



Seeking Justice Stories of Violence in Belarus

August 2020
through
the eyes
of Belarusian
media

**EACH CASE
MUST BE
INVESTIGATED**

**EACH VICTIM
MUST BE
PROTECTED**

**P R E S S
C L U B
B E L A R U S**



Belarus in Focus

Press Club Belarus

Independent Belarusian media

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“ We were beaten with batons from both sides. We were brought in and kicked to the floor. We were lying face down, with our hands behind our backs, and were forced to crawl forward in this position. When we arrived the floor was clean, and after 30 minutes they had brought in so many beaten, bloody people that the whole floor was covered in blood. ”

“ ‘Remember that underage boy from yesterday?!’ one of the women says. ‘He was the first to be released, he acted like he was catatonic. He kept repeating, ‘I’m fine, I was fed well, I want to go home, they didn’t beat me.’ Sounded like a zombie. But it turned out his leg was broken. He came back here later, to get his documents, on crutches and in a cast.’ ”

“ We were kneeling along the fence for three hours, and they were bringing more and more people in. When people asked for some water, or go to the toilet, all they got was batons. You lose track of time there. We spent three or four hours in this position. And they constantly shouted that we were ‘beasts’ and should be gunned down. ”



TUT.BY / Vadim Zamirovsky



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“ Then some supervisor came around and sat nearby. Asked if anyone had a condom. Then he cut my underwear, put the condom on the baton and rammed it into my anus. I felt severe pain. ”

“ There was a man standing next to me, over 40 years old. He couldn't hold his hands behind his back, because his ribs had been broken. When he informed OMON, he was asked to show this sore spot. He showed it and an OMON officer started hitting him on his side with his fist. ”

“ The guy who was lying next to me with a gunshot wound was being resuscitated right there, while 3-4 crazy riot police officers were beating those who were lying down and had gunshot wounds! They yelled at the doctors because they were trying to help them. ”

“ There were two guys with dreadlocks. The police cut their hair, cutting their scalps. These guys were forced to kiss in the police van: ‘Come on, you freaks, lick each other! Dodged the draft — now lick each other!’ ”

- “ We drove into the yard, the door opened, and we saw a corridor of riot police officers who were beating us with batons from both sides as we went by, shouting, ‘What, did you want changes? Well, here are your changes.’ ”
- “ The first thing we saw when we got there was people lying on the floor, and both the police and other detainees were walking on them, as there was no space. They were lying there screaming, asking for help. No help was provided. At most you didn’t get a blow on the head. ”
- “ When we had already spent about two hours in this cell, Special Rapid Response Detachment officers came and loaded us into a police van in such a way that people lay in piles, one on top of the other. Those who were below had no air at all. When we were leaving, those with broken limbs just screamed in pain. ”
- “ The prison staff were terrified and asking: ‘What is going on in Minsk? Our cells are designed for 10 people, we have to pack them with 60; people are hanging on each other.’ ”



Uladz Hrydzin (RFE/RL)

RFE/RL / Uladz Hrydzin



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RFE/RL / Uladz Hrydzin

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Uladz Hrydzin (RFE/RL)

“ There was a guy with asthma in the police van. He was being crushed by the people, he started choking, shouting; an officer approached him, put his boot on his neck and began to press down, saying ‘I don’t care if you die.’ ”

“ Once the chief, who was sitting on a stool, said, ‘Somehow I see no tension in your bodies.’ This meant they would beat us again. Those who had white wristbands were forced to eat them. ”

“ The women lost consciousness several times; one was vomiting for two nights in a row, almost non-stop. When we needed to address the guards, we had to say, ‘Excuse me, may I ask you...,’ while they insulted us, called us dirty names, called us criminals. One of them didn’t allow us look to him in the face, shouting, ‘Face to the floor!’ ”

“ One had a poster reading ‘I have a choice’ on him. The poster was crumpled, they shoved it in his face and shouted: ‘Eat, you f**k.’ ”

EACH CASE MUST BE INVESTIGATED, EACH VICTIM MUST BE PROTECTED

August 2020 will go down in history: the history of both heroism and tragedy. Thousands of people were detained while protesting against the results of the presidential vote. Hundreds were tortured in detention, dozens were taken to hospitals, and the fate of many is still unknown. This book contains the stories of people from all over the country that were published in the Belarusian independent media days after the presidential election, which require legal evaluation and investigation. The book will be supplemented as materials continue to be published.

The right to freedom of assembly is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus as a basic human right.

In accordance with the Criminal Procedure Code, publications in mass media can serve as the basis for instituting criminal proceedings. This is why we have gathered the publications in a single book, which may become a unique historical document, preserving our memory for justice in the future.

**Andrey Bastunets, Chairman of the Belarusian Association of Journalists:
“Statements in the media are an indisputable reason for instituting criminal proceedings”**

Article 166 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Belarus lists media reports of crimes as one of the grounds for instituting criminal proceedings. Article 171 of the Criminal Procedure Code says that a media report can serve as a reason for instituting criminal proceedings. So it appears that an investigative body or any other competent authority is not obliged to institute criminal proceedings, but rather may do so or not, at its own discretion. However, just a couple of articles back, in Article 167, we see this unambiguous wording: “Grounds for institution of criminal proceedings are the availability of sufficient data indicating signs of a crime, in the absence of circumstances that rule out criminal proceedings.” There aren’t any references to what anybody may or may not do, or wishes or doesn’t wish to do.

I believe the victims’ statements of torture and other forms of abuse in the mass media are sufficient data and an indisputable reason for instituting criminal proceedings. I cannot see a single circumstance that could prevent a thorough investigation of these reports as part of criminal proceedings.

Comments from lawyers

Under which articles of the Criminal Code can criminal proceedings be instituted?

Violent beatings of peaceful demonstrators in the streets, in police vans, at district police stations and detention centers are classified as torture.

Article 1 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment:

For the purposes of this Convention, the term “torture” means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.

Belarus ratified the Convention in 1987.

Article 4 of the Convention establishes an obligation for State Parties to ensure that all acts of torture are offences under its criminal law. Each State Party is obliged to make these offenses punishable by penalties which take into account their grave nature.

In its Concluding Observations on the Results of Periodic Report Review, the Committee Against Torture has on numerous occasions noted that the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus does not define torture as a separate crime, while other articles of the Code don't include all acts of torture and the purposes for which they are used, as set out in Article 1 of the Convention Against Torture.

The issue of absence of due criminalization of torture has consistently been raised by human rights advocates.

The state's position is as follows: persons who have committed offences that can be classified as torture in accordance with the definition provided in the Convention Against Torture are held criminally liable pursuant to various articles of the Criminal Code. For instance, in the course of dialog between the Belarusian delegation and the Human Rights Committee during review of the fifth periodic report, Dmitry Shilin, a representative of the National Centre of Legislation and Legal Research, noted that in addition to Articles 128 (Offences against the Security of Mankind) and 394 (Compulsion of evidence) of the Criminal Code, depending on the circumstances and the object of crime, other charges are possible, such as abuse of authority or power, torment, infliction of bodily injury of various degrees of severity.

Taking into account the current legislation, I believe that criminal proceedings must be instituted against those who used torture under Part 3 of Article 426 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus:

Article 426. Abuse of authority or official power

1. Deliberate commission by an official of actions which clearly exceed the rights and powers granted to them, which resulted in infliction of major damage or significant harm to the rights and legitimate interests of citizens, or state or public interests (abuse of authority or official power):

Shall be punishable by a fine, or deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or to engage in certain activity with a fine, or by imprisonment for up to three years with the deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or to engage in certain activity.

2. Abuse of authority or official power committed out of mercenary or other personal interest:

Shall be punishable by imprisonment for a term from two to six years with or without a fine and with deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or to be engaged in certain activity.

3. Actions provided for in parts 1 and 2 of this Article, committed by an official holding a position of authority, or which result in grave consequences, or deliberate commission by a duty official of actions which evidently exceed the rights and powers granted to them, accompanied by violence, suffering or insult to the victim, or the use of weapons or police equipment,:

Shall be punishable by imprisonment for a term from three to ten years with or without a fine and with deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or to be engaged in certain activity.

Viktoria Fedorova
Chair of Legal Initiative, a Non-Governmental Organization

Commentary by human rights advocates

We, members of the Viasna Human Rights Center, demand that criminal proceedings be immediately instituted concerning these incidents, on the grounds stipulated in Articles 128, 426, and 455 of the Criminal Code; that an investigation be carried out; and that the offenders be held accountable.

Pursuant to Article 128 of the Criminal Code, “Offences against the Security of Mankind,” illegal detention, kidnapping followed by torture or violent acts committed in connection with the political beliefs of the population, are classified as offenses.

The term “torture” means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of, or with the consent or acquiescence of, a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.

Taking into account the absence of legal grounds for the use of physical force and impact munitions in the buildings and on the grounds of police stations, as well as in the places where those administratively detained and arrested were held, the acts committed by the police officers cannot be justified by considerations of preserving law and order.

*Ales Bialiatski,
Chairman of Viasna Human Rights Center*

*Valiantsin Stephanovich,
Board Member of Viasna Human Rights Center*

*Pavel Sapelka,
Lawyer of Viasna Human Rights Center*

From the editors

Following are explanations of a few distinctive terms and usages found in this text.

arrest:

Unlike in Anglo-Saxon systems, police in Belarus *detain* people; courts *arrest* them. We have preserved usages such as “and then the officer detained me” even though it would sound much more natural to say “and then the officer arrested me,” because the distinction is important in some of the stories. We use “detention center” and “jail” interchangeably (as opposed to “prison”).

base value:

A sum equivalent to about \$10, used for calculating various fines and benefits (e.g. pensions) in Belarus.

girls/guys:

The speakers in these articles, as well as the journalists, use “girl” (*девушка*) to describe both teens and young women. In some cases (e.g. election observers, prison guards) it’s clear that the people they’re referring to are over 18; in others it’s not, or it could be a mixed group. Many female speakers who are almost certainly over 18 use “girls” to refer to groups they’re a part of. We have preserved this usage, with rare exceptions. There’s a similar usage for older teen boys and young men (*парень*, guy), which we have also preserved.

OMON:

a riot police formation; we use “riot police” and “OMON” more or less interchangeably.

quotation marks:

These articles occasionally use quotation marks not for verbatim comments but to summarize the sentiments of groups – a departure from Western journalistic practice.

In mid-October, “Mediazona. Belarus” published the results of a journalistic investigation in respect of August – September 2020 events in Belarus. This is a summary of the investigation in English.

Minsk is Beaten. How Security Officials Mutilated Protesters

<https://mediazona.by/article/2020/10/13/minsk-beaten>



Authors: Maksim Litavrin, David Frenkel, Yegor Skovoroda, Anastasia Boyko

During the protests of August-September 2020, at least 1,376 people suffered some form of assault due to the actions of security forces in Minsk, with one in three receiving moderate or severe injury. As well as assaults at the rallies themselves, more than 600 people were beaten after being detained in police stations and in the detention centre on Akrestsin Street.

There were at least three incidents of sexual violence, one rape victim being a minor. This data became known to “Mediazona” from documents received from a source in the Investigative Committee (IC).

State authorities have not published statistics regarding victims of the protests, but this information was collected by the security forces. An anonymous source contacted the editorial office of “Mediazona” and provided a file of materials from the Investigative Committee detailing injuries recorded regarding protesters in Minsk. The file contained several tables with brief information about each case, as well as investigative reports regarding torture. We have aggregated and analysed this data to obtain an overview.

How we analysed injuries

The IC files listed the medical diagnoses established in respect of protesters, making it clear which part of the body was injured. We have visualized these injuries on the silhouette of each of the 1 376 victims.

We have divided the injuries into minor (1), moderate (2), and severe (3). If no part of the body was touched, we gave 0 points. We also analyzed injuries by cause: beatings, rubber bullets, flash-bang grenades, or gas.

Minor injuries included hematomas, bruises and mild burns; moderate – lacerations, cranial and facial injuries; severe – penetrating gunshot wounds, internal injuries, fractures and traumatic amputations.

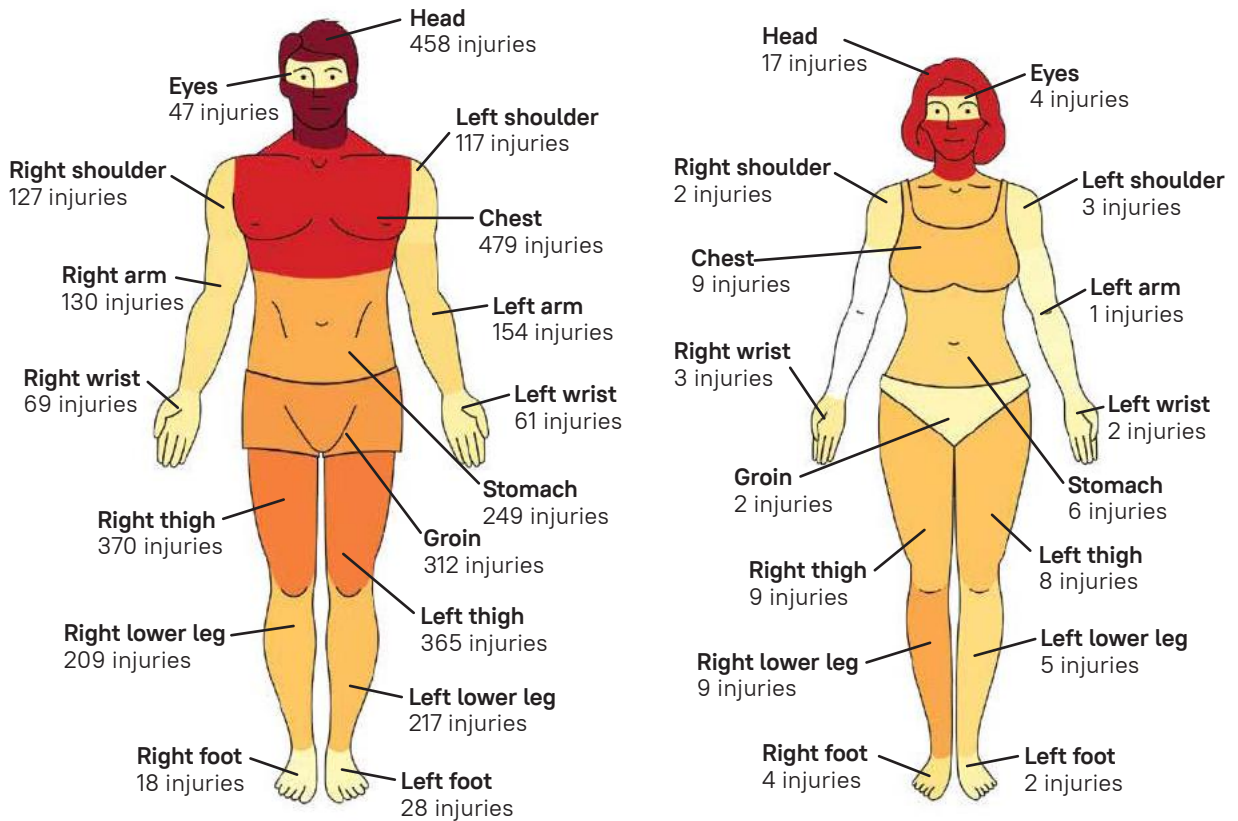
Security officials targeted vital organs

Young men suffered the most at the rallies. The average age of victims was 31 years with the most serious injuries being inflicted by special equipment: rubber bullets and flash-bang grenades.

Based on the injuries from rubber bullets (40 cases), it is clear that the security forces aimed at the head, chest and stomach; such shots inflicted the most serious injuries. 34-year-old Aleksandr Taraikovsky died from a shot in the chest on August 10 when he was walking with his hands up towards a line of security forces near the Pushkinskaya metro station.

Another participant at the rally, a 37-year-old man, was shot in the right hand side of the chest causing lung damage subsequently diagnosed as an open pneumothorax. He spent three days in a coma. Another 24-year-old protester was shot in the stomach, causing a rupture in his small intestine.

A MAP OF PROTESTERS' INJURIES



It is impossible to calculate the total number of victims at the rallies. The data we received only relates to the situation in Minsk and in the detention center in Zhodzina, although violence was used in other cities as well. In addition, the Investigative Committee is only aware of cases in which a protester attended a hospital or filed a complaint against the security forces.

Other protesters may have received injuries that either did not require treatment or were dealt with by medical volunteers with no statement being filed. There are known cases when a statement to the security forces turned into a criminal case against the victim, which encourages people to hide, go abroad and generally avoid contact with the security forces.

When aimed at the head, rubber bullets led to cranial injuries and fractures of facial bones. For example, a 40-year-old protester was hospitalized after being shot with diagnoses of “closed head injury, concussion, and multiple gunshot impacts in the right lower jaw area.” He also suffered injuries to the

chest, abdomen, and left thigh. a rubber bullet punctured the maxillary sinus and fractured the nose of a 29-year-old protester, displacing bone fragments. Another victim was shot in the eye suffering a severe concussion.

Flashbangs mangled protesters

Stun grenades, which were widely used in the early days of the protests, exploded within the crowd at thigh level or below causing shrapnel lacerations throughout the body and concussive blast injuries to the head. Such explosions caused injuries equally as serious as those inflicted by rubber bullets.

One victim, a 30-year-old man, had his right foot torn off by the explosion. Two other protesters suffered a splintering fracture of the left hand and similar injuries to the left foot and lower leg while a 33-year-old man was diagnosed with a vertebral fracture after a grenade explosion. Another victim was hit in the chest by a shrapnel causing a punctured lung.

Due to the severity of these injuries most of the victims were admitted directly to hospitals, bypassing the police departments and detention centres. The most severely injured patients were admitted to a military hospital while others were distributed between the city clinical hospitals and the emergency hospital.

“We have seen a pattern of injuries. It is always various combinations of blunt force trauma: fracture of the ribs, fractures of the bones of the pelvis, arms and legs, or fractures of individual parts of these. We no longer recorded hematomas, bruising, and abrasions, we just described where they were”, — a paramedic from one of the ambulances has told “Mediazona.”

Most people were beaten after being detained, not during clashes with security officials in the streets

More than half of the victims were brutalised in police vans, police departments and the detention centres in Akrestsin Street and Zhodzina. People were beaten by the security forces despite offering no resistance and not posing a threat to the security forces. Many were beaten repeatedly on the head and buttocks: during their arrest, then in a police van or in a police department, and then in a detention centre. In some cases, the torture continued for several days.

After the beatings in Okrestina Street and the police department, the victims were released with cranial injuries and hematomas on the back, shoulder blades, buttocks and thighs. Traumatic brain injuries and concussions were received by almost 200 people. Most likely, the detainees were laid face down on the floor or placed facing the wall and then beaten with truncheons. On October 11, the telegram channel NEXTA published a video in which the detainees at the detention centre were chased through a line of security officials who were beating them continuously.

More than 25 people from the detention centre on Okrestina Street attended hospitals with fractures and severe injuries. a 21-year-old boy was beaten causing a collapsed lung while his friend suffered two broken ribs and extensive bruising to the entire body.

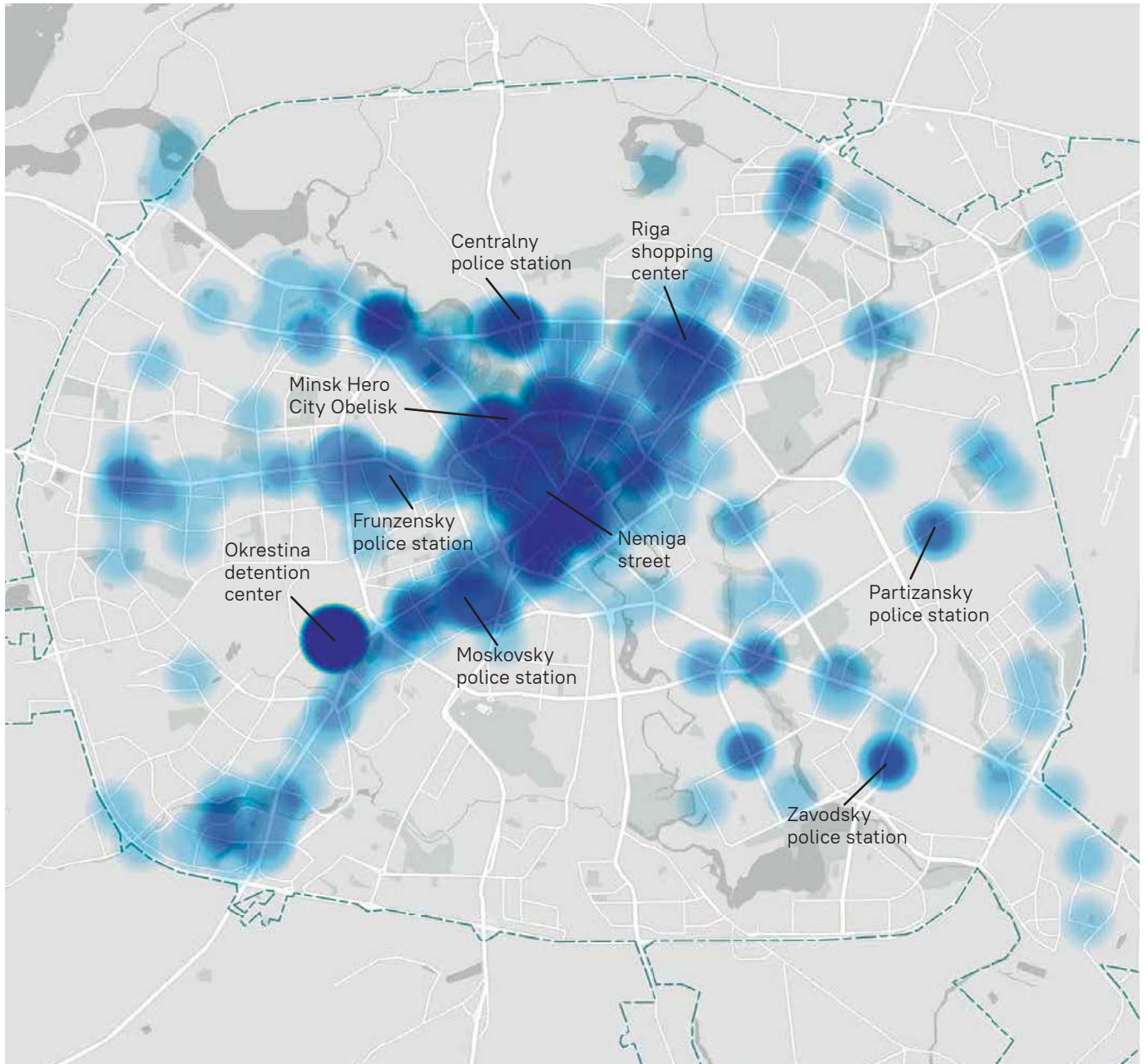
Injuries indicative of sexual abuse

Three detainees received injuries which indicate sexual assault either at the Okrestina Street detention centre or in a police van on the way there. a 31-year-old man, a 29-year-old man and a 17-year-old teenager were all hospitalized with penetrative anal injuries.

An upsurge in street violence occurred on August 10; after which protesters were beaten in police stations and other facilities

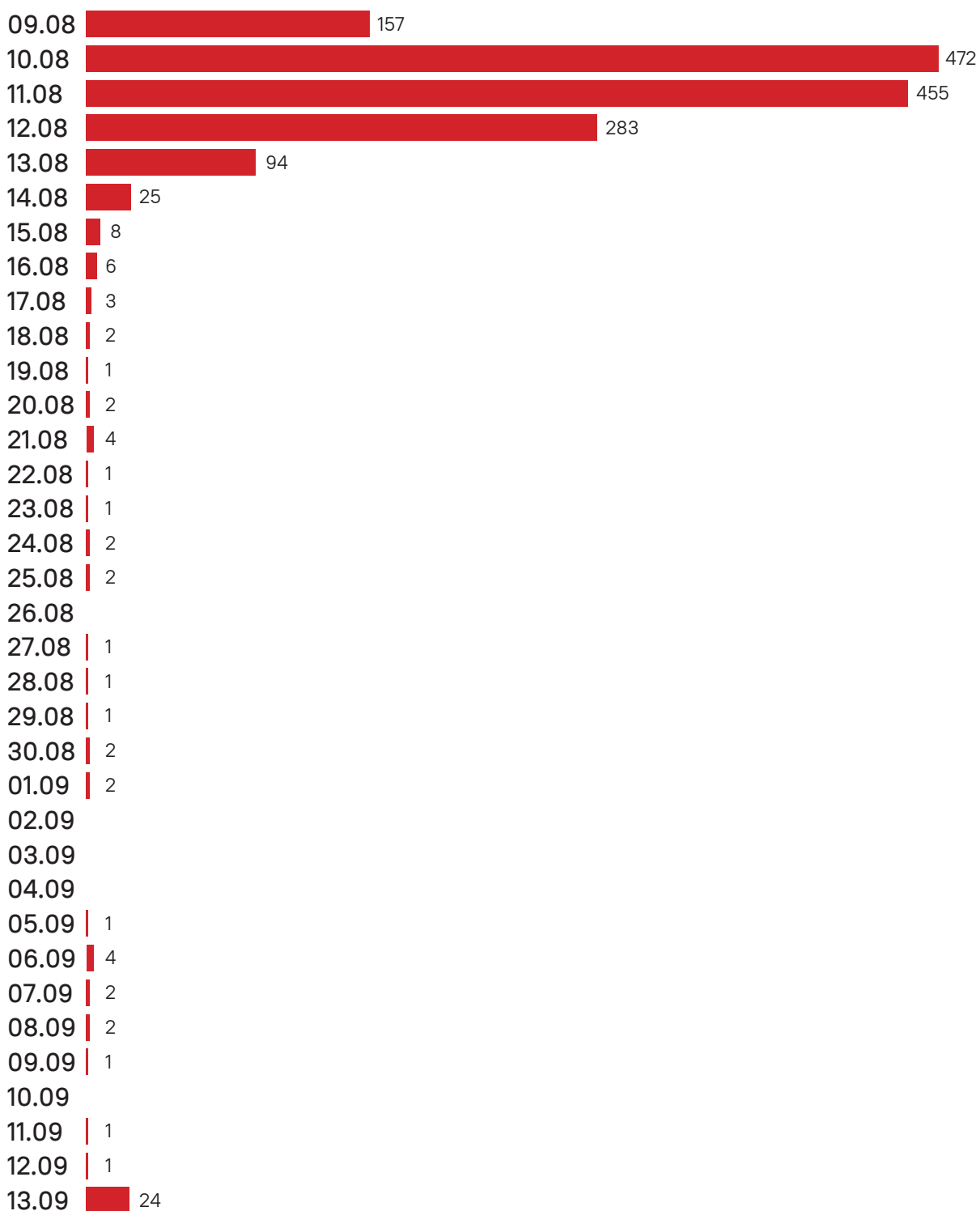
The most violent dispersal of protesters by the security forces took place on August 10: at least 291 people were injured in the streets, i.e. excluding subsequent beatings in police departments and the Okrestina Street detention centre. On the same day, the largest mass arrests took place with more than 3 thousand people detained and taken to police departments. After August 10, the security forces repeatedly continued to assault those who were detained or were under arrest: points on Okrestina Street and Minsk police departments are clearly visible on the map.

