrajudicial executions.



Thank you

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