HEMATOMAS ON THE MINSK MAP



The next clashes with the security forces occurred on September 13 during a protest outside government buildings in Drazdy: for the first time in a month, more than two dozen cases of violence were recorded. On this date, our data ends.

DATA ON THE NUMBER OF VICTIMS



The security forces assault everyone indiscriminately including women and teenagers

The use of violence by the security forces was indiscriminate: they did not target any group of people they considered a threat but beat everyone who crossed their path. Contrary to propaganda reports, the proportion of drunk people among the victims was insignificant at less than 2%. The data does not mention a single case of drug intoxication.

24 minors were among the victims. They were beaten with the same force as adults: among the injuries received by adolescents are concussions and bruises. 17-year-old Timur M. was beaten so brutally that he had to be placed in a drug-induced coma.

There are 57 women among the victims with the oldest of them being 72 years old: on August 12, security officials beat her near the KGB detention center on Volodarskiy Street and broke her wrist. Women were also tortured after their arrest. The severity of the injuries inflicted on them indicates that they were not spared and were beaten in the same way as the men. In addition, it cannot be concluded that women were detained less often than men: in the first days of protests, there were fewer of them in the streets. Women's marches and chains of solidarity began after the mass arrests.

Not a single criminal case has been initiated due to the actions of the security forces during the protests. The Minsk Prosecutor's Office refused to say whether the torture in the Okrestina Street detention centre was being investigated, referring to this as classified "official information".

On October 11, security forces resumed arrests and beatings of protesters, and the Deputy Interior Minister said that the police were ready to use lethal weapons.

1376
known
victims



33 years • Male • August 9

Closed traumatic fracture of left zygomatic arch with displacement of bone fragments. Open traumatic fracture of left zygomatic bone, traumatic neuropathy of the 2nd branch of the left trigeminal nerve.

Was beaten by OMON officers near Center of Football on Pobediteley Avenue.

23 years • Female • August 11

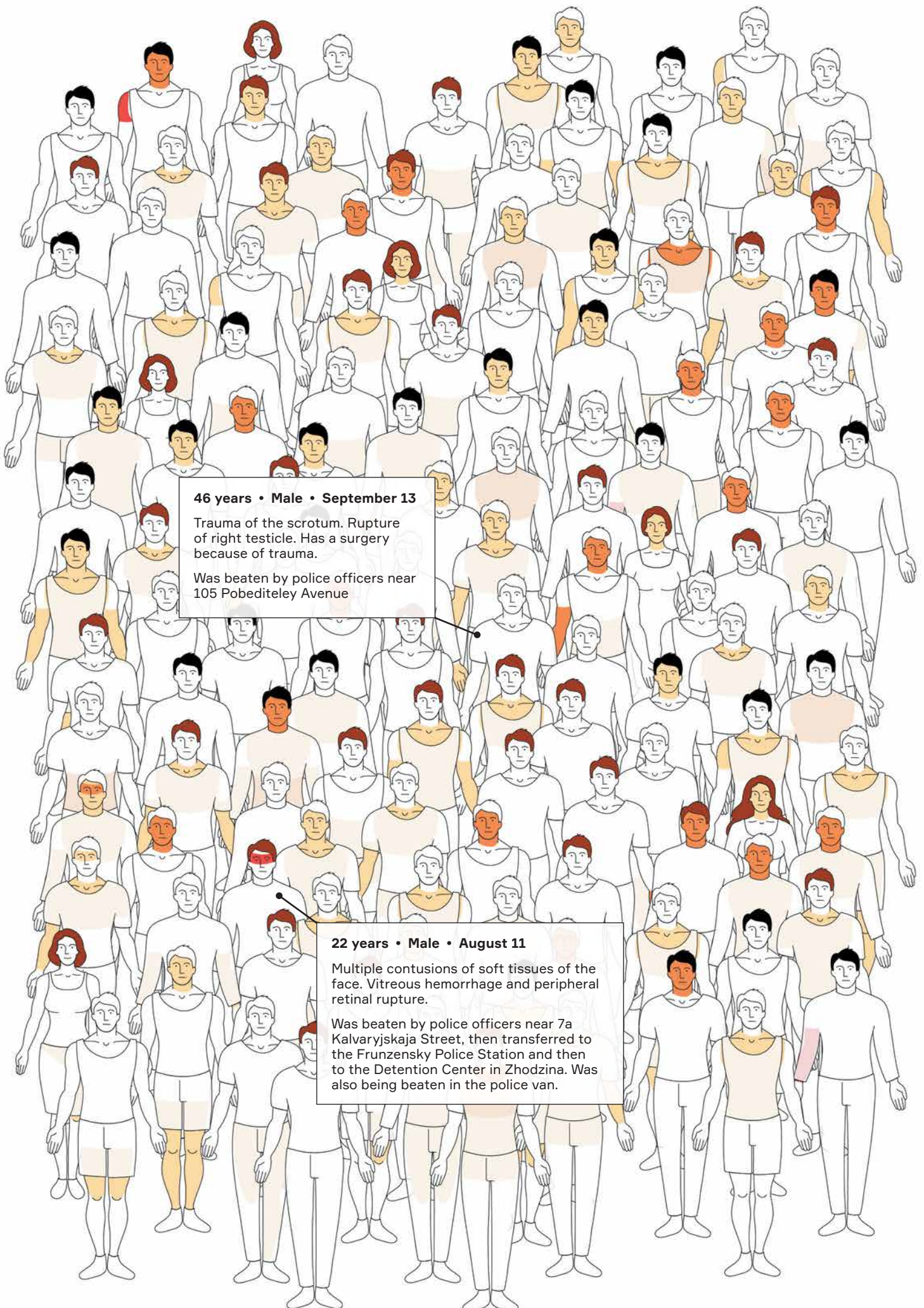
Mild closed head injury with brain concussion. Hematomas of both scapular and femur regions, abrasions on both wrists.

At 19.40 was beaten by OMON and traffic police officers.

Age is unknown • August 10

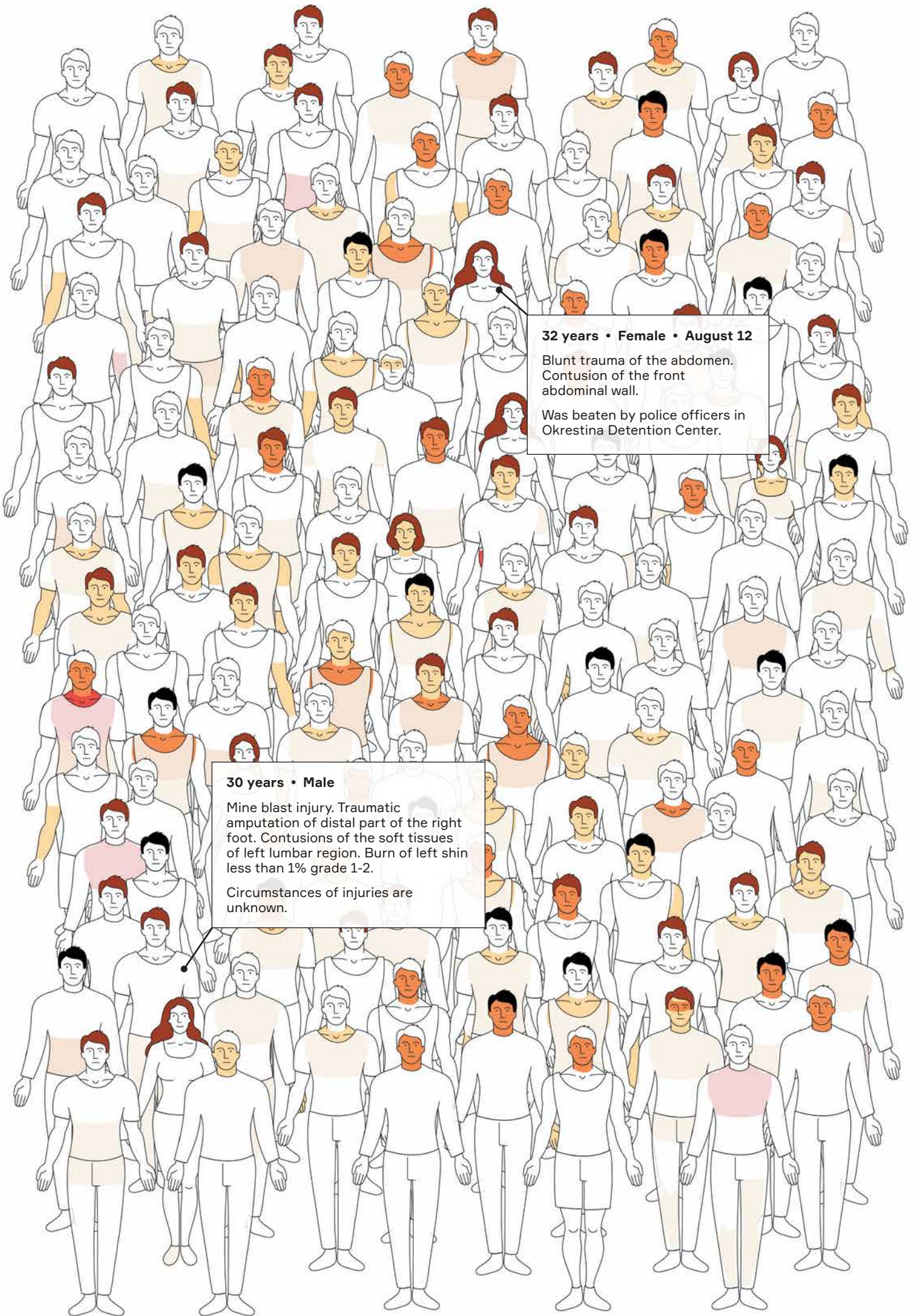
Mine blast injuries. Multiple comminuted fractures of left foot and fibula with displacement of fragments, multiple shrapnel wounds of soft tissues of right thigh and shin, left thigh, shin and foot.

Victim of a flash grenade explosion near Pushkinskaya metro station.



46 years • Male • September 13
Trauma of the scrotum. Rupture of right testicle. Has a surgery because of trauma.
Was beaten by police officers near 105 Pobediteley Avenue

22 years • Male • August 11
Multiple contusions of soft tissues of the face. Vitreous hemorrhage and peripheral retinal rupture.
Was beaten by police officers near 7a Kalvaryjskaja Street, then transferred to the Frunzensky Police Station and then to the Detention Center in Zhodzina. Was also being beaten in the police van.



32 years • Female • August 12

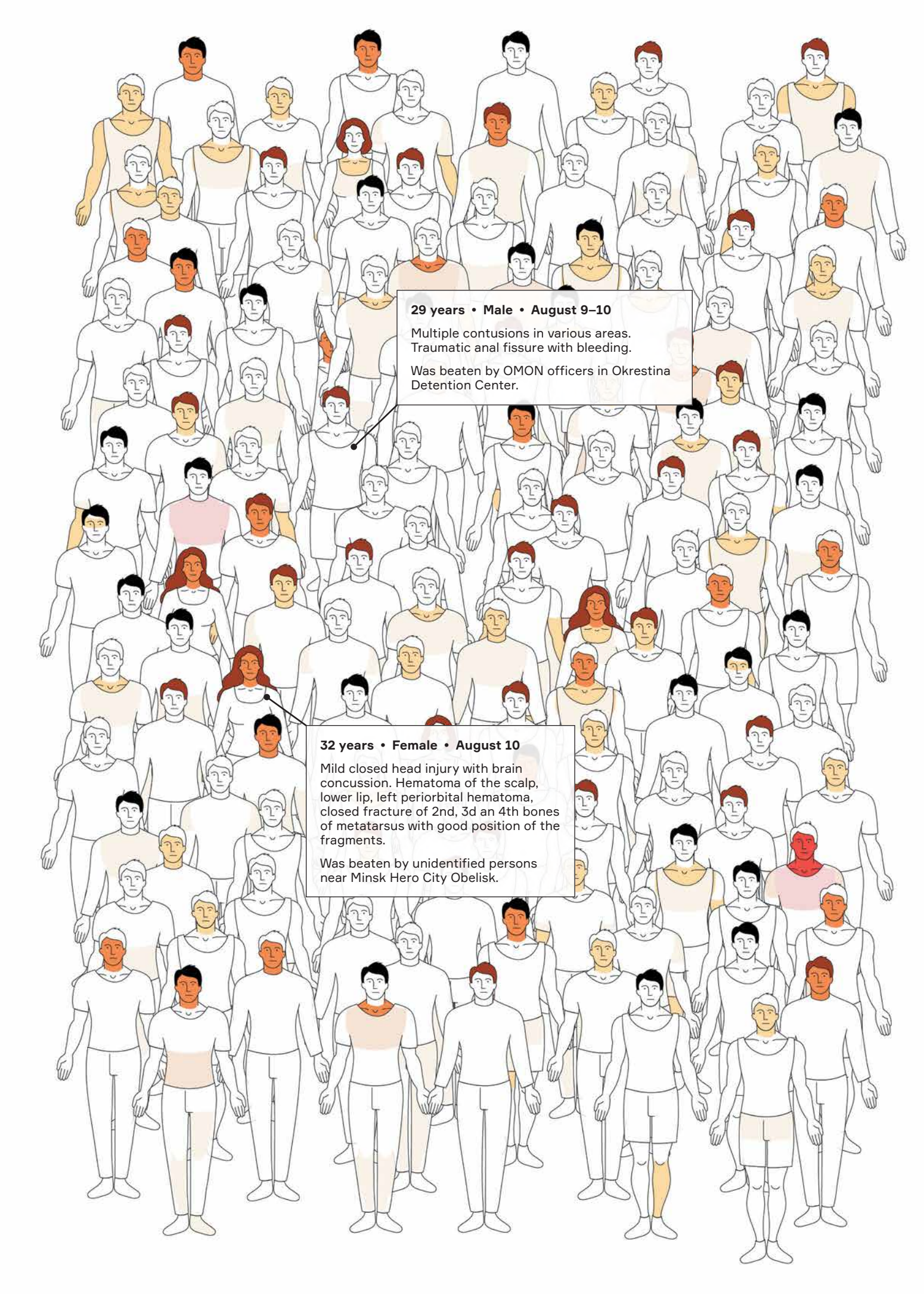
Blunt trauma of the abdomen.
Contusion of the front
abdominal wall.

Was beaten by police officers in
Okrestina Detention Center.

30 years • Male

Mine blast injury. Traumatic
amputation of distal part of the right
foot. Contusions of the soft tissues
of left lumbar region. Burn of left shin
less than 1% grade 1-2.

Circumstances of injuries are
unknown.



29 years • Male • August 9–10

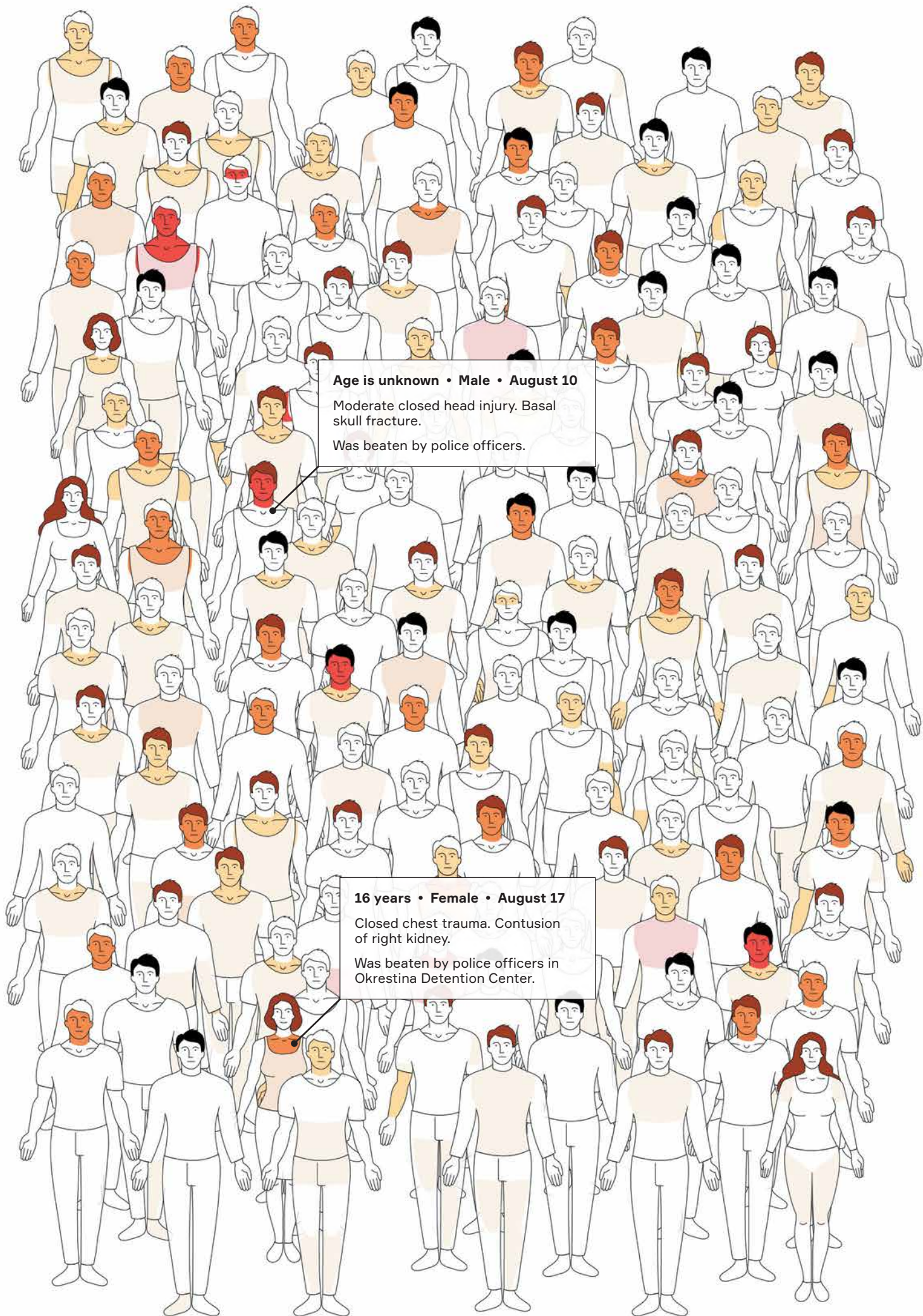
Multiple contusions in various areas.
Traumatic anal fissure with bleeding.

Was beaten by OMON officers in Okrestina
Detention Center.

32 years • Female • August 10

Mild closed head injury with brain
concussion. Hematoma of the scalp,
lower lip, left periorbital hematoma,
closed fracture of 2nd, 3d an 4th bones
of metatarsus with good position of the
fragments.

Was beaten by unidentified persons
near Minsk Hero City Obelisk.



Age is unknown • Male • August 10

Moderate closed head injury. Basal skull fracture.

Was beaten by police officers.

16 years • Female • August 17

Closed chest trauma. Contusion of right kidney.

Was beaten by police officers in Okrestina Detention Center.



56 years • Male • August 9

Multiple gunshot wounds of the trunk, left lower extremity, lacerated gunshot wound of the arm.

Victim of unidentified perpetrators in Pobediteley Avenue.

45 years • Male • August 11

Closed fracture of the right first rib and manubrium sternum. Contusion in back buttocks and thighs.

Was beaten by police officers near Riga shopping center.



20 years • Female • August 9

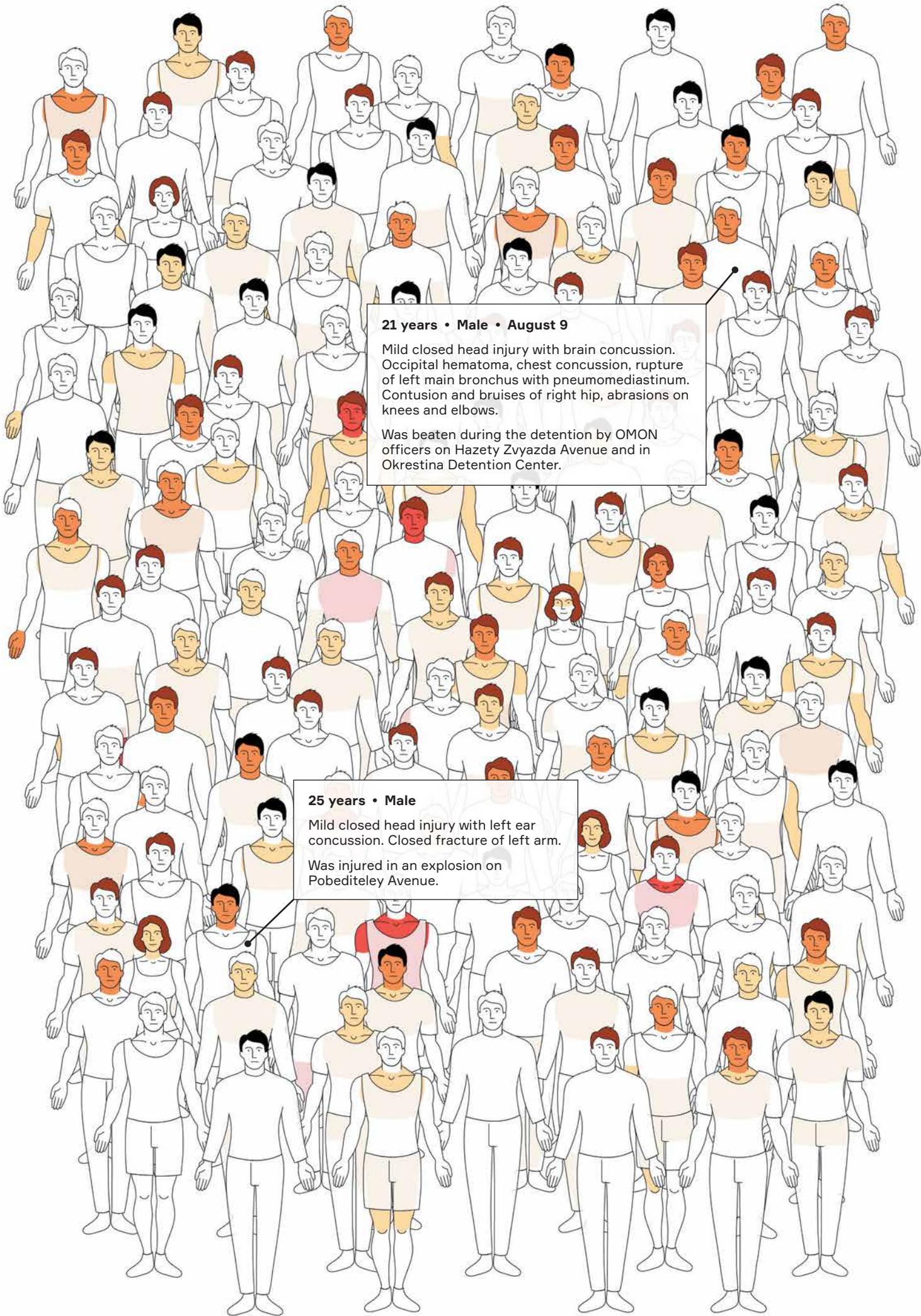
Shrapnel wound to the face and lower extremities.

Was injured by unidentified persons. Was transferred to the military hospital.

36 years • Female • September 13

Mild closed head injury with brain concussion, periorbital soft tissue bruises in both sides, hematoma of left eye.

Was injured during the detention on the crossing of Kamayskaya and Tymrazyeva streets.



21 years • Male • August 9

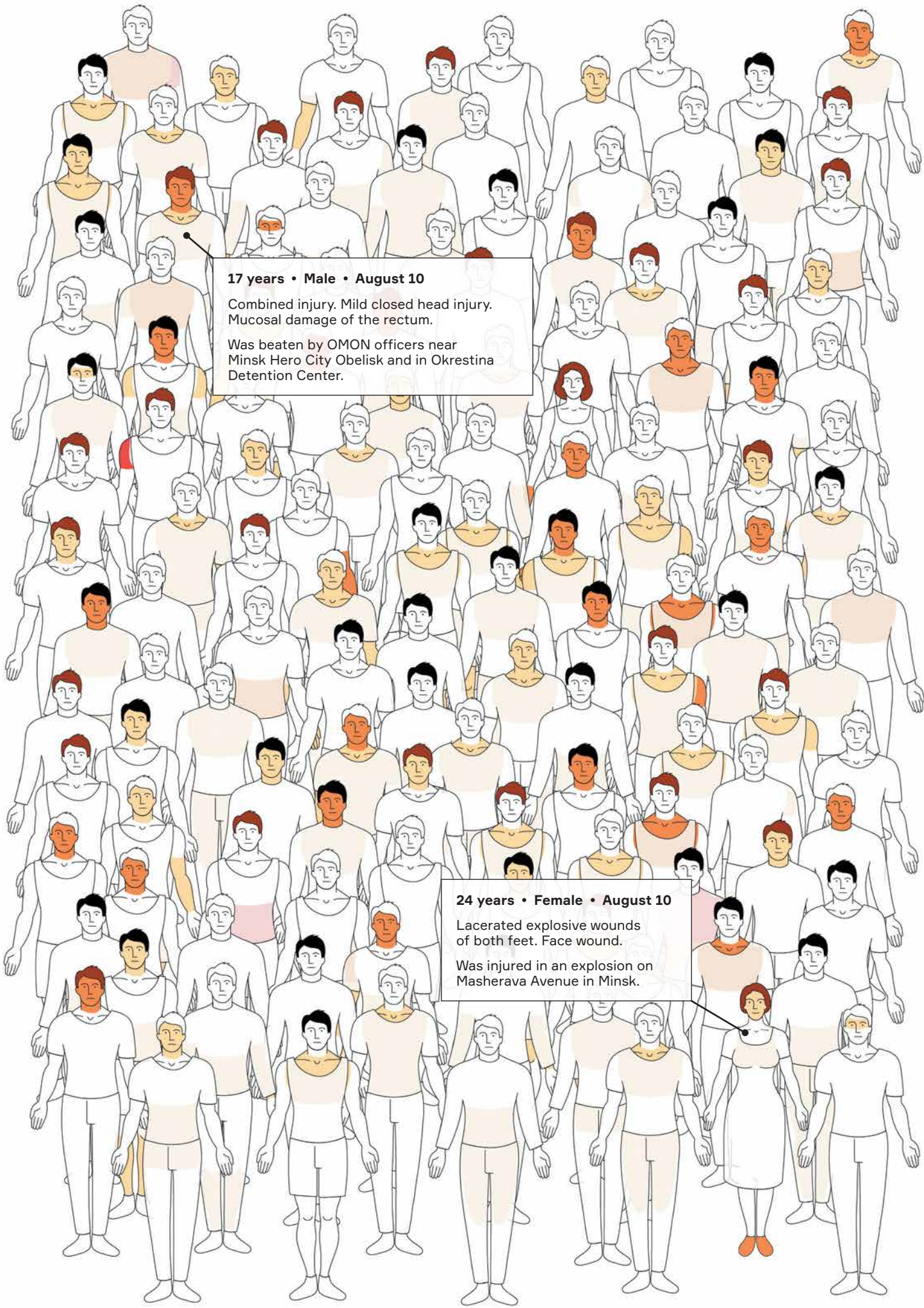
Mild closed head injury with brain concussion. Occipital hematoma, chest concussion, rupture of left main bronchus with pneumomediastinum. Contusion and bruises of right hip, abrasions on knees and elbows.

Was beaten during the detention by OMON officers on Hazety Zvyazda Avenue and in Okrestina Detention Center.

25 years • Male

Mild closed head injury with left ear concussion. Closed fracture of left arm.

Was injured in an explosion on Pobediteley Avenue.



17 years • Male • August 10

Combined injury. Mild closed head injury.
Mucosal damage of the rectum.

Was beaten by OMON officers near
Minsk Hero City Obelisk and in Okrestina
Detention Center.

24 years • Female • August 10

Lacerated explosive wounds
of both feet. Face wound.

Was injured in an explosion on
Masherava Avenue in Minsk.



44 years • Male • August 10

Gunshot wound of left arm from rubber bullet.
Was injured near Puskinskaya metro station.

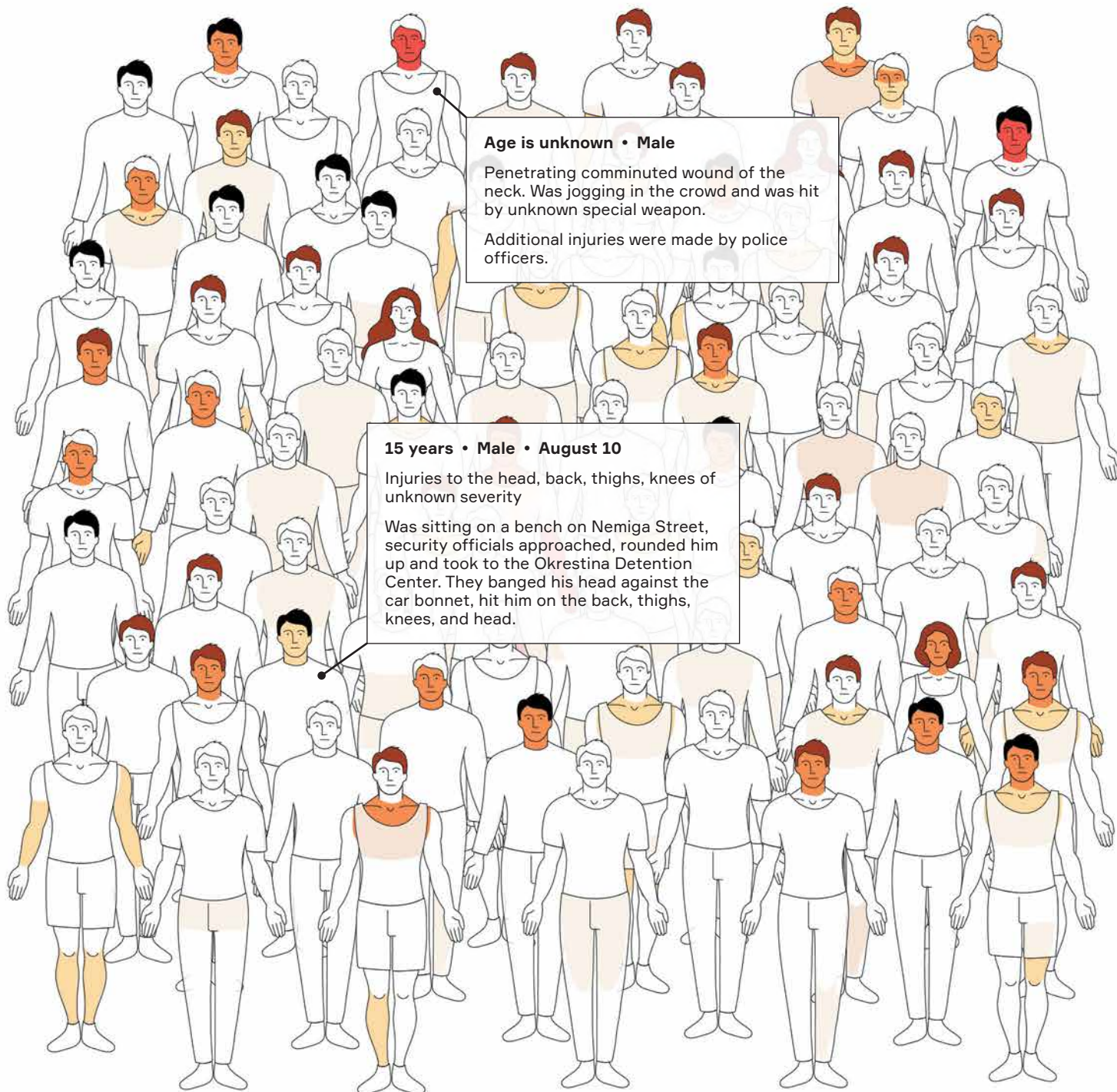
24 years • Male • August 9

Penetrating gunshot to the
abdomen with the eventration
of small intestine.
Perpetrators were not identified.

31 years • Male • August 10

Mild closed head injury with brain
concussion. Blunt trauma of abdomen,
subcapsular hematoma of the liver. Gunshot
wound in left mesogastral area.

Was injured near Pushkinskaja metro
station. Then was beaten in Okrestina
Detention Center.



Age is unknown • Male

Penetrating comminuted wound of the neck. Was jogging in the crowd and was hit by unknown special weapon.

Additional injuries were made by police officers.

15 years • Male • August 10

Injuries to the head, back, thighs, knees of unknown severity

Was sitting on a bench on Nemiga Street, security officials approached, rounded him up and took to the Okrestina Detention Center. They banged his head against the car bonnet, hit him on the back, thighs, knees, and head.

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“It’s Hell on Earth There”: Stories From the Okrestina Street Jail After the Elections

<https://news.tut.by/society/696444.html>

Author: Snezhana Inanets

“Two liters of water were given for 80 people, about once every four hours. Not everyone had the chance to take a sip. We stood in a concrete yard for 28 hours; we were not fed.” This is Vitaly’s story. Minsk, 2020. A three-time futsal champion of Belarus, a student and a printer have just left the temporary detention center on Okrestina Street and told us about the conditions they had to face.

“They beat everyone and berated us: ‘What changes do you need? I’ve got a change for you!’”

Sergei Podalinsky, 38 years old, is an athlete who has been playing on the national futsal team for many years, a three-time champion of Belarus, a three-time cup winner. He was detained near the Yubileinaya hotel on the night of August 10 and released the next day.

“After all the attacks and explosions at the Obelisk, my wife and I were returning home from that area, asking police how to get to our car safely. They told us, as well as a very frightened woman on a bicycle. A large squad of riot police officers were standing near Masherov Avenue. We approached them to ask how to go further. They told the women to go and asked me to show my documents.

“They twisted my arms and threw me onto a bus. They were indignant: Why did I need any kind of changes? Why was I wearing a white shirt? I have a white T-shirt with a decoration; I bought it in a state-owned store from a state-owned factory. I replied that we lived in a country where you have a voice and can express your opinion. They beat everyone and berated us: ‘What changes do you need? I’ve got a change for you!’ But there were no utter atrocities in the

police van; one commander even told them, 'Take it easy.' There's a boot print on my T-shirt — I'll frame it and keep as a memento.

"They took me to the Okrestina Street jail in a police van. To be honest, it's hell on Earth there. You cannot do this to the citizens of your country. We were kneeling along the fence for three hours, and they were bringing more and more people in. When people asked for some water, or go to the toilet, all they got was batons. You lose track of time there. We spent three or four hours in this position. And they constantly shouted that we were 'beasts' and should be gunned down.

"After that they took us to the cells; ours was designed for four but held 21 people. It was terribly hot, we only had a small hole in the window. The poor people sweated; we only drank water and got no food at all.

"After 14-15 hours, they told us to sign reports. If you signed, your penalty was two base values; if you didn't, you got 15 days of detention. People started arguing that the statements should be read, for a start. 'You'll get the chance to do that during your 15 days,' they answered. Someone told us that the girls in the next cell who had signed the reports had been released. We were glad and agreed to sign them; only five people refused. The reports were all the same: the detainee was there at 10 p.m. shouting 'Long Live Belarus.' I was still in line at the polling station at 10 p.m., so how does that work? Their answer was, 'Sign it, these are formalities. We don't have time for this, we've got a lot of work.'

"We were taken out of the cell. That was encouraging. But then — we were made to kneel again, and later to run to the third floor. They escorted us to a cell with 17 people inside! There were 38 of us in total, while the cell, just like the previous one, was designed for four. They closed the door. The next time they came in was around midnight. We could barely breathe there, people were standing as close together as on the subway at rush hour. We took turns sitting on the beds. We asked for someone to come and open the window in the hall so there would at least be some air circulation. They opened it for a while. We also had tap water there.

"It turned out there was a man with a broken bone in the cell. He asked for a doctor, but no one came during the whole day I spent there. He said that he had somehow managed to put the bone back in position on his first day there. His leg was swollen, big and blue. He was in bad shape, but he sat there as if he was already used to it. One of us had some nimesil, and he felt better for a while.

“There was also an accredited observer among us. He worked at a polling station and had called the police to document violations. They took him instead. He hadn’t eaten anything since the morning of August 9, so he was even hungrier than we were. He asked for food once and was denied, to put it mildly. There was a guy with Israeli dual citizenship. He had been in a café, stepped outside to smoke, never to come back – they took him to Okrestina Street. Some other people ended up there even though that they had been returning home from the night shift at 2 a.m.

“The next day they started escorting people to their trials one or two at a time. Some of them returned to the cell literally in 5 minutes, sentenced to 14 days of detention. It was then that everyone realized that we had been deceived, like children, despite the signed reports.

“Only two people out of the entire group of 38 got fines, including me. There were no people who looked suspicious, no strange guys, among us. We saw some girls – they stood there, proud and very courageous, worried about us. There was a pregnant girl among them, as it later turned out.

“Such a situation makes you feel like a helpless creature in a cage. I was released on August 11. I had spent almost two days without food. It was suggested to me that I’d better not complain.

“The attitude was what shocked me the most. That’s not how they should treat people whose guilt hasn’t even been proven. Actually, proven guilt doesn’t justify all that either. Humiliation, constant insults. When I look at footage of arrests, my eyes run with tears right away, because I have a very good idea of what will happen later to those who are arrested.”

“The girls had their periods and were told to wipe themselves with their shirts”

Karina is a college student; she asked us to change her name. She was detained on August 9 in the center of Minsk and released on August 11. She says she never participated in any rallies.

“My friends and I were just looking for the way to the Metro to get home. We asked some OMON how to get there so that we wouldn’t get detained. At some point, cars drove up, riot police ran out and just started beating people, twisting their arms. I witnessed some officers dragging a girl by her hair who had been

riding a kick scooter, while other officers stood around and laughed. I lost it and asked, 'What's so funny? What are you doing?' One of them knocked me to the ground; I scratched my arm against the asphalt. We were packed into a yellow bus and brought to Okrestina Street at 1 a.m.

"They treated us terribly. There was a cruel man at the entrance who grabbed us by the neck and threw us against the wall. We stood up, looking at the floor and keeping our feet shoulder-width apart. They started registering us; we girls handed over our bras, our telephones, and were escorted to our cell after the check.

"There were 13 girls in a cell designed for four people at first. We had tables and a toilet. Everything smelled terrible, there were cockroaches and bugs running around. We had no food for two days. When we asked for some, we were told, 'No, (expletives), now you'll know who to vote for!'

"We thought we'd be released if we managed to survive a day, because there were many girls among us who had been taken right outside their houses.

"We asked for toilet paper, water. We were told to drink tap water. It had a terrible chlorine smell, we were afraid to drink it. There was no toilet paper. Some girls had their periods; they asked for something, anything. They were insulted and told 'Wipe yourselves with your T-shirts!' So either they used newspapers or they stained their underwear and then took it off, washed it and walked around wrapped in a T-shirt, waiting for their panties to dry.

"Next morning we were forced to sign reports. We were promised we'd be detained for 15 days if we didn't sign. I asked to read the report. They threatened me, 'Sign, otherwise I will (expletive) you and put you in prison again.' That's how they answered me. I was crying, I didn't know what I was signing.

"They promised they would release us within an hour. We hoped we would be out soon, because by then we hadn't eaten for more than 24 hours. Everyone was hungry, dizzy; the cell was stuffy, there were 13 of us. But we were escorted to another cell, with 20 people in it, which made 33 in total. There were six beds.

"There were only 6 sleeping places. Bunk beds. We didn't know how to sleep, sit; it was terrible, stuffy, there was no food. We were dizzy, we called for a doctor, but the doctor was only brought two days later. I was dizzy from not eating, and they just gave me Validol (on the night of August 11).

“They opened the food hatch in the cell so that there was at least some air. They threatened to block the air completely if we behaved badly. We tried to learn what ‘bad behavior’ meant; it turned out to mean asking for a doctor. And the food hatch was closed. We sat at the window looking at the people outside standing and shouting.

“Three more girls were brought to our cell later. They were observers, sentenced to seven days of detention each, even though they had a lawyer. These girls were lucky: their parents managed to pass some things to them. One girl shared some nuts with us. Each of us ate a nut, and we felt at least some relief.

“My parents were looking for me all that time.

“There was a trial on August 11. The male judge sentenced people to fines, while the female judge preferred 5, 7, 9 days of detention. I was lucky to be sentenced to a 20-base-value fine. After the trial, we got an official paper from the prosecutor’s office warning us that the next time we participated in a ‘rally’ it would be treated as criminal offense. I am very scared; I dream of leaving this country.

“I would like to appeal the court decision, but I don’t know yet how to do it. The girls from the cell and I were also going to file a complaint with the Investigative Committee, but I’ll wait a little.”

“We stood in a concrete yard for 28 hours, we were not fed”

Vitaly Savko, 39, works as a printer. He was detained at about 8.30 p.m. on August 10 on his way to the Palace of Sport, and released on August 12.

“Three riot police officers took me, beat me and packed me into a police van. The floor was covered in blood, they made me kneel down.

“They brought us to the Okrestina Street jail. There, bending forward, we ran to the booking search. As we ran we were beaten with batons. If someone fell, they were beaten even harder.

“We were given small bags for the stuff from our pockets. We were told to pull our pants down to the knee, including our underwear, for a thorough check. After that, we were all escorted to the yard.

“The yard looked like an oubliette: four concrete walls, a concrete floor, and bars above, all open to the sky. We measured the area; it was 30 square meters, and there were 80 of us.

“We stood in this yard for 28 hours. We couldn’t sit, so we were standing all the time. They brought us there at around 9:30 p.m. And escorted us to the toilet for the first time the next day at 1 p.m. In total, most of us were taken to the toilet twice during these 28 hours, and one more time was possible for those who really, really needed it. The toilet was about seven square meters, and we were escorted there in groups of 20 and given 15 minutes. We had to go in pairs to meet the deadline.

“We were given 2 liters of water for 80 people about once every four hours. You understand that not everyone could even take a sip. It was torture by hunger and thirst.

“There were different people there — 60, 15, 18 years old. There was a young man, a businessman, who had been leaving his business center when he had been captured. He had had surgery just four days before; he was feeling bad at the jail, so we insisted on calling a doctor. The man never came back, so we hope they let him go.

“People felt sick, some were taken away; there were 80 of us at first and 73 at the end. Someone had epileptic seizures; someone else, endless nosebleeds. One man with obvious cardiac problems scared the hell out of us: his lips and hands turned blue, but he was only given a pill and brought back to us. We laid him on the concrete floor, which was not a great relief, of course, but still. There was also a man who had been riding a bicycle and had been hit so hard in the face by a riot police officer that he developed a severe hematoma all over his face.

“People who had been detained earlier were in the yard next to ours, and they hadn’t been given food or water either. We could hear them shouting, ‘We’ve been here for two days, let us eat or drink!’ Several officers rushed in shouting, ‘Who where is hungry, who here is thirsty?’ We heard them being beaten. The screams were so loud that the whole neighborhood could hear them, for sure. After that, the officers brought them to their knees and tried to learn who had been complaining. Then they made them run in circles — there was a kind of field there — then they put them on their knees again and tried to learn who had demanded food and water. They were beaten three or four times. Finally that yard fell silent, they were only moaning. That was it.

“The people in our yard were kicked out to the field around 1 a.m.; everyone was put on their knees with their hands against the wall. A man was walking back and forth writing down our surnames, dates of birth. If they didn’t like how you were kneeling, you’d get your kidneys battered.

“At about 1 p.m. the day after we were detained, they threw a loaf of bread to us — 540 grams for 80 people. I had read somewhere you’d better not eat this bread, so I gave my share to somebody else. Those who ate the bread had diarrhea. However, we still had no paper and weren’t allowed to go to the toilet...

“The evening of August 11 was rather chilly, and we were all wearing T-shirts and shorts. We started pounding on the doors demanding they take us to the cells.

“Well, yes, after an hour and a half they escorted us to two cells, 40 people in each. The cells were designed for five. However, this was a spa resort compared to the yard! The floor was wooden, warm enough to sleep on. There was water, and we could drink as much as we wanted. Having water and a toilet were our greatest treasure.

“We slept in turns. People were sitting, standing, taking turns lying down. At 4 a.m. they threw a piece of paper and a pen through the food hatch and told us to write down our surnames and dates of birth again, and soon after that they took us out of the cell and put us against the wall. Some were released, some remained detained.

“I was released, but not right away. At first they put us against the wall with our hands on it. About 10 riot police officers forced us to squat. Those who squatted badly were beaten. Those who could not squat were also beaten immediately. Then we did push-ups. While doing that, we were also lectured on how to behave. This was repeated several times. We were not given any documents, not a single one.

“When I got out, I called a taxi. One guy couldn’t walk — I took him to his dormitory outside the city. He was an orphan; he had no money, nobody to call. He was only 22! He said, ‘I have to go to the military conscription office tomorrow. How can I? I have no passport, they said they would return it in 4 days.’ I recommended that he have his injuries checked. I also put one more person in a taxi and took him to Zhdanovichi.

“I won’t go to have my injuries checked. I have bruises, a lot of them, but I can walk, so I’ll go to work.”



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“They beat us and asked what we didn’t like about the country.” Stories of those who leave the Okrestina Street jail

<https://news.tut.by/society/696608.html>

Authors: Katerina Borisevich, Ekaterina Panteleeva

Anya is 19 years old. When she notices her mother among those who are waiting, Anya rushes into her arms, and they stand in silence for a long time, with tears in their eyes. Anya was detained on August 12, not far from her house near the Riga shopping center. The riot police grabbed her when she was returning home. She saw a convoy of police vans ahead and decided to wait for it to pass.

“A police van drove out of the yard, and they started shooting rubber bullets at us – people who were just standing there,” she says, still trembling from the memories. “I tried to run away, they shot me in the back, I fell, and a police van drove right next to my face. Somehow I got up, ran into a bush, where the OMON got me. I was dragged across the asphalt and ended up in a van with some men. They had been beaten very badly. When we were transferred to a bus near the Obelisk later they lined us all up, and everyone was beaten with a baton. It was terrible.”

Anya says they were not fed at all on the first day. Then they were given water and some bread, no other food. Like many others, she confirms that the men were beaten at night.

“We heard the screams all night. They were unbearable... And the most difficult. The men lay in the yard in the cold; the officers threw ice water on them and beat them. The jail employees were more or less humane, while the riot police coming there gave the impression of being high,” says Anya, as her parents listen to this story with horror. “There were 30 of us in a cell designed

for four people. We slept on the bed, under the bed, on the table and under the table. We spent the first night outside on a concrete floor.”

Anya was tried in the jail; she doesn’t remember the judge’s name.

“They read some rights to me there, announced the place of arrest, where I was not present at all. Supposedly I was near the Pushkinskaya metro station waving glow sticks and shouting ‘Stop, cockroach!’ I refused to sign the report and was sentenced to 11 days of detention.” This is how Anya describes her trial.

Her parents kept looking for their daughter in the Okrestina Street jail; they also went to the Zhodino detention center. All the police could say a day later was that Anya had been detained, but information about her place of detention was not provided to her relatives.

“We weren’t allowed to call; they said, ‘F*** you, we won’t give you anything.’” This is how the jail employees reacted to requests to call home.

On Thursday evening the women from Anya’s cell were taken out and told, “Something needs to be reconsidered.” She told the staff in two offices the details of her detention and was allowed to call her relatives at 8:30 p.m. The family drove to Okrestina Street. Anya’s parents hugged her, put her in their car and took her home.

“They beat us and asked what we didn’t like about the country”

People have been leaving the jail in groups of three or four until 1 a.m., and in bigger groups after that. One man has no sleeve on his shirt, another has a black eye. A guy who looks like he’s 16-18 years old seems to be confused — no familiar faces on Okrestina Street. A volunteer runs up to him offering a phone. He makes a call. He refuses to talk, just like many of the older men.

“Did they beat you?”

“What do you think?” One look at him makes you understand: they did, and it was hell on Earth.

Many people refuse to talk about the abuse; they’re intimidated. If you know anything about the treatment they faced, such a refusal is understandable. People have been beaten, threatened with criminal charges, mocked and

humiliated. Two friends who don't want to give their names in the media or show their faces, but are ready to show the marks of the stun gun and the beatings, say, "We were bludgeoned."

"We were in the Zavodskoy district on Wednesday evening. We got into our car and drove off, but people in helmets threatened us with weapons, so we had to stop. We were dragged out of the car and loaded into a van," one guy tells TUT. BY; he's limping and says he'll go get an X-ray tomorrow. It's not clear what's happened to his leg. He also stretches out his arm, swollen from beating.

"Where were you beaten?"

"In the car, with batons, fists; they used electric shocks. Do you want to have a look?" He lifts his T-shirt up, and we see marks from the electrical discharge. Then he turns his back to us, lifts his shorts up and shows us black and blue marks from numerous blows.

"Did they say anything to you while they were beating you?"

"They asked what we didn't like about the country, what changes we wanted. They tried so hard to wreck our knees, elbows and shoulders."

The friends can't say for sure how long the abuse lasted. "They kept beating us until they were done." Six officers were doing the beating. The friends saw the police report later, in the cell. According to them, many detainees had the same wording in their reports. They refused to sign, but were forced to sign a document saying their participation in any other rally would be treated as a criminal offence.

"Did they explain why they let you go?"

"They said that the Minister of Internal Affairs had come. We didn't see him."

Vadim, 32 years old. He is one of those who left the detention center after 1 a.m., although in this place time seems to have no meaning anymore. When we meet, he is sitting at the gate of the jail on the curb, surrounded by volunteers and people's relatives. He holds a cup of tea in his long, thin fingers. He'll later tell us that he was detained on the night of August 10; he didn't get anything to eat until the night of August 14. He didn't go on a hunger strike, he refused to eat: he wanted to sicken himself so that an ambulance would take him away. But his body was strong enough to bear it all.

Vadim wants to talk to journalists, he really does, but he's very scared. Many of those who leave the jail are afraid to speak. "I'd rather not." "I would love to, but I can't." We get these answers over and over again. "Why not?" "Who forbade you?" we ask, and in response we get silence, tired eyes and once, a smile.

"Let's not talk here," Vadim says to me, looking lost, when I sit down next to him. "I'll walk away now, and you follow me, because there are cameras here."

We move a few meters away. Vadim says that he was detained on the street while he and his friends were walking.

"Can you shield me?" He interrupts our conversation in confusion and turns to the young people who are standing nearby. "Could you please stand with your backs to us so that I don't get caught on camera?"

During our 17-minute interview, he will cringe a couple of times from the feeling that he might be followed.

"When we were brought to the detention center and the door of the police van opened, the riot police officers were standing on both sides. You run in a column, and they just beat you from the left and right. That's their game," says the young man, replacing "we" with "you", as if he wants to be away from this whole story. "They shout, 'Run faster, b*****s.' The atmosphere feels like an aggressive drunk man who starts beating his family at home. Then they put us against the wall, and we stood in a half-squat for about 2-3 hours. Why did we stand for such a long time? Because, as I understand it, all the cells were occupied. Then we were placed in a 'sump' with four walls and bars above. It was about 3 a.m."

According to Vadim, the jail employees responded to any demands with aggression and physical abuse.

"If you start demanding something from them, they start beating you," says Vadim. He stayed silent; they didn't touch him. "But these are reasonable requirements, justified by human rights. They didn't feed us for the first two days; people shouted, 'I want to eat.' After two days, someone in the next cell seemed to have lost it. They kept banging on the door, 'Let us go, we want to eat.' Then we heard them being beaten. Everyone was silent in my cell. We were adults, someone in his late 40s; we didn't share such youthful exuberance."

"Life in a cell," Vadim continues, "can be described in a couple of words: you just sit and wait. The space is too crowded, so you can't sleep or lie down."

“At some point, a man was brought to us [Vadim realized it was one of the new detainees]; his jeans were covered in blood. He said it was the blood of his friend who was beaten. The second person escorted to our cell coughed up blood,” says Vadim.

“Did you have a trial?”

“Formally I was never there,” he replies. “No trial, nothing. They brought me in, held me, and now they’ve let me out.”

“Maybe I can take you home?” someone offered Vadim help.

He refused. He said that he still wanted to stay near the detention center, with those who were standing there.

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“They Put a Combat Grenade Into My Underwear and Said They Would Get Away with Killing Me”: Detainees Talk About Beatings

<https://news.tut.by/society/696664.html>

Author: Katerina Borisevich

We spoke to men of various ages, occupations and even political views. However, they have one request in common: they wish to remain anonymous, because the continuous beatings in the Okrestina Street jail have made them scared of harassment from those who forced them to kneel at night, beat them with rubber and wooden sticks, forced them to crawl and to shout “I love the riot police.”

Our decision to change the names of our characters becomes understandable when you look at their photos. They have been beaten black and blue. Two of

the men are now in the hospital; one detainee was taken directly from the jail to an intensive care unit.

“My legs are a mess, I was crippled”

Mikhail is over 40. The candidate he wanted to vote for didn't run in this election; he was against all other candidates and decided not to vote at all. When people took to the streets again on August 10, he talked his wife into a walk along Independence Avenue.

“Near the Circus the sidewalks were blocked, riot police officers stood on both sides of the road. I don't know what happened to me but I approached one of them and asked why the road was blocked. Some supervisor gave the go-ahead, and they grabbed me. They immediately put me against the wall, feet shoulder-width apart, all these things,” Mikhail says, but they failed to find anything during their search, as he was going for a walk. “I had no illusions about the system, but to be honest, I'm shocked by what I saw. I didn't know the situation was that bad.”

He was first onto the OMON bus; they tied his hands behind the back with something, and he was left watching others being detained: people going home from work, riding a bicycle. The hell began that night, when the detainees were transferred from the bus to a police van.

“The mayhem began; they showed their true faces. When they brought us to Okrestina Street, they lined us up with our heads down, arms behind our backs, and commanded, ‘Run!’ We ran, they beat us on the back with rubber truncheons; all this with howling, pressure, to the sounds of dogs barking. ‘We'll show you! You wanted changes, you'll get them. How much did they pay you? Tell me!’ After that we were taken to an exercise yard, 6 by 8 meters. Concrete walls, a concrete floor, bars above. There were 80 of us in the yard, while I counted more than 120 people the next day. One guy had lost his shoes during the detention, so he stood barefoot on the cold concrete floor for almost 24 hours. The guard had someone's sneakers, some slippers, but didn't give them to the guy. It hurt to look at him, but a good man gave him his own shoes for a while.”

Mikhail repeats himself three times to make it clear that they were beaten by the riot police rather than the jail staff.

“I am a grown man, and I’m not gonna lie: I screamed, I cried. I guess they beat people at night so that there are no witnesses,” he speculates, because the jail is located near private homes, and the relatives of the detainees are dispersed at night, so the abuse begins after 1 a.m. “You lose track of time in there, your watch is taken away. Somewhere around 4 a.m. they kicked us outside, put us on our knees on the tiles with our arms behind our backs, heads down; if someone didn’t understand a command, they would beat him with a baton. They recorded our data while we kneeled like that. It was the riot police who acted brutally.”

Then he was transferred to a cell designed for 4; there were 61 people there. Food, if you can call it that, was given to the detainees of both cells when they were in the exercise yard again.

“They threw us a loaf of bread for 120 people. I didn’t eat any. We could take water when went to the toilet, 2 bottles for all of us. However, the toilet wasn’t always allowed.”

“Were there people with injuries in the detention center? Did they get medical assistance?”

“There were people with cranio-cerebral injuries, open wounds that needed to be sewn up. I didn’t see an ambulance called for anyone.”

On Friday night, when they started releasing detainees, ambulances came one after another to the walls of the jail and took people to hospitals.

“They put me on my knees several times; this is definitely their favorite pastime. It was impossible to examine the faces of those who beat us — they were wearing helmets, and we weren’t allowed to raise or turn our heads; whoever raised their head received a blow,” Mikhail says, adding that he was beaten for the third time just before being released. “They kicked us outside at four in the morning, saying they would give us a lecture on what should be said in the media. I couldn’t guess what was about to happen, and believed we would actually have a conversation. We were laid on the ground with our faces down and beaten on our legs, even harder than before, or maybe I was unlucky and I got a sadist who was beating me and saying, ‘Will you go to any rallies?’ I answered, ‘No.’ However, he liked the process so much that started beating me even harder, in an orgy of enjoyment. Then we were put back on our feet, led to the wall and forced to squat for a long time. If we squatted badly, they beat us. My legs were a mess; they crippled me. Then we were told, ‘Now you

understand how to behave correctly with the media and what will happen to you if you end up here again.’ The worst thing is that the riot police officers were young; they seemed to believe that they were punishing evil.”

Mikhail was released from the detention center without a report, so there was no trial. He has already sought medical attention.

“I crawled, and they hit me on the head with a stick that had a metal rod inside”

Maxim was beaten to mummification, and this is no exaggeration: his legs, arms and buttocks are covered in huge black and purple bruises; there are stitches on his head in two areas. He was detained near a shopping center, where an Almaz special forces unit and a riot police squad were located.

“When they detain people, they beat them, heavily and often,” says Maxim. “I had protective masks, respirators, gloves in my backpack. Some of them decided that it was an organizer’s backpack, so they started asking whose backpack it was; I denied everything. Then three officers in black uniforms took me around the corner of the shopping center and showed me a grenade, saying, ‘Now we’ll remove the pin, you blow up, and we say it was an improvised explosive device. If you die, nothing will happen to us.’ They shoved the grenade in my underpants and ran a couple of meters away, then came back and started beating me. After that, they took me to a police van. My hands were tied behind my back all that time.”

People were not allowed to sit in the police van, Maxim says; they were placed on top of each other, beaten from time to time when the officers walked over them.

“Your hands start swelling up because of being tied. If you complain, they hit you on the hands. There was a guy with asthma in the police van. He was being crushed by the people, he started choking, shouting; an officer approached him, put his boot on his neck and began to press down, saying ‘I don’t care if you die.’ ” Maxim says everyone was beaten equally, but the Almaz unit was the cruelest. He recalls that while someone was escorting a detainee, an Almaz officer could come up and hit him in the face for no reason.

Maxim, like other victims of the beatings, notes that they were deliberately hit on the legs and knees, so that they couldn’t walk normally.

“The OMON officer who was closer to me kept his foot on my neck, pressed it down, beat me.” Then he starts telling what happened in the police van. “If you had a phone with you, it was either broken or unlocked. If you refused to tell them the password, they would beat it out of you. I saw them undress a guy and tell him they would rape him with a baton if he didn’t tell them the password. He did.”

Maxim tells so much about the horrors of detentions, beatings and overall conditions that we can hardly understand how he holds on after everything he has witnessed and suffered.

“There were 18-year-old girls with us in the police van; their offense was that they drew the officers’ attention to anyone who was in bad shape. One of the officers, I don’t know exactly if he was an Almaz officer or OMON, approached the girl, grabbed her by the hair and started shouting, “Shut up, you whore! Keep your bloody mouth shut.” And he shaved off some of her hair. He threatened to take her to a cell with male detainees if she didn’t shut up; she would be raped there and then taken to the woods; she would remember that for her whole life.”

Maxim was being beaten all the time and then thrown into another bus “like a sack.”

“I crawled where they told me, but I was crawling too slowly, as my legs were a mess and my hands were tied behind my back - so they beat me again. When I finally crawled to where I was going, an officer approached me, put his boot on my back and started hitting me on the head. He beat me with a rubber baton that had a metal rod inside. I can’t tell how many blows he struck. I switched off, and other detainees were thrown at me. Those who were on me were also being beaten. I lay there trying to guess which position was better: on top you could breathe, but you were beaten; lower down you were suffocating, but at least you weren’t getting beaten.”

When Maxim was brought to the police station he was too weak to stand; he leaned on other people, and when they were pressed against the wall, he saw blood running down that wall from his head. “They grabbed me by the back of my neck and pulled me aside; I was lying there until the doctors arrived. It should be noted that they did not beat me in the jail. I lost consciousness several times, I was shaking, drooling, my arms and legs were all blue. The

doctors came and said I had to be hospitalized. This let me avoid further torture. I want to thank our doctors. They do their best, offer assistance and comfort as much as possible. Our doctors are the best.”

“They used tear gas and stun guns”

Sergei was taken from the Okrestina Street jail to the intensive care unit of a Minsk hospital. His relatives saw his condition and decided to record his story on audio. They say they want to protect Sergei so that later no one forces him to change his testimony. He has yet to be tried; he got a call in the hospital from the court on Thursday and was notified there will be a trial. Its place and time remain unknown.

In order not to disturb him while he is healing, Sergei’s relatives submitted an interview with him to the editorial team.

“I was near the Pushkinskaya Metro station, apart from the crowd; I was going home alone. A small van drove up; four people got out, laid me on the ground and started beating me with batons. They put me in the van, drove for less than an hour, and then transferred me to a police van. They doused me with tear gas in the van, then used a stun gun and took me to the Okrestina Street jail. When I arrived I was beaten again, forced to hold a plank and so on for an hour,” Sergei says.

According to him, 150 people stood in the exercise yard all day.

“We stood outside all day; there were bars up at the top,” Sergei says, recalling his detention.

Sergei is an insulin-dependent diabetic; he says they were asked about medical conditions and he told them, but it was never taken into account.

“I had had no food for two days, only water, which was brought from the WC when we were allowed to use it every 3-4 hours. All 150 people drank from the same bottle [...] Then they fed us once, gave us a cup of tea and a couple of loaves of bread [...] I felt bad; they called a doctor for the first time, performed a test with a glucometer, and said, “You’ll survive, sit down.” Then I started vomiting. They took me to a doctor who put me on an IV; it got even worse, they called an ambulance and so I ended up in the hospital.”

“A big cop came and sat on my girlfriend; she weighs like 50 kilograms”

Alexander is also in the hospital now, after detention on Okrestina Street. On August 11, as he was driving along Pobediteley Avenue with his girlfriend, they honked “two or three times in solidarity” and immediately attracted the attention of the traffic police.

“We were stopped, told to get out of the car, but we did not obey; we saw people in black with weapons standing nearby, who were they? I asked to see their ID cards, and they started breaking the windows and fired point-blank,” Alexander says, describing how he was detained.

He says he was thrown into a car with his girlfriend, and a rubber bullet hit him in the left shoulder. The car stopped after 10 minutes; Alexander’s girlfriend was taken out, while he stayed inside.

“Two OMON officers held my arms and a third one hit me in the face, beat me with his fist and a baton; when I started choking with blood, they turned me around, and he started battering me on the back and the neck, which is when I got my brain injury, I guess. It lasted for 10-15 minutes, then the door opened, they put my girlfriend in and drove on. I lost consciousness several times on the drive, and a riot cop pressed on my neck with his boot.”

First the couple was taken to the Minsk Frunzensky police station and laid on the asphalt in the yard. Then they took them to the assembly hall and put them in “the dog position.”

“My girlfriend weighs 50 kilograms. Some big cop came and decided to sit on her.”

“What do you mean – to sit?”

“She was put in dog position, you know – you’re on all fours, but instead of supporting your upper body with your arms, you lean on your head. It’s hard to hold this position. My girlfriend said she was in great pain, and he hit her on the buttocks, pressing in her phone. Then he got up, crushed the phone and left. I was there, but I couldn’t do anything. They picked me up, took me to some room and started beating out false statements. I was supposed to say that I had driven over two riot police officers who were hospitalized, while I was being detained.”

“How did they beat the testimony out of you?”

“They put me on the floor, with three of them holding my arms and legs, and one beating me with a baton on my legs, back, buttocks, sometimes on the head. In order to be released alive, I said that I could have driven over them by accident. They took me to another room, with a man in a black ski mask holding a video camera. I was put against the wall, and he turned the camera on. ‘Tell me what happened.’ I told him the truth; he turned the camera off and said that if I was that stubborn, they would teach me a lesson. People in ski masks came in, and there was 20 minutes of ‘teaching’ and beatings. This is how I gave my testimony,” says Alexander.

Then they were transferred to the Central police station and spoke to investigators from the Investigative Committee. The investigator allowed him to drink, and to sit on a stool. Alexander notes that this was the only humane gesture he experienced, but no one called an ambulance for him.

“We spent eight hours lying in the police department yard. There were about 100 of us. You could hardly sleep, someone was constantly walking around; if you spread your legs wrong, they kicked you in the groin with *kirza* boots. They beat so hard you wouldn’t be able to close your legs. They checked your belongings; they found a hammer in the backpack of a 14-year-old boy and were beating him for an hour for that. It was a tough night. They beat everyone. In the morning they put us against the wall; we were freezing, we asked to be allowed to squat to get warmer. Then everyone signed a report, one by one; we weren’t allowed to read it. If you refused to sign, it would take them 20 minutes to change your mind.

“Then we were transferred to the Okrestina Street jail in a police van. Five people were squeezed into a small compartment. There was an old man with us; we stayed standing and let him sit. The van stood still for four hours, there was no more air after two. We banged on the sides, shouted, but no one came to us. It was a miracle we didn’t suffocate. Actually they opened the door for 5 minutes, but then closed it again.”

Alexander repeats other men’s stories almost word for word: how they beat people at Okrestina Street and when transferring them from police vans. He spent the day in the yard. He says he didn’t want to eat, but he was very thirsty. But they were given no water either.

“There were wounded people, with bullet wounds on their arms. It was bitterly cold, so we came up with a scheme: we lay down hugging each other, and so we warmed up. I was released in the morning and was beaten first. They beat us for an hour, in two shifts: when the first team got tired, the other one rushed to help. Those who had no bruises were beaten so hard that they screamed like children. They released one person at a time. There was so much female hair outside that it looked like someone had brought a bunch of wigs there. When they let you go, they say, ‘Run, don’t look back!’ And you run without asking anything.”

Alexander is going to make those who crippled him accountable. He has a traumatic brain injury, a broken right hand, multiple hematomas, a wound in his shoulder and multiple injuries on his head and legs.

TUT.BY • AUGUST 15

“I Say, ‘Guys, Don’t Shoot Me.’ Emergency Hospital Patients Tell Their Stories (Some in the Intensive Care Unit)

<https://news.tut.by/society/696741.html>

Author: Ksenia Elyashevich

“I’ve never felt such pain before. I didn’t know whether I would live or die if they continued,” says 20-year-old Alexey. He was detained on the night of August 13, in a courtyard near Komarovskiy Square during mass protests in Minsk. What happened afterward brought him to an intensive care unit bed. Alexey can’t get out of bed or even relieve himself; he has a catheter connected to drain urine. We talk, and two girls in scrubs beside the bed stroke his arms gently and lift the blanket with their fingertips so as not to hurt him. Here’s his story.

TUT.BY managed to talk to patients at the Emergency Care Hospital in Minsk. Some of them are still in intensive care; others have finally been discharged and returned home to their relatives today, facing months of treatment and rehabilitation.

All but one agreed to speak publicly, as well as consenting to photographs and videos and disclosing their diagnoses.

We thank the doctors who have been saving people this whole time in difficult conditions, often risking their own lives – no matter what side of the confrontation the patients are on. We also thank the doctors for letting us hear the voices of these people.

If you're not sure if you're ready to read this, it's better not to. The videos contain edited versions of the patients' stories, which are given in more detail in the text below.

Alexey Kurachev, 20 years old

Diagnosis: Mild closed traumatic brain injury, concussion. Soft tissue injury and bruising in the right zygomatic region. Bruising in the left and right superciliary regions, soft tissue of the right and left thighs, left gluteal region. Second-degree traumatic shock.

“It happened on the night of August 13 in the Komarovskiy Square area. I was walking peacefully with other people, shouting “Long Live Belarus”. All of a sudden, someone said that police vans were coming. I ran into a courtyard, there was a school there... I was detained in the yard. My biology teacher lives there...

“One of the police was tying my hands, and several others were running towards us when one of them kicked me in the face with a boot, and another one hit me with a baton. People were shouting from the windows “What are you doing!” They answered something like ‘Soon they’ll be throwing Molotov cocktails at your windows.’

“They beat me and brought me to a police van, talking at the same time. ‘Why do you participate in rallies?’ I said I wanted democratic elections to be held, without falsifications. They said, ‘Do you want to join the f*****g Americans?’ I said I didn’t want to join the f*****g Americans, guys, all I wanted was fair

elections. One of them told me, 'You shouldn't have gotten caught. You have no idea what's in store for you.'

"I was the only detainee in the police van. They only had me to beat, all those eight or 10 officers, fully equipped. They were big. They gave me a few shots; I fell face down on the floor. They said, 'Hands behind your head,' and started battering me. They beat me everywhere, beat, beat, beat.

"A lot of time passed, I think; about an hour, maybe more. A couple of times they took me out of the van and tried to find out who my 'coordinator' was. And, of course, they beat me, beat me... Mainly on my legs and buttocks. Then they said, 'We need to cut his hair, he looks like a f****t.' Well, they took me by the hair and cut it off. They said, 'Eat it.' I said, 'Guys, I don't want to eat it.' I put it in my jeans pocket instead, and that was it.

"They took my phone, read the messages. Threatened me with rape all the time. Poked a stick at me between my butt cheeks, 'We'll make you a pansy boy.'

"You beg them or you don't — they keep on beating you. I asked them, guys, stop beating me. They beat the same places, batter them. I said, 'Ok, guys, I get the idea, I was just going to protest peacefully.' And they answered, 'Are you going to throw rocks at us?' I hadn't thrown any rocks, hadn't thrown any Molotov cocktails, hadn't even thought about that.

"They pulled me out of the police van, my underwear was torn. Some action movie hero met us. A really hardcore guy, and he said, 'Alright, now you'll be shot!' I said, 'Guys, don't shoot me. I didn't want to do anything to you.'

"They took me to some other guy. They all had this obsessive idea that someone had paid me or that I was high. They asked about it constantly. I guess they had been told that about the protesters. They were trying to learn who my informants or coordinators were. I said, 'Guys, I don't have any coordinators.' They didn't believe me and said, 'Okay, let's have some fun.' I understood that until then it had been a Sunday-school picnic.

"They led me to another police van, it was at the Obelisk. I heard screams. Terrible screams. 'Look,' they said, 'there's this fat guy over there, you'll take his place soon.' I went over there and said, 'Guys, I admit I was wrong, don't touch me.' Well, of course, they didn't care.

“They beat the guy; they just battered him fiercely. I guess they had brought him from Serebryanka. They beat me several times and put me at the back of the van. And the guy was still being beaten, beaten, beaten, beaten, just mercilessly beaten. He said, ‘Guys, I can’t scream anymore,’ and they answered, ‘Well, then don’t.’ And kept on beating him.

“When the guy was really in bad shape, they pulled him out of the van. I understood the same thing was about to happen to me. They started beating me, but I had already been beaten hard enough in the other van, beaten to the maximum I could take. They hit me in the same places. I screamed and screamed. The pain was just unbearable, but they didn’t care. I realized I couldn’t scream anymore.

“I just shut up. They beat, and beat, and beat, beat, beat, beat, beat, beat, beat. At some point they stopped and said, ‘So guys, he seems to have kicked the bucket from shock, from the pain.’ I couldn’t speak anymore, my ear was a mess because of that guy, I mumbled something, I couldn’t speak. I realized that I could no longer react to anything.

“They said, ‘Leshka, Leshka.’¹ I remained silent.

“They poured water over me and threw me on the concrete. At this point I understood that if I moved, this hell would continue. I didn’t move. They poured cold water over me, I lay on the asphalt. I hoped I wouldn’t get sick.

“An ambulance arrived in about 25 minutes. I guess the doctor understood I was conscious, but he didn’t tell them. I was immediately hooked up to an IV and taken away. I passed out and woke up in the hospital.

“That’s my story...

(...) “I have never felt such pain before. I did not know whether I would live or die if they continued?”

“How long were you beaten for?”

“Time is relative in such cases... (...) The guys in the second van, at the Obelisk, were absolutely deaf to any words. You could scream, beg, whatever — they didn’t care. Their only aim was death. And rape.

1 Diminutive of Alexey.

“They also forced me to sing the anthem in the police van, to say ‘I love OMON.’ I should say, they were sophisticated. Absolutely ruthless people. As I understand it, the OMON should deal with especially dangerous criminals; for example, terrorists. They use extreme measures; no one can endure the pain. It’s really unbearable, and they do this to ordinary people.

“I heard from the doctor that a girl had been brought here, and she had also been threatened with rape.”

“Did they call you an ambulance only after they thought you had passed out?”

“Yes, only when they thought I was dead.”

Maxim Salnikov, 34 years old

Diagnosis: Concomitant injury, mild closed traumatic brain injury, concussion. Soft tissue injury of the occipital region and chest. Internal abdominal injury. Rupture of liver segments III, IV.

“I went to a store on Rokossovsky Avenue to buy cigarettes. I went around the corner of the building. They attacked from behind the bushes. They were standing with their shields up. I watched them running toward me, I was alone, and I said, ‘No, no, I’m not doing anything!’ They put me down anyway and started beating me. Sprayed tear gas over me.

“Then they threw me into a car and continued beating me there. They hit me a couple more times when they brought me to the [Leninsky] police station. And that was it.”

Maxim is silent and stares straight ahead for a very long time. It’s hard to describe what’s in this look.

“Were you beaten right on the street?”

“Yes.”

“How long?”

“About three minutes.”

“What did they hit?”

“My liver.”

“Can you tell what injury brought you here?”

“Partial liver laceration.”

“Did you have an operation?”

“Yes. The day before yesterday, in the evening. (...) It’s my third day here.”

“How did you get here?”

“I called an ambulance from home.”

“So you returned home after the beating and called it?”

“Yes.”

Alexander Alkhovsky, 21 years old

Diagnosis: Closed composite traumatic brain injury, concussion. Pneumomediastinum. Subcutaneous emphysema in the neck. Multiple bruises, abrasions of the soft tissues of the head, trunk, left limb [sic – not specified whether arm or leg].

“I was detained on the night of August 12 at 73 Goretskogo Street. People were gathering there, and I was going into the yard. A van with traffic police officers drove up. They ran over, threw me to the ground, beat me with batons and kicked me.

“Then they loaded me into the van and were driving somewhere for a long time, about an hour, two or three, I don’t know.

“They beat me in the van. Then they brought me somewhere and made me go through a ‘corridor’ – they stood in two lines on the sides and were beating me with batons, kicking me, sometimes beating me with their fists.

“Everything was fine in the police station, no physical force was used. We just waited. They laid us face down on the ground outside the building and asked anyone who had money with them questions like, ‘Did they pay you for the rally, let’s say, \$20?’ They asked leading questions.

“A day later we were taken to the Okrestina Street detention center, where I was tried. Then I was taken to the hospital because of my poor condition.”

“Why were you taken to the hospital?”

“Concussion, hematoma on the hip, multiple bruises. There was some problem with the respiratory tract: the air accumulated in the bronchi; it was hard to swallow, to breathe; my voice changed a little. The doctors did a CT scan, an ultrasound scan, checked everything.”

“Can you say again who beat you?”

“OMON riot police officers, as far as I understand. They wore black clothes, masks. I can’t name anyone, no one introduced themselves. I can’t tell you the plate number of the van, either; I don’t even remember the brand.”

“How many people beat you?”

“Two. One beat my legs at first, then the second one ran up. In the van I was lying on the floor, hiding my head under the seat to protect it, because my hands were tied behind my back. I couldn’t see how many officers there were in the van. As far as I could tell from their conversation, there were four of them, maybe more.”

“Did they say anything to you?”

“They cursed me, threatened me with physical violence, including death. They asked who had bought me, who was paying me.”

“Did they call you an ambulance only from Okrestina Street?”

“Yes, I asked for a doctor there. They pointed at me and said, ‘We’ll hospitalize him.’ About 30 people traveled with me to the Okrestina Street jail, of whom maybe two went to the hospital. I heard they took more people away. There were a lot of guys who got beaten hard. A lot of people wanted to see a doctor.

“Everything seems to have turned out all right [for me]. Relatively well....

Those guys were young. All of them. 20-25 years old, maybe 30. My peers.”

“Those who detained you?”

“Yes, those who detained me. Any serious matters, let’s say paperwork, is done by the older guys.”

“How did your relatives find you?”

“I was not allowed to call, so no one told them. They just searched for me. When the ambulance was on the way to the hospital I asked a paramedic to call, and

he was kind enough to agree. The detainees in the jail weren't allowed to call or write letters. So they just sit there. There were people detained for three days who weren't allowed to call. People had no food. We only had water. Guys spent three days in a police station – there was no room for them in the detention facilities.”

“How long did you stay at the Okrestina Street jail?”

“One day in a police station and one day there.”

“Did they feed you? Did they give you water?”

“They fed us, gave us water, everything according to the law. Everything was quiet on that day; many lawyers came, and maybe some journalists. Maybe that was the reason everything was rather quiet.”

“People living near the detention center reported terrible screams at night. Did you hear that?”

“I heard no moans at night, but those who had spent a day there said that officers would come, hit them on the back and on the legs. I was not beaten, but I only spent about a day there; I can't really say.”

Maria Zaitseva, 19 years old

Diagnosis: Closed traumatic brain injury, traumatic subarachnoid hemorrhage. Contused wounds of the right temple, right shoulder. Puncture wounds of the eyelids and paraorbital region of the right eye, foreign body in the sclera, contusion of the eyeball, subconjunctival hemorrhage in the right eye. Fragment wound. Traumatic perforation of the tympanic membrane in the right ear. Post-traumatic neuropathy of the right ulnar nerve with mild paresis of 4th and 5th fingers of the right hand.

“I come from Gomel, but I've been in Minsk since the protests on August 9. I was wounded, presumably, by fragments of a flash bang. The doctors also found a couple of rubber bullets in me. Well, I suffered a lot, yes.”

“Where did it happen?”

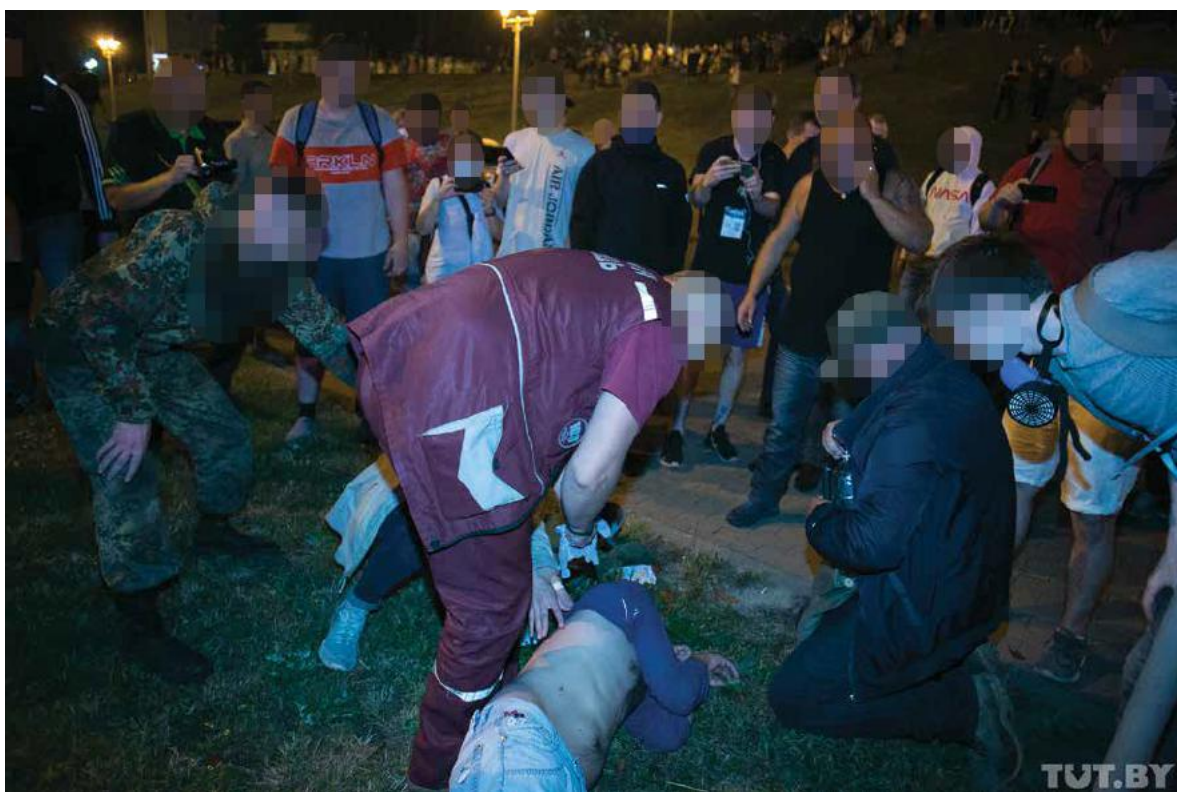
“At the Obelisk, on August 9. I don't know the address, I'm not a local. (...) Somewhere on my side there are wounds left by the fragments. The doctors told me they had found bullets in me, but I don't remember being shot at. I was stunned after the explosion.



TUT.BY / Vadim Zamirovsky



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My friend and the people around me tried to drag me away. There are scary photos of me on the Web sitting half-dead, covered in blood, with a head wound. I was stunned: I couldn't hear or see anything. They tried to speak with me, but then apparently they called me an ambulance and took me to the hospital."

"I see marks on your neck."

"Yes, I was wounded in the head. My eardrum was also torn."

"And you can't hear out of this ear now?"

"Right. But it can recover. It's not that bad, the eardrum may grow back. The doctors are waiting for the wounds from the grenade fragments and the bullets to heal, and then they'll deal with the ear."

"You mentioned you couldn't see?"

"I was blinded. I wear contact lenses, as I have pretty poor eyesight. One of the lenses fell out after a blow to my eye; apparently it was hit by fragments. That lens saved my eye, saved my eyesight. I can't see anything right now just because I can't put them on. But my vision is ok."

"Did you see who was shooting, from where?"

"I remember the very beginning of the protests, when people stood in a large chain in several rows. Some guys walked with megaphones in front of the crowd, but I couldn't make out what they were saying. I guess they were trying to negotiate with the police. The police did nothing. They even lowered their shields. People told them not to use force because they were protesting peacefully. But there were some tough guys who threw empty bottles at the police, though they couldn't reach them — the gap between the crowd and the police was wide enough. Also the crowd calmed down quickly, people were in favor of a peaceful protest.

"Then the police raised their shields again and started shooting out water from the cannons. I don't know why or what for. We stood peacefully, shouting that we wanted peace. I remember being doused with water, and then there was an explosion, I was lying on the ground. I don't remember anything past that moment."

Alexander Pashkovsky, 32 years old

Diagnosis: Closed traumatic brain injury, concussion, subcutaneous hematoma of the parieto-occipital region. Previous nosebleeds.

He asked us not to photograph his face.

“On August 11 I was in a car with my friends: I asked them to give me a ride from home to the Pushkinskaya Metro station and they agreed. We went there to lay flowers. We threw them out through the window and drove on.

“Every road was blocked that day; the riot police was everywhere. We drove to Independence Avenue, turned right to turn around, and were stopped by the traffic police near the Red Church. They asked for the driver’s license, then told us to show them the trunk. They said to drive past the next two police cars and wait there, at a fork behind the bridge that goes to the Institute of Culture.

(...) “Three or four minutes later a dark Ford van with tinted windows drove up. Four men got out, I think. Not OMON. They had a triangle on the back of their uniforms. I don’t remember much of what was written on them . They surrounded the car and told us to get out. They didn’t tell us the reason, but they did tell us to shut up. They opened the door, I think they broke the windows. They took me out, twisted my arms, making me face the ground. I was the first to be pulled into the van.

“I wanted to sit down, but they made me kneel. They started beating me with their batons and fists, kicking me. My friends were also brought in, the same thing happened to them: they got beaten. They took away our phones and asked for the PINs. The guys didn’t have PINs, and they saw some videos from Nexta and other Telegram channels. They shouted at them, ‘So, you are journalists and spies!’ They beat them for that. I didn’t tell them my PIN, and they beat me for that too. This spurred them on even more.

“They were driving us for about 10 minutes and beating us all this time, some of them harder, some — if I may say so — less hard. We stopped to transfer to a police van. The distance between the vehicles was a little less than a meter. They told us to get out on our knees.

“When we got up, they started beating us. There was an OMON on each side of the door, the ones that transported prisoners. They had clothes without identification marks. Well, they beat you, ordered to take everything out of your pockets, you put your hands in your pockets — and they start battering you again.

“God forbid they found something like a knife or other things that could be used as a weapon, even a hairpin or barrette. They beat you even harder, saying ‘Are you an organizer, what, did you want some kind of changes?’

“When we were inside the police van we were told to turn away, hide in the corners and never look on the windows, because if they saw that, that’s ‘the last thing we would see.’

“Two or three minutes later, three more people were thrown inside; they were already in zip ties. Ordinary workers who were going from a construction site. They packed a total of 19 people inside. Two guys were pulled out of their car when they wanted to change their oil near the Bigzz store. Their car was left standing in the street.

“The last to be taken were a guy on a bicycle and a woman, a doctor. ‘What, did you want to help? And now who’s gonna help you?’ they said. They didn’t beat her, but emotionally abused her. She sat there crying.

“The guy from the bike started having heart problems; they stopped, and some doctor gave him a pill. This happened at — we had been pulled out of the car at about 8 p.m., so it all lasted for two or three hours.

“Then we arrived at the Leninsky police station, we heard the screams of people being beaten. Since there were a lot of us in the van, it wasn’t clear what was going on. We drove into the yard, the door opened, and we saw a corridor of riot police officers who were beating us with batons from both sides as we went by, shouting, ‘What, did you want changes? Well, here are your changes.’ So, the corridor was around 15 meters long.

“They put us along the perimeter against the yard wall. There were 2-3 people whose job was to go back and forth beating people. The dude to my left lost consciousness and fell down; we tried to help him and they started beating us, and beating him to bring him back to consciousness. They threw them against the wall and said, ‘If you fall again, that’s the last time you’ll fall in your life.’ a woman came up with a riot police officer, wrote down our information. A normal person reflexively turns to the person they’re speaking to; those who turned were beaten.

“They asked for our full name, date of birth. Took us in turns to a special room, by different ways, so that no one would remember, probably. They said on camera who you were, where you lived, filmed our clothes from all sides.

“I remember they brought one or two groups of people and shouted that they were organizers, because they had axes, knives. They yelled at them, ‘You f*****s are organizers and instigators!’ And beat them. Another group of people

was brought in who experienced the same: the corridor, they pass through — they get beaten. Soon we ran out of space near the wall.

“My hands were very swollen from the zip tie. My shoulder was slightly injured. I felt bad and was escorted to see a doctor.

“A lot of people in the last group had gunshot wounds. They were unconscious. It was impossible to know their names.

“Two guys with injuries were lying next to me. One of them had a wound in his head, or near his neck. And then, all hell broke loose: the ambulance sees all this, they’re trying to call more teams, distribute the patients among the hospitals, because there were too many gunshot wounds. As far as I understand, they were taken to a military hospital or, if a person was at death’s door, to the nearest hospital to save them.

“Some began to pass out. Dying, to put it bluntly. The guy who was lying next to me with a gunshot wound was being resuscitated right there, while 3-4 crazy riot police officers or police station officers were beating those who were lying down and had gunshot wounds! They yelled at the doctors because they were trying to help them.”

“Did they beat those who were lying down?”

“Yes. And a doctor yells at him, ‘You dumb ox, move away! Why are you hitting him, he’s already in f*****g pain!’ And he says something like, ‘Shut up, b***h, if you say another word, I’m going to do the same to you.’

“He said that to a doctor?”

“Yes, she was so brave, she started yelling at him. He was like, ‘Follow my orders!’ And she says, ‘I give the orders here, because a human being is dying!’

“The epic nature of the whole scene was that while people were being beaten, a female police officer walked around and didn’t even say a word, like, calm down, stop it, etc. People believe the regular police are better than OMON, and the girls are good. Well, she was not a good girl.

“Another interesting thing: when the patients lying on the ground were beaten and the ambulance staff were attacked, no one intervened. Nobody said, ‘Calm down, stop.’ I heard from a distance that he had been drawn away, but he came

back and started yelling. There was one moment when he almost hit the doctor. We were on the brink of a riot.

“The ambulances tried to take as many people as possible, but there were too many. I don’t know where they all came from. Many of them were crippled, blood all over them. The officers wouldn’t let the doctors take them, saying something like, ‘No, this one stays here.’

“I remember one guy answering all questions with one word, ‘Yura. They asked his name, anything, and he kept repeating, ‘Yura, Yura.’ One guy had a bullet in his elbow, but he was conscious. Another one with his head covered in blood was taken to the 10th Hospital, I guess. While they were registering me, 3-4 more people were brought in. They were in a worse condition than me.”

“Were there many people in the police station who were unconscious?”

“Two guys with rubber bullet wounds were lying beside me. The officers brought another group of detainees, they had used tear gas against them. They were lying on the ground covering their eyes with their hands and asking for water to wash their eyes, because they couldn’t see anything.”

“Where did all this happen?”

“In the yard. The building wasn’t big enough to fit everyone. It got chilly at night, those in [warmer] clothes were somehow lucky, while most people wore T-shirts, shorts – the police grabbed everyone at random.”

“According to your estimates, how many people were there in the yard?”

“Twenty people were brought in our van; the same number had stood there before us. While we were going through the formalities, two more vans arrived with at least 20 people each. And as we were leaving, another one came.”

Kirill Piskarev, 24 years old

Diagnosis: Closed traumatic brain injury, concussion, closed dislocation of the humerus. Contusion on the chest.

“I ended up here because of the government of Belarus. On August 10 on the avenue near the Circus, a Ford without identification marks, with tinted windows, turned around, crossing two solid lines, a door opened, and officers jumped out. I tried to run away, but someone hit me very hard from the bushes.

“They twisted my shoulder, beat me many times with a baton on the head and body, and used a stun gun on me.

“They started beating me on the asphalt. They were beating me in the van for 25-40 minutes, then they put two more people on top of me. My arm was already numb, just hanging there.

“Two more people were taken on Rokossovsky Street. One of them was a riot police officer. He said, ‘I’m one of you, from 120th Division Street (the street where the riot police are based). They checked and learned he was a senior lieutenant. However, when they learned he had been dismissed, they started beating him fiercely on the head, saying ‘Dismissed.’ All this happened on my back, I felt it all. My hand was hanging; my lip was cut. I lost consciousness twice...

“When I lost consciousness for the first time, they put two stun guns to my neck. Look, there’s still a scar, and another scar on the opposite side of my neck as well. When I lost consciousness for the second time, they again put two stun guns to my side.

“Then we were brought to the building of the Presidential Administration, I could tell from the tiles. They loaded us into a police van, but it was all packed, with 19 people. They put us in the last compartment and drove around the city for an hour. They also took a taxi driver, we don’t know from where, but they had broken his windshield and dragged him out. A young guy, about 20 years old. He was also all blue, and fainted. When they put him in, it became clear that the authorities wanted everything to happen as harshly as possible on August 10.

“They drove us around for an hour; it was stuffy and terrible inside. Then they brought us to the Central police station. We knew that from hearing the trams nearby.

“One more interesting thing from the van: one of those who were beating us in the Ford with tinted windows was an officer, a colonel or lieutenant colonel. He was some kind of battle-tested man, and kept giving instructions.

“When we arrived at the police station, we saw that the whole yard was crowded. People stood against the wall being hit on the back of their heads with the butts of service weapons and batons to keep them standing. Whenever they fell, they got kicked.

“I was put against the wall and told to raise my hands, which I couldn’t because of my dislocated shoulder. They hit me twice, on the shoulder and on the legs. I was about to lose consciousness again. Someone from the police station came (I think he was a police officer because the riot police were in the yard) and grabbed me by the scruff of the neck. He was about to clap handcuffs on me, but I managed to convince him I would lose my arm for good in that case.

“I was dragged into the detention facility. There were 20 people already there, all beaten. Some of them were 15-16 years old. I spent three hours there, without medical assistance. During this time we realized that the situation was critical: people were being tortured on the 4th floor, and I’m sure they still are...

“They didn’t hit them on their heels, but hung them up by handcuffs, beat them in the groin and on the head in all kinds of ways. As I understand it people came from the 4th floor, where reports were drafted, half-dead.

“I witnessed all this, went through it. They took a man to the detention facility; he had no injuries, nothing – they had detained him, dragged him into the paddy wagon, put a zip tie on his hands and brought him there. Then he went to the 4th floor, and returned barely alive, beaten to a mummy. He told me what had happened.

“There were girls there too, in the detention cell next to ours. One of the guys said they had been sexually harassed in every possible way, undressed, put against the wall and photographed.

“When the light was turned off, they lay me down; I could hardly endure the pain, running with sweat and blood.

“Finally, one low-ranking station officer called 103. This guy seemed to have just entered the service. He saw me and called an ambulance. While I was lying there, I was beaten many times because I was trying to position my arm more comfortably. It hurt so bad.

“The ambulance arrived and took me to the 6th Hospital. We drove through Bangalore Square; the atmosphere near the Riga supermarket was fierce. We got a flat tire there. The ambulance got a tire punctured.”

“Who did that?”

“Some people from a Ford with tinted windows. They jumped out of it when we were approaching, a couple of other cars with tinted windows were there as

well. One of them punctured our tire. The vehicle sank at once, and we spent 35 minutes changing the tire... Then we took a detour to get to the hospital.

“It was overcrowded. Fragment wounds, crushed bones and so on.

“I got my dislocated joint set and went home. I slept for a day, went to the clinic, but my temperature rose to 38 in the evening; I felt sick. I called an ambulance from home again. The doctors suspected broken ribs, and I had them X-rayed many times.”

“According to your estimates, how many people were in the police station?”

“About 750, including those in the yard and inside the building; people stood close to each other against each wall, with a pile of their things in the middle. There were also people in the cells, the whole floor was overcrowded.

“I would also like you to know that the Investigative Committee staff come here [to the hospital] at four in the morning. They interrogate people in violation of the law, which forbids such things at night, especially in a hospital. There are no doctors here at night, and the nurses aren’t authorized to disobey. The investigators argue that they will only ask a couple of questions, they don’t have enough time, that’s why they come so early in the morning. The real reason is that people after surgery, on medication, can’t refuse anything. They come and bother other patients. They record video and audio. We escaped it somehow, but everyone in the surgery unit on the 11th floor said that all of them, some 20 people, had been interrogated by investigators. They’re not allowed in the intensive care unit, but a couple of them visited patients over here.”

As TUT.BY has already reported, doctors are outraged that forensic experts do not come to patients who have suffered from beatings in detention facilities to document the injuries.

“The experts do come to the hospital, but to other patients, not like these,” one doctor explained. “Let me remind you that the expert should be called by the investigator who is in charge of the case.”

NAVINY.BY



“An Ordinary Person Cannot Beat Another Human Being So Irrationally and Unmercifully for Nothing”. Belarusians tell how they are being victimized by those who should protect them

<https://naviny.by/article/20200813/1597331282-obychnyy-chelovek-ne-mozhet-tak-bessmyslenno-i-zhestoko-bit-cheloveka-ni>

Author: Elena Spasyuk

About 6,000 people were detained throughout the country over the past few days. Most of the arrests were inhumanly brutal. Many got the feel of both a police baton and a riot police boot. The detention facilities are overcrowded, and people are being kept in humiliating conditions.

Here are just a few stories that illustrate the attitude the state is displaying toward the people today.

“They said they would teach me who to vote for”

Minsk native Ivan Dubovik was detained on 10 August, while walking with a friend to the BIGZZ supermarket near the Frunzenskaya Metro station:

“We were heading to the store and had money in our hands; we were counting it. Policemen approached us and asked us to show them what was in our bags, and we showed them. After that they took us by the arms and escorted us to a bus. There were riot policemen there. They started yelling obscenities, made us kneel down and put our hands behind our heads. They put my friend on the floor in front of me, and they kicked me in the back to make me lie down. We were still lying down when the bus drove up to a police van, which we were transferred into. We were also made to tell them the PINs for our phones —

they twisted our arms, hit me in the ribs. They asked who we had voted for, and said that they would teach us who to vote for. I still don't understand why they shouted that."

When the van arrived at the Leninsky police station and the people began to be taken out, they were beaten with batons; Ivan was lucky – he didn't get hit. They were escorted to a parking lot near the station.

"People were sitting with their knees tucked under them and with their backs to us. We were made to sit the same way and keep our hands behind the back.

"We sat for an hour or more. There were about 60 people in the parking lot – men and women, young and old. One boy said he was 17."

When the riot police left, the station officers allowed them to sit as comfortably as possible. "They brought water. We asked what time it was, and they almost always answered. We could visit the toilet with their permission, but they didn't always give it. We were often told the toilet was occupied or being cleaned.

"A man came and read a list, which included my and my friend's surnames. Then another man came and said that those who had been mentioned would go inside and then go home. We ended up in some kind of hangar; it was warm. In the morning, a man in black clothes came and told us to go out one by one and sign our reports. I went out and saw a table, reports, a pen. They said, 'Sign it quickly. I wasn't allowed to read it, but I managed to see something about a trial. Administrative penalty? What for?' I asked. Nobody answered me.

"I came home all dirty. My ribs weren't sore anymore, but my legs hurt. My friend went to the hospital to have his injuries verified, but the staff told him it was useless. So he didn't verify them."

"These are conditions for livestock"

Minsk native Yury Kuznetsov was detained on July 28, when he went to the KGB to file a complaint about the conditions of Viktor Babariko's detention.

"I was looking for the entrance; at first I went up to the wooden doors, then the side doors facing Komsomolskaya Street. I was asked politely what I wanted, and then politely instructed where to go. I entered a room with the only exit into the yard, where a police van stood. The KGB officers asked me politely to enter it, and when I did, I saw 18 women and men there. We were taken to the

Oktyabrsky police station, from where, after registration, we were taken to the Okrestina Street jail in a van. I managed to call my relatives and my work from the station.

“I was sentenced to 14 days of detention for participating in an unauthorized rally.

“There were various people in the cell on Okrestina Street, mostly non-political detainees, including homeless people. Thirteen people were fit into eight places. We had a flush toilet, screened from the rest of the cell by a plywood wall. I slept on a bench with a water bottle under my head. I spent three or four days like this. The mattresses were taken out into the hall every day, and we picked one each night; you weren’t always able to find your own. Books and pens were forbidden. We made a chess set out of bread but later they took it away. It was actually impossible to write a complaint: we asked for a pen and paper after the trial, but weren’t given them.

“Seven days later I was taken to Zhodino, in a cell for eight people. Our WC was a toilet behind a thigh-high partition wall made of bricks. These are conditions suitable for livestock.

“However, we were allowed to read in Zhodino – they didn’t take away our books and magazines, unlike in the detention center on Okrestina Street.”

After the elections, five people were brought from Borisov to Kuznetsov’s cell at night. They were young guys, beaten up – one had a broken tooth, another had one of his cheeks torn up, as if he had been dragged along the ground; someone had wounds on his body.

On the night of August 11 people were brought from Minsk who had been severely beaten.

“They told us terrible things. It seemed that the people who had been beating them were under the influence of some drugs. I think an ordinary person cannot beat another human being so irrationally and unmercifully for nothing. Those who arrived were very hungry – they hadn’t eaten for more than a day already. They weren’t given food in our prison either; other detainees shared food with them. The first time we gave them bread, they fell on it like pigeons.

“I was freed yesterday, and now I’m calling the relatives of the Minsk detainees, while my cellmate is trying to get in touch with the relatives of the detainees from the regions.”

They said “Whore, slut, prostitute.”

On the evening of 10 August, Irina Trubchik, a resident of Kobrin, went with a friend and Irina’s four-year-old daughter to buy a backpack for the child, returning home only on August 12, exhausted and having been beaten by police.

The women were near Lenin Square in Kobrin; they met Irina’s husband, who took his daughter in his arms, and Irina went back a few meters – towards the site of a rally, as it turned out a bit later. Irina wanted to find her daughter’s shoe, which had fallen off. She didn’t see the shoe, but she did see a crowd of policemen who were violently pushing two guys into a police van. A policeman approached her and asked, “Are you curious? Come with us.”

Irina says that at first it was even funny to her, then she thought the joke had gone on far enough, and then everything began to look like a horror movie, and simultaneously theater of the absurd.

“We arrived at the District Department of Internal Affairs of the city of Kobrin, where I saw many detained people. They put me against the wall with my legs spread apart – this is called a ‘stretch,’ as far as I know. They twisted my arms. Whenever I moved my head, they slammed it against the wall, grabbing me by the hair, and beat my legs with a baton at the same time. I shouted, ‘What are you doing? That hurts, it hurts!’ Later on, I felt no pain and had blurry vision.

“They called me a slut, a whore, a prostitute. I remained silent. I think I would have been killed if I had answered. Then they took me out to the exercise yard, told me to sit on the concrete. I was crying and waiting for what would happen next. In about 40 minutes we were told to sign a report. The policeman read out what I was being charged with. Allegedly, I had participated in a rally, attacked the police, insulted the officers. I hadn’t done that, so I didn’t sign the papers. A while later I was told ‘Go home.’ I went, but they took me to a cell with two people, and brought eight more girls a bit later, telling us we would be detained for one more day.

“Wooden bunks, clogged toilets, the whole cell stank terribly. Nine people in a four-person cell. We sat throughout the night like sardines in a can, humiliated. The male guards cursed us with dirty words every five minutes,

opened the window into the cell and told us not to sleep. They asked who would go to have a shower with them first, asked us to show them our bodies. When I asked for a mattress, they told me to shut up and be thankful for the ideal conditions I was being offered.”

The next day, Irina was told she would be detained for three days until the trial. She actually spent two and a half days there.

“At the trial, I said that I had two children and I realized what I had done wrong. I was fined 20 base values and allowed to go home. I have one question: what for? I think we need to hold on, not give up, not lose heart. I will not be ashamed to tell my children about what happened to me. I want them to know what country they live in and what kind of authorities we have.”

Minsk resident Vladislav Lushchinsky, who was a member of Valery Tsepkalov's initiative group, was detained on 28 June and sentenced to 15 days of arrest for alleged participation in an unauthorized rally in defense of Babariko.

He served his arrest in Zhodino. Detainees were brought there in large numbers after the elections.

According to Lushchinsky, he saw people with traumatic brain injuries; he has marks shaped like bars from baton blows on his back. People said they were detained while walking around the city, not during any rallies, and beaten in police stations.

According to Vladislav, many said the riot police officers accused people of being paid for their activities and called them traitors to the nation.

Lushchinsky said there were 30 men in the cell where he was detained. When people started arriving *en masse*, they did not have enough food, and other detainees shared with them, but the problem was solved later. They were allowed to receive parcels, but it turned out not everyone actually got them. Vladislav never received the parcel his mother brought to Zhodino.

Israeli Citizen Detained in Minsk: “They Stacked Us Up, Just Like the Nazis Loaded Jews Onto Trains to Auschwitz”

<https://naviny.by/new/20200815/1597487181-grazhdanin-izrailya-kotorogo-zaderzhali-v-minske-gruzili-kak-v-poezda-v>

An Israeli citizen, Alexander Fruman, was among those detained in Minsk during the crackdown on protests. He and his wife had come to Minsk to find information about their ancestors, who died on the territory of Belarus during the Nazi occupation.

Fruman and his wife were detained on Independence Avenue, near the apartment they were renting.

“They beat us up and put us in a police van, continuing to beat us with batons. I witnessed the beating of a disabled boy and women. This took place in the Sovetsky police station, and its captain was in charge of everything,” Alexander Fruman said on Echo of Moscow radio station.

According to him, the detainees spent 16 hours in the police station being “forced to hold various uncomfortable positions, five minutes of which made your whole body numb. When someone tried to move, the police noticed it and started beating us again.”

“Later on, we were loaded into a police van and taken to Zhodino. They stacked us up, just like the Nazis did when loading Jews onto trains to Auschwitz. I was lying on other people who fainted. When someone complained, they would beat them with batons,” Fruman said.

He added that when the police learned that he was an Israeli citizen, they started making anti-Semitic jokes and beat him again.

In the pre-trial detention center in Zhodino, Fruman and other detainees were placed in a cell designed for 8 people. “There were 18 of us in it. They didn’t abuse us there,” he said.

When the Zhodino staff learned about his Israeli citizenship, they decided to release him in order to avoid problems. “They pretended to have lost my passport and the detention protocol, which I had refused to sign, and released me after 78 hours of detention,” he concluded.



TUT.BY / Stanislav Korshunov



RFE/RL / Uladz Hrydzin



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RADIO LIBERTY



Радыё
Свабода

Thirty-six People in a 4-Person Cell. Three Days Without Food

<https://www.svaboda.org/a/30782109.html>

Author: Ina Studzinskaya

“We were glad we weren’t fed, so we didn’t have to go to the toilet in the cell”

Free Theater actress **Dasha Andreyanova** shares her impressions of being in the Okrestina Street jail.

On the evening of August 9, Free Theater actress Dasha Andreyanova and her colleagues **Sveta Sugaka** and **Nadzeya Brodskaya** were at a polling station near Minsk Linguistic University on Zakharova Street. Two vans drove up, police in full riot gear jumped out, and the women realized they would be detained. The police put them in the van and transferred them to another vehicle later.

“It was a police vehicle with two compartments inside that had benches, and a cage at the back. Four guys were pushed into the cage, but they were very tall and didn’t fit, so they were hit on the legs with the door. We were brought to the temporary detention center on Okrestina Street and put against a wall. We were forced to sign documents stating we didn’t have syphilis or other diseases, weren’t insulin-dependent – but they didn’t actually ask us, they just wrote ‘no, no, no’ on each line. That was all the medical examination we got,” Dasha recalls.

At first, 12 people were put into a single cell, then they were transferred to another with 36 detainees (although it was designed for four). They were just random people, far from politics, women who had never known or even heard about Okrestina. They were shocked.

“They poured buckets of water all over us twice because we were shouting, ‘Let us breathe some air.’ We heard men being beaten, police vans coming

into the yard, people being beaten and shouting. We were photographed twice: face forward, in profile and from behind; they must be preparing some database. One girl didn't want to be photographed, so the guard told her, 'I'll take everyone out of the cell and beat the s**t out of you.'

The women lost consciousness several times; one was vomiting for two nights in a row, almost non-stop. When we needed to address the guards, we had to say, 'Excuse me, may I ask you...,' while they insulted us, called us dirty names, called us criminals. One of them didn't allow us look to him in the face, shouting, 'Face to the floor!'

"Another interesting aspect. The guards call themselves 'dogs,' using prison slang. The girls in our cell weren't beaten. When they beat the guys, they closed the food hatch so we wouldn't see. But we could still hear them. They would beat a man and shout, 'Listen to the dog, the whole cell is suffering through you.' They would hit him four times, making fun, 'Is it still funny? Now wipe your shit and go to your cell.' The guy would ask for something to wipe off the blood, only to hear, 'F**k you! Wipe your shit with your T-shirt and go to your cell now,' Dasha recounts."

The women weren't fed for three days. They asked the "good" female supervisor for some toilet paper. They were given dirty mattresses and blankets, while the men weren't given anything; they slept on bare planks.

On the third day, volunteers somehow managed to hand over a parcel — one bag of food for 36 people. They got four cookies and half a bottle yogurt, a couple of small pastries each.

"Actually, I wasn't hungry because of the stress. In addition, you know, visiting the toilet in a cell with 35 other people was awkward. We were even glad that we weren't fed, so that no one wanted to 'do a number two,'" Dasha says.

The trial took place three days later. Judges from Frunzensky, Centralny, Moskovsky and other courts were brought to the detention center on Okrestina Street. It was a judicial conveyor belt: 5-10 minutes for each person; people were sentenced immediately, mostly to a few days of detention, so they wouldn't be released and go protest the next day. Occasionally there were fines with a warning that a repeat offense would result in a criminal case and was punishable by imprisonment for up to three years.

“The information in the reports did not correspond to reality: I had been detained on Zakharova Street, while the report said it had happened on Pobediteley Avenue, at a time when I was already at Okrestina.

“As a result, I was sentenced to a 25-base-value fine¹,” Dasha says. “I spent three days in detention just for fun. Some people had two trials, from different districts. Nadzia² Brodskaya was sentenced to 13 days of detention first, then got another 5. At first we thought her sentence had been reduced and were happy, but it turned out the days were to be served consecutively. Sveta Sugaka was sentenced to a total of either 19 or 20 days. Someone was sentenced to detention and a fine: 10 days plus 25 base values. Don’t forget to add another 13 rubles and 60 kopecks a day (about \$5.20) for staying in that ‘all-inclusive hotel,’ with no food, in a cell with 35 other people.”

RADIO LIBERTY • AUGUST 15

“They Smashed a Baton Down his Throat and Beat Him on His Eyes”: Schoolboy in a Coma After a Riot Police Attack

<https://www.svaboda.org/a/30785310.html>

The riot police attacked 16-year-old Timur M., who had left home to meet a friend on August 12. The boy, who finished 9th grade this year, was taken to an intensive care unit, placed in a coma and put on a ventilator

1 Circa \$ 259

2 Diminutive of Nadzeya.

As the victim's mother, **Tatsiana**, told Radio Liberty, her son was beaten in the Frunzensky and Partizansky district police stations (ROVD) of Minsk.

The family was told by administrators from his school that Timur was in the intensive care unit of the 3rd Clinical Children's Hospital.

“He left the house and went to meet a friend. In the West-3 district, people got off a bus and started beating everyone with batons,” **Timur's** sister **Katsyaryna** says, relaying what he told her. “He was also beaten and pushed into a police van. People were stacked on top of each other, and the police sat on top of them. When they were in the ROVD, Timur had a baton inserted in his throat and smashed into it with a boot. They were forced to sing the anthem. Timur said he was 16 years old, but they didn't care.”

However, they finally called an ambulance for Timur. He is now in the intensive care unit and cannot see anything; his eyes and face are swollen.

“He was in a coma because he couldn't breathe; the doctors put him on a ventilator. Luckily he has already started getting better, although he says he's in pain and also very scared,” **Katsyaryna** adds.

The family has filed a complaint with the Prosecutor's Office, which has started an investigation.

Note from the publishers of the “Seeking Justice”: Timur's mother died on September 25 after a long illness; members of the family say the trauma of her son's ordeal was too much for her to bear.

August 2020. We are witnesses. “One riot policeman said, ‘If it were up to me, I’d burn you all to ashes!’”

<https://www.svaboda.org/a/30783191.html>

Sergei Melyanets, a Baptist, tells the following story.

“Yesterday, on the second day after the election, I was detained by the riot police. My two brothers and I were sitting in a car parked near the Minsk Concert Hall. We just wanted to be close to the city center and pray for the situation in Belarus.

“I was pulled out of the car and punched in the head, back and abdomen. I shouted that I was a believer, that I was there to pray for Belarus. They didn’t believe me. They talked exclusively in vulgar language, threatened me and beat me. They also took my phone.

“After that, they threw us into a blue van and ordered us to lie down in the aisle, face down. There were already two people there, so I had to lie on top of them. The riot police officer started torturing me with a stun gun, pressing it to my back near my heart. He asked who was with me, who the organizer was. My answers did not satisfy him. When he learned that I was a Baptist, he asked what prayers I knew. I said I prayed in my own words and knew the Lord’s Prayer.

“We were brought to some small yard, let out and forced to stand with our feet wide apart and our heads leaning against the police van. We were beaten with batons for the slightest movement or attempt to say anything. The OMON officer kept my broken arm behind my back, although it was unnecessary. It was very scary. One riot policeman said loudly, ‘If it were up to me, I would burn you all to ashes!’

“Then, with swearing and beatings, we were loaded into another police van, a gray one. There were so-called “tubes” in there, i.e. boxes that could barely fit three sitting people. They had no windows or ventilation, just a small hole at the top of the door. It was hard to breathe.

“I shared that ‘tube’ with a student who suffered from diabetes and breathing problems, who had been returning home, and a guy who had been in a car with a friend. He had stopped near a police officer to ask if he could turn toward the avenue. He had been grabbed and dragged along the asphalt, skinning his knees.

“We were brought to a facility with a high fence topped with barbed wire. They took us out of the police van, cursing, and escorted us to a room that reminded you of an empty warehouse. Just a concrete floor and walls. They put us against the wall and forbade us to talk.

“We stood there for two hours. They wrote down our names and started tying our hands behind the backs with zip ties.

“I felt sick. My heart ached; I was short of breath. I had had heart problems before; I didn’t even enlist in the army. I asked for an ambulance. It turned out one was already at the facility. I was examined promptly. Tachycardia, panic attack, heart pain, cramps, low blood oxygen level... I was lying in the ambulance for half an hour, connected to an IV, taking pills. The doctor decided to take me to the hospital.

“The doctors were outraged by what they saw and what we told them, but they didn’t say anything to the riot police. Some doctors were indifferent and used foul language.

“I was slowly tested and examined at the hospital over four hours. Many beaten and injured people were brought there. One man had parts of his body, as big as a fist, torn in three places where rubber bullets had hit him.

“I was finally told I didn’t need urgent hospitalization. There were no available beds. They were crowded with injured and beaten people.

“I was released at around three in the morning. My phone had died, I had no money at all. I spent half an hour at a bus stop trying to thumb a ride. No one stopped. A woman approached. She had 10 rubles and was going the same way as me. We were finally able to catch a taxi. A good man agreed to take us home.

“I was praying to God all this time for the people who were being abused and beaten, for myself and for my brothers. For our country. For the authorities: may God open their eyes and speak to their conscience.

“Two days later, we finally learned that my brothers were in prison in Zhodino. They were released four days later. They had been beaten but had no severe injuries. God saved them.”

The Story of the Babariko Campaign Coordinator from Grodno

The mother of Ihar Yarmolau, Viktor Babariko Campaign coordinator, told us the following story.

“We spent two days looking for our son after he dropped out of touch on the evening of August 12. We started calling all the phone numbers we knew the next morning, but we couldn’t find out anything, because the phones of the police offices and prisons either were busy all day or weren’t answered. Ihar’s friends joined the search. They said that according to the neighbors, our son had been taken from his apartment by unknown people the day before. We filed a missing persons report with the police, but didn’t receive any information from them.

“We live in Grodno. We went to Minsk on August 13 to look for Ihar at the police stations. He wasn’t on any of their lists. We had no idea where to look for our son. Ihar’s friends gathered bits and pieces of information and told us to look for him in the detention center on Okrestina Street. We were there the next morning and saw the beaten people, who said they had been treated worse than cattle, kept in small cells with 37 people, abused and beaten. People who were released from the center showed us terrible hematomas. We were horrified by their words and by the uncertainty about Ihar’s fate. He wasn’t included on the lists of detainees in the center on Okrestina Street, in Zhodino or Slutsk.

“We hired a lawyer and he later told us that Ihar was in the KGB detention center.

“His friends kept looking for him in hospitals and found him, on the afternoon of August 14 in military hospital No. 243 at 26 Masherov Avenue. At 5 p.m. we were near our son’s ward in the surgery unit of the neurosurgery department. The ward was guarded by two plainclothesmen.

“According to Ihar, unidentified bandits broke down the door of his apartment and burst in. They ordered him to lie on the floor, threw the first thing that caught their eye — his shorts — over his head and started beating him.

His father asked if he had been severely beaten. Ihar said, 'Quite hard, Dad.' At that moment, the guards kicked us out of the ward. We didn't have time to ask anything more. We brought fruit, yogurt, juice, cookies and water for Ihar, but were only allowed to leave the water. We're thankful for that though.

"The duty doctor told us that Ihar had a closed traumatic brain injury, a broken rib and a severe chest abrasion. He was conscious.

"With the help of a lawyer, we are going to file complaints to the Prosecutor's Office and the Investigative Committee, as well as turning to law enforcement agencies and the media."

"I am Frightened by My Own Hatred"

Alena Shcharbinskaya, a Belsat journalist, shares her story.

"I'm scared by the hatred I feel towards every member of law enforcement and the system that is now killing and crippling us all. I don't distinguish between the 'evil OMON' and 'a lieutenant from a ramshackle police station who did nothing wrong' anymore. I hate everyone who is still in this system.

"I am so grateful to the doctors who carried out a huge amount of testing yesterday in just a couple of hours, refuted some diagnoses, established others. At the same time, they thanked me for my work, supported me all the time, in all kinds of ways: with words, a cup of tea, a smile. They were on our side, not on theirs. And they are also waiting for change.

"I am grateful to the people who were there for three days and literally saved me. Girls from the cell, I have your phone numbers, I'll contact you all. I'm grateful to the one who stroked my head when I started crying and whispered, 'Everything will be fine, let's pray.' She was sleeping with me for three days, either embracing me or back to back with me. She talked about the right things and kept silent when it was important. She promised me delicious cocktails when we go out (I haven't forgotten anything).

"I am grateful to an unknown woman who heard me on her intercom begging, 'Please, help me, I'm a journalist, I'm being chased,' and opened the door. She let me into her apartment, shared her wi-fi, offered me food and worried when I left.

“I feel sorry for all those who have been beaten, crippled these days, as well as those who see all this. My sorrow is so deep that I cry all the time and only stop to talk to doctors and swallow food with a pill.

“I feel my strength. A hundred times, I wanted to confess that I had participated in a rally, shouted slogans and waved my arms, and then “go home,” as some men in civilian clothes promised. I was scared to argue with the court and prove I wasn’t an idiot. “Alena, shut up, sign everything, otherwise you’ll be detained for 15 days,” one of my voices said. (I have a couple of them, but I haven’t been diagnosed with schizophrenia.) I listened to the one I’m not ashamed of.

“I feel love. For my husband, who not only kept looking for me all those days, driving my colleagues crazy, keeping in touch with all the police stations in Minsk, but also caring for our two younger children, a dog and even my mother. But most importantly, he is the only one in my family who hasn’t asked a question that can disturb your moral balance, ‘Why on earth would you go there? You have children!’

“I miss my children. I miss them all the time, feel that lump in my throat. It is coupled with a constant sense of guilt: will they understand why their mom is like this? Maybe I should just be with them, without all that trouble?

“I feel embarrassed. Many people write words of support, want to visit me, ask about ways to help and treat me as if I were a hero. I’m embarrassed because I see other heroes.

“I feel hope. I don’t think we need any explanation here, right?

“I’m in the Emergency Care Hospital diagnosed with ‘extensive abdominal and bladder bruising, bleeding’ (and something else).”

“The Police Made Carpaccio out of my Butt”

Dzianis Kraitsau from Mogilev, 39, shares his story.

“I was detained near the diagnostic center (200 meters from the city executive committee) on the evening of August 11. I was sitting on a bench when four

policemen in full gear ran up, twisted my arms, and threw me into a van. I only saw the floor and some boots and heard threats and swearing.

“They shouted, ‘You don’t like the government and go out protesting?’ and combined this with baton blows. They were focused on the head (not very hard), while the hardest blows targeted my buttocks and the backs of my thighs. They’re a mess. Carpaccio. When they finished with me on the bus, I was pulled into a police van and thrown face down on the floor.

“The policemen acted according to an algorithm developed for them, as if they were beating the nonsense out of an unreasonable child.

“After such ‘processing’, all the vans drove to the Leninsky police station. We were ordered to run to the assembly hall on the third floor. Policemen stood on the stairs and in the corridor and beat those who ran past them with their batons. Around three dozen people were lying on the floor in the assembly hall. They didn’t beat us there, they just shouted. The district inspector drew up the documents and took our fingerprints.

“There were five of us in the cell where I stayed for a while. There was a person with a class-II disability¹ among us, who had been detained for 24 hours already. His brother had managed to find him, but had been thrown in the same cell. Another guy had been beaten black and blue.

“I felt sick at the police station at about 10 p.m., and an ambulance was called. The doctor didn’t show ‘great enthusiasm’ examining me and evaluating my condition. She checked me over quickly and said everything was fine. I appealed to her conscience, but in vain. We were taken to a detention center. I no longer had any hope that a medic would be called for me again, but an officer offered to do that during the check. Having seen the skin on my face, the doctor said he suspected a traumatic brain injury. He was shocked at the sight of my buttocks. I was taken to the hospital. The doctors there were surprised by the marks of the beatings I had, and I was hospitalized.

“I am in the Emergency Care Hospital now. Officers from the Leninsky police district interrogated me here about the beating, and an investigator from the Investigative Committee drove me to the ‘crime scene,’ evaluated the coverage of the surveillance cameras near the diagnostic center.

1 For example, people with dwarfism, blindness, spinal injuries, cerebral palsy.

In my reports and statements, I'm requesting that the recordings be secured not only from the external surveillance cameras, but also from the ones inside the police station.

"I can't characterize the situation I found myself in as 'lawlessness,' because this word fails to fully convey what I experienced.

"This is surrealism. I cannot believe that this happened in a European country in the 21st century."

"People were Forced to Pray and Beaten with Batons"

Nikita Tselizhenko, a correspondent of the Russian online newspaper [Znak.com](https://znak.com), was detained in the center of Minsk, on Nemiga Street, at about 7 p.m. on August 10.

"A minivan approached, fully equipped fighters came out of it and saw that I was writing something on my phone; I was texting, but they thought I was writing on Telegram and had access to the Internet. As far as I understood, they take all the people in Belarus who are in your phone to be coordinators of all these protests.

"I was taken to the Moskovsky police department, where force was used against everyone, without exception: anything the staff was unhappy about caused immediate beatings. People were screaming, people were soiling themselves in pain.

"All this took place in the presence of all the other police officers, who were calm, even though they were supposed to protect people. They reveled in it. They made people pray when they started beating them. They demanded, "Say the Lord's Prayer!" and kicked you, beat you with batons and everything else. They beat you on the head, the legs. The man who was being escorted in front of me they banged against the doorknob with all their strength, just for fun.

"We were all dumped into the assembly hall. The first thing we saw when we got there was people lying on the floor, and both the police and other detainees were walking on them, as there was no space.

"They were lying there screaming, asking for help. No help was provided. At most you didn't get a blow on the head.

“As soon as we came in, we were laid face down on the floor. God forbid we turned our heads – we would get a kick in the face. You must look at the floor. I escaped it, but a man lying next to me probably lost his teeth.

“We were lying for 16 hours with someone behind our backs; we couldn’t unbend, couldn’t lift our heads, couldn’t move at all. We went to the toilet with permission; when it wasn’t granted, we had to soil ourselves, which was common. About 150 people were detained in my presence in the Moskovsky ROVD alone.

“All the people who still were in the ROVD in the morning were escorted down to the first floor, where there were cells for two or three people. They tucked 20-30 people in there, with no ventilation. People were forbidden to sit, forbidden to turn around. Our age, gender didn’t matter. People just stood there waiting.

“Condensation from our breath appeared on the walls, on the ceiling, dripping down from it. We literally stood in the water, unable to breathe. People lost consciousness from the lack of air.

“There were people with damaged spines, broken arms and legs, traumatic brain injuries. No help to anyone.

“Someone would be carried away on a stretcher quietly when we weren’t looking. We didn’t know if they were alive or dead. If, God forbid, we raised our heads, they were hit immediately.

“When we had already spent about two hours in this cell, Special Rapid Response Detachment officers came and loaded us into a police van in such a way that people lay in piles, one on top of the other. Those who were below had no air at all. When we were leaving, those with broken limbs just screamed in pain.

“The moment the vehicle drove away, we were all told to squat, arms behind our heads, and bend our necks. We couldn’t lean on anything. When we lowered or raised our heads, we received multiple blows. We were strictly forbidden to lean on anything. When the escorts got bored, they told us, “Sing the anthem of Belarus.” It was the most horrible scene when people sat facing the floor and sang.

“The facility we were brought to is called a temporary detention center, but it’s actually a prison. In Zhodino, I guess. When we were taken inside, we were threatened, ‘Now you’re coming to a place where you’ll be cornholed in turns.’

“People sat there waiting, but many were happy that at least they were not being beaten at that moment. That is, people were happy to be in prison because they were not battered there.

“While we were waiting, a Colonel Ilyushkevich came and called my name. I raised my hand and went to take my stuff and leave that place.

“Many thanks to the employees of the Russian embassy who were evacuating Russian citizens. After all, there were no allowances made for the fact that I was a citizen of Russia, a journalist. If you got caught, no matter where you were going, you were in huge trouble.”



TUT.BY / Stanislav Korshunov



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TUT.BY / Olga Shukaylo



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NASHA NIVA

Наша Ніва nn.by
ПЕРШАЯ БЕЛАРУСКАЯ ГАЗЕТА

What happens when you get inside a police van

<https://nashaniva.by/?c=ar&i=256924>

By tribuna.com editor Maksim Berazinski, who was released today and told NN what happened to him during his detention.

“The car he was riding in with friends was stopped by the traffic police at about 8 p.m. yesterday leaving Independence Square, opposite the Pedagogical University.

“I had a little flag on the car. The traffic police officer started drawing up a report for honking, although the horn in my car hasn’t worked for a long time.

“Then a blue van with riot police drove up, and we were all loaded in there. The car remained where it was. Later we were transferred to a police van in Nemiga, where we stood for like two hours. It was a van with ‘tube’ compartments, and we were in a ‘tube’ together with another guy – we were cramped, to put it mildly.

“Then the van moved to the Leninsky police station.

“They also detained a cyclist who was just riding along the bike path. Later seven carpenters were picked up, either from Kobrin or from Pinsk. They were repairing a building on Marx Street and returning to their dormitory with their bags. They had their belongings in the bags, including knives to cut sausage. So the riot police shouted, ‘Now we’re going to stick these knives in your a**holes!’

“We were beaten a little in the police van. They kept saying, ‘Did you want a country to live in? Here’s a country for you to live in! How much did they pay you?’ The riot police are convinced that the rallies are paid for, that they are coordinated from abroad, etc.

“They brought us to the police station, beat us a bit there as well. Put us against the wall in the yard. We were later transferred to a parking garage. According to police, 110 people were brought to the Leninsky police station overnight.

“The ambulance took some of the detainees — there were people with traumatic brain injuries, wounds from rubber bullets. About 80 people were left.

“We stood in the garage through the night. The regular police guarded our section, so they escorted us to the toilet and allowed us to sit on the concrete floor. The department nearby was guarded by the riot police, and detainees from there said they had been allowed nothing.

“We were there for fifteen hours.

“Today everyone was loaded into three police vans and taken to Okrestina Street. Five people were released at 1:30 p.m., including me. My friends were sentenced to detention, while I got a summons without a date.

“I don’t know where my car is now.”

NASHA NIVA • AUGUST 15

“The riot police officers told the doctor, ‘He will now sign a refusal of care, and we will take him away’ ”

<https://nashaniva.by/?c=ar&i=257170>

Artsyom, 24, described his detention.

“I live in Zaslavl. On August 12, late in the evening after work, I drove to the kiosk where a friend of mine works. Her shift was over, she closed the doors. We were sitting together, drinking coffee.

“All of a sudden, the riot police stormed up. They started shouting, ‘Open the door, or we’ll wreck this whole place.’ We had to open it. They flew in; I was standing at the entrance, so I was immediately beaten. They smashed up that kiosk, several shop windows were smashed with my body.

“When I was pulled out onto the street, I was pepper-sprayed in my face while lying on the ground. I was beaten on my back with batons and taken to the local police station. There I stood against the wall for like 40 minutes; other people were standing nearby.

“They demanded the PIN for my mobile phone, saying otherwise they would beat me with batons. I told them.

“They checked the phone and took me to the office. Showed me reports to sign. Told me they would bring me to a detention center. I asked about the grounds, because I had done nothing. He answered that I had failed to obey an order from the police during detention, and had also attended a rally.

“I was in bad shape at the station. I asked for an ambulance, but was told to stop joking, I was a criminal, there would be no ambulance.

“I was lucky my father found out about it. He came to the station, called an ambulance. The police told the doctors that everyone in the station was fine and no one needed an ambulance.

“After a while, I was examined by the doctors. I was forced to sign all the reports and then handed over to the doctors. Then I was taken to the Emergency Hospital in Minsk in a police car, accompanied by riot police officers. A doctor examined me and said I had a closed traumatic brain injury and would be hospitalized. A riot police officer answered that instead I would sign a refusal of care, and would be taken away.

“But the doctor managed to get his way. I stayed in the hospital.”

“I was handcuffed to a hospital bed”: Minsk residents continue describing what police did to them

<https://nashaniva.by/?c=ar&i=257162>

Alexander, 26 years old.

“I was detained on August 11 on Dzerzhinsky Avenue. In the evening, around 11 p.m., my friend and I were walking out of the store, just as people were gathering on the avenue.

“I saw three cars of officers in helmets and with shields approaching. Someone threw a bottle at them – and the mayhem began. They started dispersing the crowd.

“We went back to the store to wait until we could get home. After a while we went out and headed toward Malinovka. At one of the intersections, a seemingly ordinary car drove up, two plainclothesmen jumped out, and one of them hit me in the face.

“I was thrown into the car and taken to the Moskovsky police station. It was there where I more or less recovered from the blow. I was taken to the assembly hall, where the detainees were lying on the floor. The officers laid me on the floor as well. I was beaten.

“When the officers found out that one of the detainees had served in the special forces as well, they started beating him with particular cruelty. They beat him so hard he shouted, screamed; then they took him somewhere and continued beating him: we heard him screaming.

“I was lying on the floor for about an hour. My stuff was thrown right on my back. They didn’t ask to see my phone. It was also on my back, ringing all the time: my wife was worried.

“Then they put us in chairs and took us out one by one for an inventory. After that we were taken to another part of the hall where two officers were filming, asking questions about our occupation, date of birth.

“I sat in the chair for another two hours. I felt sick and realized that I most likely had a traumatic brain injury. I started vomiting. They gave me some water and took me to the toilet. I was about to collapse.

“I told them I needed an ambulance. They hesitated for a long time, trying to find other options. Finally the doctors arrived. I was taken to the hospital.

“I don’t know why, but two officers went with me. I was hospitalized and handcuffed to the bed. The officers stayed in the ward. They were later replaced by others. I spent the night in handcuffs, but they were removed in the morning. Yesterday the police finally left. What was that all about? Nobody explained anything to me. I later talked to lawyers, and found out no case was started against me.

“There was one moment in the police department. I was lying on the floor, and a police officer approached with a can of yellow paint and just painted a stripe on my back and on my head. This officer walked around the hall and painted some of other detainees. I don’t know and can’t understand what it was: I didn’t pose any threat, and I don’t have any criminal record, either.”

Zmitser Khvedaruk: “In the Okrestina Street jail, in my sleep, I ran to the window shouting, ‘What are you doing, you bastards?’”

<https://nashaniva.by/?c=ar&i=257305>

Former Young Front member Zmitser Khvedaruk was detained at a polling station on election day: he took a picture of a hole in a ballot box.

“Since the evening of August 9, the most horrible screams of pain, despair, beatings, batons, battering, violence were heard through the windows of cell 42... The most disgusting voices of the officers. People were tortured not somewhere in the square, but in prison. Where they were helpless. From morning till night, on and on, non-stop. I looked out the small window from time to time praying and hoping I wouldn’t see my family and friends. Have you ever been upset by neighbors who listen to music and shout loudly, until late? Remember what that felt like?

“Multiply that by a million! Especially because you are behind bars and understand your complete helplessness; you can’t stand up for those who are being tortured, beaten nearly to death, forced to shout ‘I love the riot police,’ strangled, beaten against the concrete walls. All this isn’t a terrible movie about the ‘30s in the USSR, this is not a movie about Salazar’s dictatorship — this is Minsk in 2020.

“In a nutshell, since August 12, the terrible stress I felt made me run to the window in my sleep and scream, scream, scream, ‘What are you doing, you bastards?!’ And that was me, who wasn’t actually physically injured.

“Until now, even after my release, I have to show civic courage (I’m not kidding now) to go to a store, go downtown or answer a phone call (my phone was never returned to me). Images pop up in my head all the time, especially in the evening, and the sounds of Okrestina Street... I can hardly sleep or concentrate, and sometimes I forget what I’m talking about.

“Up until 2020, I had been illegally detained, arrested and even knocked unconscious by riot police many times. They had even given me a traumatic brain injury. However, I wasn’t ready to see or endure such horrors.”

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“This is some kind of atrocity”: Victims and detainees talk about their trials and injuries

<https://people.onliner.by/2020/08/15/rasskaz-cheloveka-zaderzhannogo-v-minske>

Authors: Dmitry Korsak, Nastasia Zanko.

Over the past few days, more than 6,000 people have been detained in Belarus and accused of being involved in unauthorized protests. Within just a few days, more than 1,000 people were released. Our publication has received details of the detentions and what happened to the detainees next — in police vans, police stations and jails. We warn you that the text below contains information that may shock sensitive people.

Yury: “From time to time a major would come into the yard and shout that he was going to shoot everyone, that he had a direct order to do so.”

Yury works as a loader. He says he didn’t participate in any rallies. August 9 was his birthday; he went to celebrate it with his friends on August 10 and was returning home around 5 p.m. The public transport minibus stopped near the Minsk City Executive Committee and the driver said he wouldn’t go any further; the street was blocked.

“My wife and I walked cautiously to the Circus and wanted to go to Nemiga Street, catch a bus and go home,” Yury says. “Near Yanka Kupala Park, I heard a scream: ‘Get this guy!’ I was attacked by people in uniform, who twisted my arms behind my back. My wife tried to hold on to me; she was hit on the arm with a baton. I shouted: ‘Masha, go away, run away, we have three kids at home, there will be trouble!’ They started beating me on the way to the yellow bus. There were ten detainees on the bus. A woman was beaten after me; they were hitting her on the head, and she lost consciousness. We demanded

they call an ambulance, but anyone who said a word was severely beaten; they kept shouting that ‘fresh meat’ had arrived. They shoved people into the compartments of the police van, five in each.

“We were brought to the Sovetsky district police office and lined up against a wall. There were about 80 people in all. After that, we had to ‘hang on the fence’ for exactly 24 hours: with our hands behind our heads, the backs of our hands pressed against the back of our heads. From time to time a major came out into the yard and shouted that he was going to shoot everyone, that he had a direct order to do so. He passed along the line of people and beat them with a baton; some of them fainted. Next to me there was a man with a broken arm. No assistance was offered to him. Late at night, we were allowed to sit down for as long as 15 minutes; after that we were forced to stand up again.”

But the real nightmare began the following day, Yury says, when police vans arrived to transport the detainees to jails.

“They were beating the hell out of people, each one was forced to run along the fence, and while they were running, they were beaten,” he recalls. “That wasn’t the end, though; we were put on the floor of the police van, our arms were twisted behind our backs and tied up tight in zip ties, so that it was impossible to move. There was a guy next to me who shouted that he was an CTV journalist and asked them to call his editors; no one reacted. They kept beating us – for raising our heads, for example. There were 26 of us in the van. At the entrance to Zhodino jail we were untied and they allowed us to sit and drink some water.

“In Zhodino the van stood there for 2.5 hours, waiting for our turn; there were a lot of vehicles with detainees. At booking we were met by people in green uniforms; they lined up to form a corridor of 20 people and moved each detainee through it, beating everyone. I saw the jail staff only when they brought us to the second floor. We were examined by a doctor and the people were taken to their cells.

“The prison staff were terrified and asking: ‘What is going on in Minsk? Our cells are designed for 10 people, we have to pack them with 60; people are hanging on each other.’

“I didn’t get to a cell; the doctor who examined me said: ‘This one goes to hospital.’ Some guy with a gunshot-like wound in his groin was taken with me. The ambulance came to pick us up 2.5 hours later. In the hospital we were

examined, first aid was provided and those who were able to move without help and whose life was not in danger were released.

An old doctor, who recorded the beatings, said: 'I have seen more dislocations in these three days than in my entire life.' ”

In a car provided by volunteers, who were transporting victims from the hospital to their homes, only Yury was capable of moving on his own.

While he was in jail, Yury's wife was travelling all over Minsk, trying to find out any information about her husband. She was in Okrestina Street and took a cab to Zhodino. She still can't recover from what happened; in the next few days she will go to the jail to pick up his things, as she's afraid that her husband would be captured again and beaten up if he goes there himself.

Yury emphasizes that the jail guards, including the supervisors, were the only ones who treated the detainees humanely.

“What can I think about what is happening? It's some kind of atrocity... This experience is terrifying, it's terrible to imagine that someone else could have the same experience in the future. I can show you the marks from the beatings, but the most distinctive ones are in a spot that you don't normally show people. Although today I would gladly show this part of my body to those who tortured me.”

Kirill: “We were taken to the basement, the 15 of us, where they made us sing the anthem of Belarus and kept beating us with truncheons”

Kirill, 21, was heading to the store where he works as a manager on August 12, after working out. He was standing at a pedestrian crossing on Masherova Street, some 50 meters from his store. A van with tinted windows drove up, and its doors opened. The people inside said: “Come here, don't be afraid of anything, nothing's going to happen to you.” They put him to the van, took his phone and drove him somewhere. They hit him on the head several times. Then they brought him to a police van.

“In the police van, an OMON officer put me on the floor face down and asked: ‘So you want a change?’ — and started kicking me,” he says. “Other detainees were sitting around, about 15 people. I was put in a box with three other men.

The vehicle drove around the city for a while, picked up a few more people and took us to the Partizansky district police office. They took me out of the truck and brought me into the inner yard. We were asked our names and dates of birth, and ordered to lie on the floor. Then they started kicking us, including in the face. There were about 30 detainees; each of them was beaten one by one. It appears they broke my nose at that time.

“After that, about 15 people were taken to the basement, where they made us sing the national anthem while beating us with truncheons. Then they took us to take inventory of the stuff they had taken away from us, and sent us back to the basement, telling us to stay on the floor. An hour and a half passed. OMON officers came in, made everyone get on their knees and made them sing the anthem again. Then other detainees and I were transferred to our cells, and an hour and a half later they took us out of there, beat us again, and took us to police vans.”

The detainees were taken to the detention center in Okrestina Street. According to Kirill, he and other people were put in the yard; there were about 50 in total. They were summoned by name. Some were sent to court, and others were taken to Zhodino. That lasted until about 6 p.m. After that, people were transferred to a cell with 7-8 bunks. They put 36 people in the cell.

“It’s hard to be kept in a cell like that,” says Kirill. “People traded places every hour and a half just to sit and sleep. It was very stuffy and hard to breathe. I was fed for the first time after 24 hours in the cell. Food was brought there: a piece of bread and half a hot dog for each person. There wasn’t enough for everyone; we had to share. An hour and a half later I was given some cereal, a cucumber and some bread. There were no problems with water; we drank from the tap. At 2 a.m. we were told that everyone was going to be released.

Before we were released they forced us to sign a warning about participating in unauthorized rallies. I tried to explain that I had nothing to do with any rally, I was just walking to work, but nobody listened to me.”

All that time Kirill’s relatives didn’t know where he was or what had happened to him. The last time he talked to his mother was before going to the gym. She had been looking for her son at his friends’ houses, in hospitals and prisons. As it turned out, the detention record contained incorrect information: his last name was correct, while the first name and patronymic were not.

When Kirill came out of the detention center in Okrestina Street, he saw many volunteers. He was asked if he needed help and said he could use some. Kirill called his relatives and was taken home.

“It’s difficult to formulate what I think about everything that’s happening,” Kirill says. “I see now that I live in a country where even a walk from home to work can be scary, because anyone can get sent to jail. But I’m more afraid not for myself, but for my relatives and friends who may disappear and nobody will know where they are.”

Anya: they said they were walking me home, but they shoved me into a police van and started beating me

Anya, 30, a senior graphic designer, was walking home from Moskovskaya Street towards Gorodskoy Val Street on August 11, after 11:30 p.m. She walked up the bridge between the subway stations Institute of Culture and Independence Square, and as she was walking down, she saw several police officers.

“I went up to them and asked them how I could get home,” Anna recalls. “They told me there was no alternative route, and offered to walk me home. While we were walking and talking, the policemen said they were escorting me for my own safety. We reached their chief, wearing a ‘spaceman’ suit, and he volunteered to take me further. He said he would check my belongings on the way.

“We approached the Red Church (Church of Saints Simon and Helena); there was a bus parked near it and a lot of riot policemen. Unexpectedly, they threw me into the bus and started beating me. I was kicked and beaten with truncheons, they hit me on the head once, and a large hematoma developed on my forehead (you can still see it on my face). They shouted that I was a coordinator of the protests and demanded that I tell them who was paying me. I answered that I didn’t understand what they were talking about; for every such answer I was beaten again. It was the most terrible evening of my life.

“At some point, when the bruise on my head became very large, it seems they decided that they had overdone it and sent me to the Moscow district police department. When we got there, other people and I were taken to a large room; there was blood and vomit on the floor, around 40 people total. They threw

me on the floor, looking at my dreadlocks, and started saying they were going to cut my hair off.

“Then I was taken to an office for questioning. They put me in a chair with seven policemen around me asking who was paying for my ‘subversion.’ Once again I tried to explain that I didn’t understand what they were talking about, and they knocked the chair out from under me told me to lie on the floor. They continued asking the same questions, and if the answer was not satisfactory, they beat me with batons below my back.

“After that I was taken to a room that looked like an assembly hall, where there were more than 40 guys and girls. They sat me down and a policeman came up behind me and drew something with a spray can on my hoodie.

“As it turned out later, it was a sign that marks the most active protesters.

“We sat in that room throughout the night. Someone asked to call an ambulance, someone was throwing up, but nobody helped.

“In the morning half of those present were given reports; if people signed them, they were released. A van arrived and some people were pushed into it to go to Okrestina (detention center). The guys were packed very tightly in the compartment, while three girls, including me, were placed in the ‘tube’ (stakan). All the windows were closed, and people soon began to suffocate.

“We were taken to the Okrestina Street jail, and there, in the yard, they lined us up facing the wall. The guys were then put face down on the ground. In total, there were about 80 people. The girls were left in the yard; the guys were taken somewhere.

“We sat through the night in a room with concrete walls without a roof. Many were wearing T-shirts and shorts, and we all froze. At that time, the men were being brutally beaten on the other side of the wall: we heard screams, moans, and the sounds of blows. Girls recognized their boyfriends’ voices and were shaking in terror. It lasted all night.

“In the afternoon we were put in a four-bed cell; at different times there were between 35 and 40 people there. Some people didn’t eat for 24 hours, and some for 48. It was horrifying to see a woman who had been detained together with her husband; she was asking them to let her make a phone call because their children were left at home alone.

“On the third day after I was detained I was told I had to sign a paper with a warning that if I was detained again I would be criminally charged. I packed up my belongings and went outside where I was met by the volunteers, just like the other prisoners.”

Yana: “We agreed to keep silent so that everyone could have enough air”

Yana, a creative professional, came to the Minsk Hero City Obelisk on Sunday. She said she went to a peaceful protest, and she was dressed accordingly: a dress, sneakers, some accessories.

“Around 9 p.m., we were standing at the intersection of Masherova Street and Independence Avenue,” she says. “The OMON ‘comb’ passed us by, because the main crowd was near the Palace of Sport. Then they moved back and detained a friend of mine. I followed the riot police. They shouted at me, told me to go away, but I decided I wouldn’t leave. Then the doors were opened for me and I went into the police van. The men who were there applauded my move.”

The van was packed. Like all the other detainees, Yana was taken to the Okrestina jail in the van, which was divided into smaller compartments known as “tubes.” At Okrestina, Yana was first placed in a four-person cell with 19 girls, and then in a six-person cell with 50 cellmates. Her trial took place at the center, as did everyone’s. She didn’t agree with the charging document, and was sentenced to four days of arrest.

“An English teacher, a mother of five children and a designer were with us. Their stories were different. For example, we had a girl there who had come to meet her friend near the jail. We were not fed and could only drink tap water. It’s impossible to drink it there. We suffered for a day, and then we started to drink it. We thought of ways to sleep. Four girls would sit on a bunk. Some were under the table, some were on the cabinet, some were inside the cabinet or under the bunks. On the last night before leaving for Zhodino, on Tuesday, they knocked on the door every hour. Everyone had to get up and line up.

“There wasn’t enough air. We agreed to keep silent so that everyone could have enough air. When the hatch was opened, it was a little easier. But it was closed when the men were taken out to be beaten. There were mostly taken out at night so that no one could hear. But we could hear them fine, and we could hear

the support of people near the fence. We could see and hear everything that was going on, but we were not allowed to respond. Because if we responded, the window would be shut.

“The staff at the Zhodino jail cried when they heard our stories. It was the first time we were fed in three days. On Thursday night they let me go; I was looking for my things, they took me to all the cells, and they told us those who had come from ‘Auschwitz’ would not find their belongings there. We do not have any human rights here. It feels like they can do anything here. On the third day I became hysterical. It seemed to me that I would stay there forever.”

Few people are aware that inmates are charged 13.5 Belarusian rubles (approximately USD 5.2) per day for food. This is what Yana was charged at the Zhodino jail.

Alexey: “At first we were kneeling, leaning on our elbows. Those with injuries and the rest of us.”

Alexey Shchitnikov, 47, was detained on Dzerzhinsky Avenue on August 12. In front of him a window was shattered in a car and a man was dragged out. Then the same thing happened to Alexey.

“I was detained by OMON. I even thought that they were not Belarusians, because I heard them ‘sending guests.’ I was beaten thoroughly in the police van. I was beaten hard. They just kicked the hell out of those kids,” he recollects. “On August 13 we came here from the Moskovsky district police station. We stayed outdoors practically until the night. At first we were kneeling, leaning on our elbows. Those with injuries and the rest of us. We weren’t allowed to go to the bathroom, and were only given some water after 24 hours. Then we were put face down on the floor in the assembly hall, then we were seated in such a way that our necks got numb. After that we spent the night in the ‘tube,’ a small cell where we could barely breathe.”

Yesterday morning Alexey was released. But before that he had signed a “warning” about the riots.

“It means ‘We are watching you, if you get involved again, you’ll get the maximum punishment next time,’” he said.

Yulia: “At night we heard the screams of guys who were being beaten, and there was blood on the walls in hallways”

Designer Yulia Golievskaya decided to become an election monitor at the polling station in the building of School No. 205. She said she wanted the votes to be counted properly and the election process to be transparent. Yulia recorded violations and filed complaints with the commission. On August 9, at 5:30 p.m., OMON riot police arrived at the polling station. She still doesn't know who called them.

“Twenty people came in. They came up to me, took me by the shoulder and said: ‘Let's go.’ I followed them,” she says. “I was pushed onto a bus, where 10 OMON officers were seated, and we went to the Okrestina jail.”

They did not immediately tell Yulia why she had been detained, and the security officers never identified themselves. She was placed in a four-bed cell together with 35 cellmates.

“There was no air, every inch of it was occupied. We asked them to spread us out somehow. The door opened and a bucket of water was poured right onto us. We were not fed, no deliveries were allowed, no medication, nothing. There were no sanitary pads. We were constantly humiliated, cursed and yelled at: ‘Why didn't you just stay at home, frying cutlets?’” Yulia sobs. “At night we could hear the guys being taken out of their cells. We heard them being beaten and their screams. And then, when we were taken out for roll call, I saw blood on the walls in the hallways.”

Yulia had her case considered by two courts from different parts of the city. She doesn't know why. Trials were held at the pre-trial detention center as well. They followed an irregular procedure.

“I was called to their office. There was a judge in the office. She asked: ‘Do you trust the court?’ Yes, I do. She asked me what I was doing in the evening on August 9. I wrote down my testimony. Then I heard: ‘Wait for the verdict.’ The verdict was announced in the cell by a completely different person — a man in civilian clothes. Everyone was given 15 days of arrest. Then there was a second trial. It was written in the report that I was detained at 10 p.m. on Pobediteley Avenue for shouting ‘Long live Belarus!’ and other slogans.

I did not agree with the report, and that court sentenced me to four days of arrest. Many listened to their verdicts while facing the wall and with no opportunity to communicate with the judges in any way.

Yulia was transferred to the Zhodino jail. She says that after Okrestina the conditions there were better: 13 people in a cell with two bunks.

“They fed us there. They treated us normally. They weren’t rude,” she says. “In Zhodino there was no information, no documents on people at all. So I stayed for an extra 24 hours because they couldn’t find my documents.

“It was very hard to bear it. It was hell for us in Okrestina. I suffer from panic attacks, I take pills for my condition. I asked for medical help, they gave me ammonium chloride. Women asked for insulin – they were denied it,” she recalls. “The only thought was that we had to survive, to survive and not to fall into despair. We tried to support each other, in order not to lose heart.”

Yulia says she will see to it that her situation is properly investigated. She says that together with her cellmates she wants to bring to justice all those who abused their authority.

“I saw people being beaten and they were crawling, wriggling like caterpillars.” Victims of violence during detention share their experience

<https://people.onliner.by/2020/08/19/postradavshie-ot-nasiliya-pri-zaderzhanii>

Author: Nastasia Zanko

Many of those who experienced violence during the protests were silent at first, refusing to communicate with the media. Some had just left the detention center; others were in hospitals and were not willing to talk. But time passed, and it seemed like the breaking of a dam. Dozens of people talked about their experiences — about the violence, both psychological and physical, that they went through. We are launching a new series called Okrestina, in which we will publish the stories of victims during the protests. We warn you: what you are about to read may shock you.

Nikolay: “We were thrown into the van and they sat on our backs.”

Nikolay is 46 years old. He is one of the participants in the Open Mic project near Pushkinskaya Metro station. His voice trembles and his hands twitch a little. Nikolay intentionally put on the clothes he was wearing when he was detained on August 11. He says he has nothing to hide, and no one to hide from.

“I was detained for honking my horn in Independence Square. At that moment there were a couple of cars in Independence Square and no people at all,” he says. “I was riding with a friend, and I honked. We were stopped by a traffic police vehicle. In our car there was a white-red-white flag. At first there were questions about why we had honked and whether the car had passed its

technical inspection. I answered honestly about the inspection: that I didn't pay for it because they were already taxing us for it. As soon as the policemen noticed the flag, they called their allies on the radio, saying that they had 'revolutionaries' in the car.

An unidentified van drove up to Nikolay's car; people in civilian clothes, ski masks and body armor came out.

"We were thrown into the van and they sat on our backs. They sat on us, beat us, called us gays and shouted: 'Do you want Gay-ropa?'¹ We'll shove batons in your back holes,' Nikolay recalls.

At the Moskovsky district police station, all the detainees were sent to the assembly hall. But before that, they had to pass through a formation of riot police.

"We were beaten with batons from both sides. We were brought in and kicked to the floor," Nikolay says. "We were lying face down, with our hands behind our backs, and were forced to crawl forward in this position. When we arrived the floor was clean, and after 30 minutes they had brought in so many beaten, bloody people that the whole floor was covered in blood. In the end, I was allowed to sit on a chair. I saw people being beaten and they were crawling, wriggling like caterpillars, screaming in muted voices. Those who couldn't crawl were dragged on that bloody floor by their hair or by their clothes."

"If the police found money in people's pockets, they would beat them and ask them where the money came from, who had paid them. But no one was paid — none of those who were there. We had gone there following our hearts.

"The country needs changes; we just need to look around. During the beatings, we were actually told to confess that we had been paid.

"The judges were sitting at tables, and the detainees were on their knees in front of them, facing the floor."

Nikolay says the detainees were mostly beaten by OMON. Other police officers who were there treated them better.

1 a play on words in Russian (gay + Europa) used as shorthand for the idea that the European Union (or Western Europe more generally) is destroying traditional morals.

“But whenever OMON arrived, [the regular police] also became enraged. They were normal, some seemed to talk to the detainees, and then OMON came and started beating people – and the regular policemen would grab their batons,” Nikolay explains. “Why were they acting like this? To show off.”

Nikolay and his friend stayed at the police station for about 24 hours. They were transferred from the assembly hall to a tiny cell with a single bench. There were six detainees in that cell.

“As soon as you moved, they started yelling: we’ll pump gas into the cell now, and you’ll all die,” he recalls, adding that trials were held at the detention center. “The judges were sitting at tables, and the detainees were on their knees in front of them, facing the floor, our heads touching the floor. They came up to us with a baton to raise us up. You were not allowed to look at the table. They asked us a couple of questions: our surname, first name, patronymic, telephone number.

They asked if we agreed or disagreed with the record. But they were not interested in the answer. A couple of minutes – and I was taken away.

“Some time later, we were told that those had been our trials. It was a kind of conveyor belt. Nobody told us anything: they didn’t tell us the name of the judge, we didn’t even know that those were trials, that we had already been sentenced. Mine were Article 18.14, Part 10 and 18.22, Part 1, of the Administrative Offences Code of the Republic of Belarus. This provides for punishment for blocking roads, something of this kind. They want to revoke my license for this. For what? For honking?”

Then the detainees were taken to the detention center in Okrestina Street. Nikolay says the night there was total chaos.

“They would make us lie on the grass outside, then they would bring us back, and they stripped us several times,” he recalls. “Their lists were a mess, they counted and rewrote our details a hundred times, but still couldn’t say who was where. And they beat us all the time. You lie on the grass, you’re numb, all your joints hurt, but as soon as you move, you get kicked. You try to turn your head so that your nose has air, and they hit you on the back.

Nikolay lifts his shirt and shows bruises on his back. He says it’s the same on his buttocks and hips.

“On the night of August 12-13, people were beaten so that there was a constant unceasing scream. The sounds from the blows were like the sounds when you hit a tree with an axe. Grown men just soiled themselves,” he says. “That scream is still in my ears. I can’t sleep at night. I’ve lived half my life and could not even imagine that this is possible.”

“I do not know how these people live with their families.”

“At the Okrestina detention center, we spent the night in a 5x5 m exercise cell. There were 78 people there. We were driven there like cattle. In the corner there was a sewer hatch; the stench was terrible. There was no air to breathe, and then there was the smell,” he says. “Over 36 hours, we were thrown several loaves of bread – one for every seven people. And they want to charge us for that. I’m telling you, I will not be paying for it. I will go to the Investigative Committee with it.”

After that Nikolay and his cellmates were sent to the Slutsk Labor and Rehabilitation Center (LTP). They were among the first detainees sent there.

“One guy couldn’t get up, so he was just thrown under the fence in Okrestina Street. I still don’t know what happened to him,” he says. “When we came to Slutsk, I was in shock. The LTP had been re-equipped: I saw new towers made of fresh timber, and soldiers with dogs.

”Everything really looked like a death camp. But there were guys from the internal troops there. For the first couple of hours they were wearing masks. But when they saw who had been brought – not Nazis, not some mercenaries, not soldiers, but regular Belarusians – two hours later, there were no ordinary soldiers, but only officers and ensigns (praporshchik). They wore sand-colored military uniforms. Those people didn’t hide their faces and they treated us humanely, some even shared cigarettes. I appreciate this. I saw that there were honest people in the army.”

I don’t know how these people live with their families. They all hid their faces because they know that there will be a trial and they will be prosecuted. And I will personally speak at that trial.

Ivan: “They smashed the right window with a kick; someone suggested using the point of a truncheon to deal with the left one”

Ivan, 36, is an individual entrepreneur and partner of Yandex.Taxi. He’s a former paratrooper, and on August 11 he was going to meet with his buddies to celebrate Paratrooper Day, because they had missed it on August 2. Ivan was driving while wearing his beret and striped shirt, and with the flag of the Airborne Troops on his antenna. At the intersection of Internatsionalnaya Street and Yanka Kupala Street, he was stopped by a traffic policeman.

“I was honking, it would have been a sin not to. A traffic policeman ran up to me and stopped me. I obeyed his legal request. I was sober, everything was fine with my documents,” Ivan says. “The only thing wrong was the flag on the antenna or that I honked. I was ready to accept some minimal fine for the flag. A couple of base units, maybe.”¹

When an entire OMON unit ran up to me, I realized that it was more than a fine for the flag.

When he saw police running to the car, Ivan rolled up his windows and locked the doors. He says it was just at that time that the riot police started pounding on his car with their batons. A video of the incident has been posted on the Internet.

“Nobody addressed me, no one explained that I had violated some rules, that there were some accusations made against me, nobody introduced themselves — they just hit the car with their batons, and that’s it,” Ivan explained. “A man approached the car from the left and started hitting the glass with the butt of his pistol, and someone was trying to smash the glass from the right side. Then there were more of them and they started to pound on the windshield. I started shouting: “‘What are you doing, what is going on?!’ I didn’t expect this turn of events.”

As a result, they smashed the right window with a kick, someone advised suggested using the point of a truncheon to deal with the left one.

1 a base unit is about \$10.

“My hips started to burn so that it was unbearable to stand, and I fell on the asphalt.”

It was calculated later that Ivan’s car was being hit by 15 riot police officers. In the end, the windshield was smashed. The doors were unlocked and Ivan was pulled out of the car.

“I was thrown onto the road, and the video shows me lying down and being kicked and beaten with truncheons. They hit me on the head and cut it open. I was lucky, to be honest: it doesn’t hurt so much, but it bleeds a lot,” he recalls. “Then I was taken to the bus and made to kneel with my head down; they turned my pockets inside-out. And they started to beat me with batons. They beat me some more and then I fell.

“My hips started to burn so that it was unbearable to stand, and I fell on the asphalt. I was kicked more and left lying in front of the bus. My beret was lying on the road. My shirt was torn and I was told that I was unworthy of it. That’s a serious statement, but I was unable to answer.”

I asked to stop the bleeding as I felt that my face was covered in blood. They told me: ‘You won’t run dry.’

After Ivan was taken to the bus, someone called an ambulance. The doctor wanted to take him to the hospital, but he was asked to stop the bleeding and leave the bus.

“I started playing DiCaprio – pretending to be in shock; I realized that I wouldn’t survive otherwise,” Ivan says. “They ‘woke me up’ with ammonia and pushed me back to the corner of the bus, until my phone rang.”

I have Viktor Tsoi’s “Change” set as my ringtone, and it played loud inside the bus. It was like a red rag to a bull.

“They started jabbing me in the ribs with the end of the baton to get the password to the phone. I pretended I was stunned, said random numbers, and they didn’t manage to access the phone. In the end I was left alone.”

More people were thrown onto the bus. Ivan remembers that everyone was beaten, especially if photos from the rallies were found on their phones. Late at night they were taken to Pervomaisky district police station. Like Nikolay, Ivan had to walk face down through an “alley” of policemen, who continually

beat him. He also found himself in the gym of Pervomaisky police station in the same position as Nikolay: on his knees, face to the floor and with his hands tied.

“I sat for at least five hours with zip ties on my hands.”

“I eventually lost feeling in my hands. They went numb,” Ivan says. “I was detained at about 8 p.m., and I was brought for questioning at 3 a.m. In total I spent at least five hours with ties on my hands. All that time they beat me from behind if we tried to move. People asked to change their position, someone had problems with their legs or they just couldn’t be in that position, but nobody cared. Sometimes we were allowed to put our hands under our heads, or lie on our stomachs and stretch our legs. But those were rare cases. I was so nauseated that I understood: that’s it, the end. I started to ask for an ambulance.”

In this condition Ivan tried to read the prepared record, but he was physically unable to do so. He said he wanted to write that because of his physical condition he couldn’t do it.

“They said in that case they wouldn’t call an ambulance. I had no desire to stay there any longer, so I signed the record,” he explains.

The doctors came and took him to the Second Clinical Hospital. After X-rays and ultrasound it looked like all his bones and internal organs were intact. They let him go home. Ivan still has trouble walking: his muscles burn, he gets very tired very quickly.

“Everything looks very scary, but it almost doesn’t hurt anymore,” Ivan says, showing his bruises. “But the main thing is that I still can’t get my car. I would be grateful if somebody could help me with this. I drive an old Moskvitch, I borrowed it from a friend. I can’t work now, because I still can’t get my car back. I have already appealed to the Investigative Committee; it will conduct a probe into my physical injuries. In addition, I want to file claims concerning my health, property and lost profit.

How did I cope morally? I served in the army. And I am not a boy, so I do not feel broken in any way. Physical injuries are no reason for me to give up my principles.

Alexey: “They poured glue on a guy with leaflets, then slapped them onto his body and beat him.”

Alexey, 29, ended up in the same gym of Pervomaisky police station. He was detained on August 11 on Pobediteley Avenue between the Palace of Sport and the Obelisk. He was stopped by a traffic policeman, and then detained by OMON.

“They ordered us to unlock our phones and open the photo gallery,” he recalled. “My friend listened to them and showed them his photos. There were pictures from Tsikhanouskaya’s rally that had been held on July 30. They said, ‘Oh, he’s one of our clients,’ and took us out of the car. In my car, they found a white-red-white flag and postcards from the Heroes Bar, which the bartender had given me. In fact, that’s why they detained me. An OMON officer said he had detained rioters. They said we had leaflets, a flag and whatnot.”

Alexey was taken to a police van with small compartments. He was pushed through the entrance and two OMON officers began beating him.

“They beat me on every part of the body, but I protected my vital organs, covered my head and waited until they stopped,” he explains. “Then I was thrown into a small cell. There was one man already sitting there. He was shirtless. He said he had been detained while riding a bicycle. The same procedure applied to every man who was thrown into the vehicle.

“Five of them were pushed into our cell. One had a poster reading ‘I have a choice’ on him. The poster was crumpled, they shoved it in his face and shouted: ‘Eat, you f**k.’

“But they had a lot of ‘work;’ people were constantly being detained, so they didn’t have time to feed him the poster. What were the others detained for? For a poster, for a ribbon, for something else. But we had a guy who was an ordinary cab passenger. He was detained for nothing at all. He was also a diabetic. He got his insulin syringe broken. He repeatedly asked for a shot of insulin, because he was getting unwell, but they didn’t bring in a doctor.”

Alexey recalls that the cells were very stuffy, the ventilation didn’t work. Many people were getting sick, so they asked that the ventilation be turned on. But no one did.

In Pervomaisky district police station, Alexey had the same experience as people before him: they ran squatting along the ‘alley’ composed of riot

policemen, who beat them with truncheons. In the notorious gym, Alexey was forced to kneel, his hands behind his back, and press his head against the floor. He was wearing shorts, so his knees soon began to hurt. He said he tried to take off his sneakers and put them under his knees, but was hit with a baton for that.

“They started asking who was paying us, they said we were facing eight years in prison,” he recalls. “They didn’t say why. But you start trying to make comparisons and think: are they really trying to frame up some sort of a case?”

“Kneeling in that position is torture. And I could never do it right, I was always positioned incorrectly. The employees who passed by me kicked me in the small of my back. Batons were hitting people incessantly. People were screaming.

“A guy who had leaflets and glue got the worst beating. They poured glue on his head and his back, slapped leaflets onto him and beat him with a baton.

“OMON was very scary. They would come, ask why nobody was beating us and proceed to beat us. No one in that gym went unharmed. When we were told to take off our shirts to see any distinguishing features, I saw that most people’s backs were blue. In Okrestina Street, some guys said that one of them had a tattoo of the Chase coat of arms, so they kept hitting him on that arm so hard they broke it.

“Asking for something in those conditions was scary, because in return you could just get kicked. But when it had become unbearable, people asked to lie on their stomachs. And we were allowed to do it for a few minutes. But then we were forced to return to the same position.”

Alexey says they stayed like that – on their knees with their hands behind them – from 9:30 p.m. until noon the next day. They were allowed to change their positions from time to time, but they remained on their knees most of the time. The detainees spent the night in the same gym. They were very cold: the windows were wide open.

“There were 102 people in 20-25 square meters.”

“When they were drawing up reports, the officer only asked the time and place of detention. They were simply written into the report, where the text had

already been printed,” Alexey explains. “In the investigator’s office, I was also kneeling, with my hands behind my back and my head on the floor. I was not allowed to read the report. I asked and they answered: ‘Don’t make me angry, and sign it quickly.’ I wrote that I did not agree with what was in the report and signed it. There was no other way.”

In the afternoon, the detainees were sent to the Okrestina Street jail. There they were unloaded following the same procedure as at the police station. They were brought back to their knees near a wall.

“There was a man standing next to me, over 40 years old. He couldn’t hold his hands behind his back, because his ribs had been broken. When he informed OMON, he was asked to show this sore spot. He showed it and an OMON officer started hitting him on his side with his fist.

“Later an ambulance arrived and picked up the beaten man. I saw him wheeled away in a wheelchair with an IV,” Alexey recollects.

Trials followed. People stood facing the wall, and were taken to the judge one by one. It turned out that Alexey’s report read that he had been detained at 6:30 p.m. while shouting slogans. The name and time of detention were wrong, though. He mentioned this; the judge listened. He was sentenced to 13 days of arrest.

“Then we were sent to the yard, with the concrete floor and concrete walls. In total there were 102 people in about 20-25 square meters. I felt like I was on a packed bus,” he says. “We also spent the night in that yard. Some people were barefoot, some shirtless, and it was very cold. We had to huddle together.”

Later that night we were fed for the first time: two loaves of bread for all of us. I managed to tear off a piece of bread the size of a matchbox.

The detainees were sent to a cell. The bunks were all occupied. They were no blankets or pillows. People would lie on the floor with their sneakers under their heads.

“We constantly heard screams and beatings, as someone moaned in pain. Right under the doors of our yard, someone was thrown down, beaten with batons and made to scream ‘I love OMON.’ People screamed until they lost their voices, but they continued to be beaten with batons. Again, the main rhetoric was that we had been paid. They said that your Tsikhanouskaya

had left you like cannon fodder, earned money and left for Lithuania. They threatened us that we were expendables, that even if someone was killed, they would not be punished.”

“Compared to the LTP, the detention center in Okrestina Street was perceived as some kind of a concentration camp.”

Alexey was taken from Okrestina Street to the Slutsk LTP (rehabilitation and labor center). During those three days, Alexey was not on any list; his family had no idea where he was.

“The LTP employees were decent; they didn’t beat us, they let us shower for the first time. Then we were taken to the barracks, and there were bunks where we could lie for the first time, though without linens or pillows,” he said.

In the evening, we had porridge and a hot dog. The best food in the world.

“Compared to the LTP, the detention center in Okrestina Street seems like some kind of concentration camp. I don’t understand how such a thing is even possible. After all, even if people are detained, there are some standards applied to them.”

There was breakfast in the morning. The detainees were ready to serve their days of arrest there.

“There was a TV set in one of the rooms. We were watching it, and there was a caption that Interior Minister Yury Karayev apologized to those who had been detained accidentally,” Alexey says.

He was released on Thursday afternoon. Alexey had already contacted his lawyers. He decided not to forget what happened, and sent a complaint to the Minsk City Court.

“My bottom hurts the most; you can’t see as many bruises on my back and arms. My body hurts, but I have no bruises. I will still document my injuries,” he explains, adding that he didn’t come to us just to complain.

I decided to tell my story to make it public. I think that we should all tell about what happened. We shouldn’t keep silent about it.



TUT.BY / Olga Shukaylo



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Those who fell were beaten severely: how riot police abused ordinary Belarusians

<http://euroradio.pl/tyh-hto-padau-zabivali-yak-amap-zdzekavausya-z-belarusau>

Author: Marya Vaitovich

From August 9 to 13 almost 7,000 Belarusians were detained by police. For many of them, their ordeal ended with severe injuries and treatment in a hospital.

Patients at the Emergency Care Hospital in Minsk shared stories of the abuse they suffered with a Euroradio journalist. They asked us to tell everyone that the photos of injuries that have flooded the Internet are not fake.

Viachaslau Piatrou: “They beat me and swore they would put a firecracker in my pants”

On the night of August 11, Viachaslau Piatrou was on his way to the Riga department store and saw barricades. He recalls that police were grabbing groups of people, putting them on the ground and tying their hands with zip ties.

“In our police van there were about 30 people stacked in four layers. The police climbed up, stamped their feet, sat on top, so that no one could get up. I raised my head to have a look – and got beaten. One of the police said jokingly, like, let’s throw a grenade inside and close the door – that would be a good lesson for them...

“The people lying on the bottom were barely breathing, they asked the police to let them out, to let them breathe. After that, those who were on top were beaten. The police said to tell those below not to ask for anything. I was lying on my side, so I got a blow to the ribs. When we reached our destination, my clothes were soaked in blood.

“At the detention center in Okrestina, I was kept the whole night with my face against the grass. I was searched. My phone fell out and was lying beside me. A riot policeman started yelling that I was taking videos. They beat me and swore they would put a firecracker in my pants. Right in front of my eyes, a guy with long hair got his hair cut three times. They shouted at him: ‘You hairy bastard!’ They beat him. To a foreigner, they shouted: “You nigger, welcome to our country. We’ll show you freedom!” They beat him, too. I got two blows on the ribs and three or four on my back.

“After that the investigator demanded that I name those who were paying me. He said that all of us were answering according to a script. He swore we’d get 12 years in prison on a criminal charge.

“While I was at Okrestina, I heard people in neighboring cells crying. There were girls and women there, too. Some of them were having their periods, and were told to use their T-shirts.”

Aliaksandr Lukianski: “I can’t look at people in uniform, it’s scary”

On 11 August Aliaksandr Lukianski was returning home in a taxi. The car was caught in a traffic jam near Sportivnaya metro station.

“We were approached by the traffic police. The driver stepped out of the car to show his documents. They told me to step out, too. I sensed that something bad was happening and locked the doors. Then the OMON riot policemen came running, broke the glass, and pulled me out through the window. They beat me severely. They hit me with their batons on my legs, arms, butt, lips, nose... They beat and kicked me. On all parts of my body. My butt hurt so much that I couldn’t sit down.

“They took me to Pervomaisky district police department, threw me into a cell, then took me to the gym. There, people were kneeling with their hands behind their necks. The guys were beaten; the whole room was covered in blood. The girls were treated better; they were allowed to sit down on pads. But one of the girls was kneeling with us, because they found a video from the protests on her phone.

“Then we were taken to Okrestina. As we were approaching the building, we heard terrifying screams: people crying for help. Everyone was forced to kneel

in the yard. If someone wanted to go to the toilet, they were ordered to do it where they were, or a bucket was brought. Someone said they were hungry. Then a riot policeman knocked some small green apples off a tree and said: 'Eat those, you bastards!' Occasionally they would beat us at random, to keep up the tension.

"In fact, I was lucky. A medical team arrived and examined those who had to be taken to the hospital. I said I could barely breathe, my ribs and back were hurting. Others also asked to be examined. A doctor from Okrestina came up and said roughly: 'You bastards, you were brave enough to protest, and now you're going to hide in the ambulance? Sit down, I'll cure you right now.' Some official from the detention center came up and also said they'd take care of us. People were taken inside the building and beaten, forced to say 'OMON rules', sing the national anthem – and all of that was filmed.

"Then they said over the radio that one guy needed to be taken out. His pelvis had been broken with batons, and he couldn't walk. They took him out and gave him a painkiller shot; he was completely broken.

"We couldn't start moving for a long time – they wouldn't let the ambulance out. They were pounding on the vehicle, trying to see who was being taken out and in what condition...

"I'd like to leave the country for Ukraine or Poland. I can't look at people in uniform. I'm scared that they'll start beating me."

Ihar Krupsky: "They yelled that we were packed full of drugs, paid in dollars"

Ihar Krupsky was detained on August 9. He was an independent observer at the 83rd polling station of Moskovsky district. The headmaster of school number 181 called the police, saying the observers were putting psychological pressure on voters.

"They took me by the arms and put me onto a bus. They insulted and beat me. Then I was taken to the police van. There was a very short young riot policeman with a blank stare. He grabbed me by the throat and tried to choke me. When he saw my white ribbon, he shouted that I was Tsikhanouskaya's bastard. When transferred from one van to another, I was hit with batons or on the stomach.

“After arriving at Okrestina, we saw a corridor of riot policemen, who started beating us with their batons. I didn’t know who was hitting me or where. I felt the blows and realized that I needed run forward so I wouldn’t fall down. Those who fell were beaten severely.

“They yelled that we were packed full of drugs, and paid in dollars. They said: your Tsikhanouskaya has already left, and you fools are here, while the streets are already quiet. They liked to hear people crying and asking for forgiveness. I was hit about 15 times. I couldn’t feel my legs.

“The riot policemen were scared to take us to Zhodino. They realized anything could happen. In Zhodino, I was hit several times in the chest, on the head, and in the stomach. Then they forced us into the yard. I stood and couldn’t breathe. On the first night, I could only sleep on my side or if I curled up. I was gasping for breath. I asked for a doctor, but none ever came.

“In Zhodino, they threatened us with ‘the masks’. That meant masked people who would burst into the cell and start beating you, without stopping for even a moment. So no one wanted to be on a top bunk, afraid that they would start forcing people down, hitting them against the metal frames. But it was just intimidation.”

Aliaksandr Alkhouski: “They threatened us with rape in prison”

On the night of August 12, Aliaksandr Alkhouski was detained at the intersection of Goretsky and Sharangovich streets, near the Magnit shopping mall. He says he had not participated in the protests.

“I stopped by to talk with my friends, then suddenly several buses arrived. They grabbed me. I got kicked in the legs. Lay on the ground. Rolled up and covered my head. I got hit on the legs and kidneys. They yelled: ‘You fucking bastard, you’re dead!’ All the time they threatened to take us to the forest, or with rape in prison.

“Then they forced me onto a bus, took my phone, unlocked it and read my messages. Then they detained two more guys. We were lying with our faces to the ground; they drove across the whole city while beating us.

“Then they locked us up in the police van and took us to the district police station. There were some young officers who untied our hands. They took me to the investigator, and I fainted on the way. My ears were bleeding. My legs were badly injured. During the interrogation, I was asked provocation leading questions: they wanted me to confess that I had been in places other than Magnit mall.

“They forced me to sign a statement, even though what was written there wasn’t true. But I agreed.”

Yauhen Yakubets: “Guys with dreadlocks were forced to kiss in the police van”

Yauhen Yakubets was detained for the first time on July 14; it happened near the Minsk Hero City Obelisk. He was taken to Pervomaisky district police station, spent the night in the gym and was released. Yauhen says compared to Okrestina detention center, it was like a luxury resort. On the night of August 11 he was in a car with some friends, heading for the Riga department store from the Monetka mall at Komarovka Market. They saw a traffic police post, with officers in black inspecting every car.

“All of us were forced down onto the ground. One of my friends had a video on his phone that they found unacceptable. I had long hair. They started insulting me, saying I was like a girl. They cut my hair with a knife and threw me into the police van. Inside it, they hit me on the legs, on the pelvis, on the stomach and the back. They shouted: ‘We haven’t slept for three days because of you, you bastards! What do you want to build here, what kind country worth living in? Why won’t you stay at home? We’ll show you!’

“There were two guys with dreadlocks. The police cut their hair, cutting their scalps. These guys were forced to kiss in the police van: ‘Come on, you freaks, lick each other! Dodged the draft – now lick each other!’

“When going from one police van to another, we had to pass through a double cordon of policemen. I got a boot to the face. My nose was swollen, and the wound was bleeding.

“In the police van, we were shoved into compartments. It was very stuffy and hot. Then we arrived at Okrestina, ran, and were beaten. I was pretty much

running on my hands and knees. And somebody was trying to pull me up by my hair.

“Near the fence, we were standing on our knees. Then they took us to the yard.

“In the corner there was a five liter jar instead of a toilet.”

Dzmitry: “Rammed a baton into my anus”

On 11 August Dzmitry (who asked that his surname be withheld) passed by the Minsk Hero City Obelisk on his way home. At a pedestrian crossing, two OMON policemen approached him.

“They demanded that I unblock my phone. I refused. Then they took me off my bike, took away the lock and the key, took my bike somewhere, and forced me into a police van. Inside there were four or five OMON. They beat me and demanded that I show them my photos. They found some that showed the dispersal of protests. Then they beat me again with batons, hit and kicked me.

“Several guys were already lying on the floor. I was put in the middle. They forced me to sing the anthem and the song “Change”. Then they kicked me out of the van and onto a bus. There was a guy, like an ideologue, I was ordered to crawl closer to him. He asked: ‘Who pays you? How do you coordinate the protests? Do you have a bad life?’ I answered that my life was normal, that I hadn’t gone anywhere. I wasn’t in a position to push for my rights.

“Then I was forced into the van again and put down with my face on the floor. They started bringing in more people; they brought in a Pole and beat him. A guy near me had a knife in his pocket. He said he practiced crafts. They took the knife and cut his shorts and underwear at the back, threatened to stick a baton into his anus. Then they beat him again.

“Two policemen came with my phone. They wanted to unlock it. Having been beaten, I forgot the password. I felt very bad. They beat me again, and threatened to throw a grenade into the van. Then some supervisor came around and sat nearby. Asked if anyone had a condom. Then he cut my underwear, put the condom on the baton and rammed it into my anus. I felt severe pain. He demanded that I unlock the phone, but I didn’t remember the PIN. I got beaten again and was left in the van.

“Then they pushed us into a police truck. We were heading for Zavodskoy district police station. On our way out, we were beaten by riot policemen once again. They forced us to lie with our faces to the ground, looked at our tattoos, filmed us. We were lying like that for about 10 hours. Then they put us up against the wall; sometimes they gave us water.

“I had a hematoma on my scrotum; I asked for a doctor, but was refused. One guy fainted and hit his head against the curb. An ambulance came and took him away. As for me, they wouldn’t let the doctors see me, they would just laugh. In the morning they tied my hands with zip ties. We stood like this for another ten hours. From time to time they would bring us water. I felt like they were going to shoot us or kill us with grenades. We were standing outside; I was wearing a T-shirt, with my pants cut. Some guy gave me a jacket. My whole body hurt very badly. Sometimes they would loosen the straps and let us move our hands.

“Later they brought statements to sign. Everything written there was a lie – it said I was walking and swinging my arms. They forced me to sign it.

“Then they put us into the police van and took us to Okrestina. When they let us out, they forced us through a corridor of riot policemen. They beat us with batons and took off the zip ties. There were 120 people crammed into the yard, where we stood for about five hours. Local officers were walking around. They didn’t give us any water. Then they gave me a painkiller. An ambulance arrived and took me away. The doctors were shocked.”

Aliaksandr Herasimau: “The Internet was down. My friends and I went to find out who won.”

On 10 August Aliaksandr Herasimau woke up at home. He did not vote; instead, he spent the day in the countryside. The Internet was down. He wanted to learn the news, so he went out in the street.

“My friends and I went to see who had won the election. We arrived at Komarovka, bought some kebabs, ate them. There were many people around. We were happy, sober, no drugs or anything. We reached Riga and saw that a barricade was being built there, the one the police would later storm. We stood near the Europa mall and watched what was happening. The barricade was destroyed. First the water cannons arrived, then other military vehicles

drove into it at full speed. I doubt they knew for sure there were no people behind it.

“All of a sudden the riot policemen appeared. I tried to run away from them, jumped on a ledge, but the jump off it was not a success. I couldn’t run any more. They seized me. They tried to tie my hands, but they couldn’t. They beat me. Told me to stand up, and so I did, as I couldn’t run with my leg broken.

“Then they forced me down with my face to the ground, cut off my hair. (I thought it was awful, but after I had a shower, it turned out to be okay!) They threatened to rape me with a truncheon. Shouted that I was paid. They had a provincial accent. It seemed to me they were high on something. I could tell from how they were acting and their crazy eyes, their blank stares.

“I was taken to Tsentralny district police station. I stood outside until I started to faint. At the station they took photos of everyone, but not me. My lips were swollen, I had a cut on my eyebrow, I had a black eye – the photographer refused to shoot me.

“They didn’t give us any medications, while many of us desperately needed medical help. I was ordered to sign a statement. I don’t know what it said, but I signed it. My leg was aching, I couldn’t think about anything else. Then I was taken to hospital. What is there to say? I’ve served in the army and know how it works. I can imagine how they practice for that kind of thing. Now they let them out, let them loose a bit. The boys had a great time!”



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МОГИЛЕВОНЛАЙН

“The Nazis in the movies are polite compared with them.” A bartender from Grodno talks about the 14 hours that followed his encounter with the riot police

<https://ru.hrodna.life/articles/fashisty-omon>

Denis Stepanenko is 34 years old. He was born and lives in Grodno, where he graduated from the Chemical Technology College. In 2019 he left for Lithuania to work as a bartender, returning home in the spring of 2020. On the evening of August 11, he went for a walk and ran into riot police officers. The next 14 hours became the most terrible in his life: detained passersby were tortured to unlock their phones, beaten and humiliated. A Hrodna.Life correspondent recorded his story.

The story of Denis Stepanenko makes your blood curdle. Hrodna.life editors warn you that this text is not recommended for sensitive people.

“What are your goals, tasks for today? Who is your contact? How much were you paid?”

I went for a walk on the evening of August 11, as usual. I’m trying to lose weight and walk at least 10,000 steps a day.

I was walking alone downtown, listening to music on my headphones. I wasn’t even going to cross the bridge, where the road could be blocked.

I had been walking there the day before and had come across a cordon. I asked a police officer where was a better place to go, and he showed me.

When I saw the police on August 11, we were about 500 meters apart. I could have left, but I didn't even think that meeting them could be dangerous. There were no rallies or protests around me; a stray cat was the only one keeping me company for a while.

When I reached the police, I asked what the best route was, but they immediately detained me. They pushed me to my knees, then threw me to the ground. Frisking, batons. They yelled, "What are your goals, tasks for today? Who is your contact? How much were you paid?"

They took my phone and studied the information for a long time — all the messaging apps, subscriptions, social networks, browser history. Understanding their attitude, I told them my password right away. I realized later that I had done the right thing. A guy who didn't want to unlock his phone got some poison poured in his face. It wasn't gas, but he screamed in pain, coughed and wheezed. They continued until he gave them the password.

While lying on the ground, I heard them radio information about passersby. When they got there, they shared my experience. They detained several people this way.

"Green marker meant 'violent, beat without mercy'"

My thumbs were tied with a zip tie. They tightened it up so hard that I thought I would definitely get necrosis. When I asked them to loosen it up I got hit.

In general, speaking without being spoken to resulted in a beating. I had been lying on the ground for about an hour when a police van drove up; they lifted us up, twisted our arms, shoved us inside. In a way, I was lucky — I was put in a back compartment with a bench, while the rest of the detainees were tucked into small compartments, mobile punishment cells, two or three people in each.

As I was lying on the ground during detention, one of the riot policemen took out a marker and wrote on my face. As it turned out, those marks that determined your fate after you were delivered to the police station. A "message" to the team that would meet us later.

Green marker meant "violent, beat without mercy."

Black — a “foreign agent”, a “coordinator” or just a “person involved in organizing riots.” That color was the worst. The ones marked black were to be interrogated and beaten black and blue. Confessions were actually beaten out of them.

I don’t know what the rest of the colors meant. Apparently the officer marked my face green for fun, because I was polite and silent whenever necessary.

We were all kicked from time to time. They would put a huge bright lamp near your face, switch it on and ask the same questions about your contact, goals and objectives, and your payment.

There was a feeling that I had fallen into a cult. The riot police actually believe in the idea of foreign interference and, like real cultists, are blind in their faith.

“We have to watch TV. It shows everything we need to know”

We were lying on the ground, while they were walking around or standing there, placing their boots very close to our faces. They said that we should watch TV. It shows everything we need to know. We were beaten for having subscriptions to opposition Telegram channels.

I’ve never been shouted at like that in my entire life. I couldn’t even think it was possible. The Nazis in the movies are polite people compared to the riot police.

Upon arrival at the police station (I don’t know which one), they twisted our arms, swearing at us, and told us to only look at the floor. If we looked around or forward, they beat us. Bent over, with our arms twisted painfully, we were escorted to the basement and thrown on the floor. We were forced to take a pose with three-point support — both knees and your forehead. We were to keep our butts high. If you put yours down, they hit you again. One guy was forced to kiss a white-red-white flag lying on the floor, in that position.

Driving up to the gate of the prison, the driver said, “Guys, I feel sorry for you...”

At the roll call I heard that there was a Russian citizen and a man from Poland among us.

They took me upstairs for interrogation. While walking, I saw people lying everywhere on the floor. There were several detainees in the offices. They were ordered to “fall”, “push up”, “stand up”, “sit down”, “stand up”, “repeat”. If people disobeyed, they were beaten. It was obvious they enjoyed beating us, yelling at us, humiliating us, feeling their power and impunity.

The interrogation was relatively painless. I was registered and taken outside. None of the officers introduced themselves. All the riot police officers and regular policemen were wearing ski masks.

While we were driving from the police station, the other detainees and I tried to communicate with each other somehow, but we stopped when they threatened to beat us.

At the gate of the Grodno prison the driver said, “Guys, I feel sorry for you...” The gate opened, a searchlight was directed at our vehicle. About 40-50 people in masks and camouflage were waiting for us in the courtyard. They shouted and whistled. It was really scary.

A huge riot policeman opened the door and shouted in a crazy voice, “Why are you lying around, you animals? Run out, motherf*****s!” Bent and twisted, we were taken out of the van and beaten. They put us against the wall, arms behind our backs, legs apart. They searched us, examined the marks on the faces. I was promised I’d be black and blue in a couple of days.

They put us in a different position, making us bend so low we could only see our sneakers, and made us run as fast as possible across the yard; I was close to leaving my face there. Apparently, they counted on that during this “procedure” – that we would “fall all by ourselves.”

Political detainees hardly got any food

Inside the building we were put up against the wall again. This time our hands were to be raised, palms facing the guards. It hurt, but I guess that was the point. Another search, another check of our marks, questions. The guy with the black mark was beaten so hard he was screaming. I guess he fell from the blows to his legs; I couldn’t see him well. We were forbidden to look that way. We had to stand against the wall with our legs as far apart as possible.

Then – a full check, removal of shoelaces and belts. We were told to undress completely and squat deeply with our arms extended forward – they checked whether we were carrying contraband in our rectum. The process was humiliating, but everything was humiliating there, from beginning to end.

They made us bend over again and run up the stairs into the cells. There were five of us in a four-bed cell.

That was when the physical abuse ended, but they still used psychological tricks. The light was always on in the cell. The only barred window under the ceiling was barely open, the glass was opaque. Everything in the cell was Medieval. The beds were terrible, the mattresses and pillows were dirty. The toilet was not shielded from the rest of the cell in any way; we had to use it in front of the others.

When we were awake, we talked about everything. One of my cellmates spoke about travelling. He hoped desperately for this insanity to end soon and for us to be released. He said when they were beating him, they kept saying he was rubbery, because the sticks had been bouncing off him. His arms and legs were all covered with marks from the batons, his back as well.

Then we remembered about our marks, and somehow wiped off the marker with cold water. I suggested we become friends on Facebook, like “let’s laugh at all this when we see each other next time.”

We heard that other detainees were fed, but we, the political ones, were not. We only got tap water. The window overlooked the yard. The prison dogs kept barking.

No one had a watch, no one knew what time it was, what would happen to us next or when. That added to the depression.

We could hear the guards talking and laughing outside the door. Those days were their usual work days. We also heard other detainees being taken for interrogations at night. Someone screamed from time to time. I think it was torture rather than interrogation. Of course, in jail “interrogation” at night goes on without a lawyer. We sat there, hungry, beaten and terrified, listening to those screams and the barking dogs, wondering whether we were the next to be “interrogated.”

“I fear death now”

When I was released, I calculated that 14 hours had passed between my detention and my trial. The trial took place in the prison. It was completely arbitrary. The judges sentenced people to detention or fines just as they pleased; I was desperately hoping for a fine.

As far as I understood, a detainee who hadn't signed the report would not be released, so signed it, was sentenced to a fine and was happy, although the amount of the fine – 405 rubles – was big money for me. After the trial, I had a conversation with a psychologist or an ideologue. He said some “parting words” about the consequences. In a nutshell, it was just “Don't you dare appear near any rallies. Otherwise you'll be in prison for a long time.”

After that, I was given my stuff and released.

Getting out of prison is one of the sweetest things ever. You only want to have one memory of it.

I sold my phone. I use an old one now.

Three days after my release, the emotions finally hit me. I was scared last night. I have a fear of death now. I know for sure: if I ever get caught again and sentenced to a long term, I'll commit suicide.

I cried this morning. I have anxiety and feel threatened all the time. Vans with tinted windows scare me. I used to walk around listening to music in my headphones. Now I don't put them on, so I can hear anyone running, or coming up to me. I don't wear open summer shoes anymore. I only wear sneakers, to have a chance to run away.

I steer clear of all the rallies. I've only been downtown once since my detention. I had to visit a computer company. Of course, I went there during daytime, in a cab.

“Half of my head was covered with bandages, while the other half was bruised.” How detainees were treated during the protests in Mogilev

<https://mogilev.online/rus/news/mogilev-12171/>

Many of those who were detained at peaceful protests were released from jails and prisons a few days ago. Our readers shared stories of how they spent those days in various facilities in the Mogilev region.

“Don’t beat children, beat me”

Late in the evening of August 11, Mogilev resident Alexander was going on a date with his girlfriend. He was detained near the Bykhov Market. There were several people in the police van; it turned out that Alexander’s “cellmates” were minors, schoolchildren. “The police started beating the children. I asked them not to use force against them and beat me instead,” he recalls. It didn’t take long to persuade them. The stairs of the Leninsky police station, where Alexander was brought, were full of riot police officers, who beat the detainees with batons: “During the interrogation, they asked how much I had been paid. When I said I hadn’t been, an OMON officer approached, pulled off my pants and started battering my buttocks with a baton. One blow per question.”

“So you don’t like the authorities?”

Nikita tells a similar story. He was detained on Zvezdnaya Square on August 10. “In the Leninsky police station, they beat us with their fists and slapped us.

They shouted, “So you don’t like the authorities?” From there, the detainees were transferred to the detention center of Mogilev Prison No. 4. “There were so many people there that there wasn’t enough food for all of them; it also took a very long time to receive parcels.”

“Guys, don’t beat us, we don’t beat you”

Nineteen-year-old Yelisey doesn’t deny that he was going to a peaceful protest on August 12. He was apprehended on the grounds of School No. 9. He couldn’t resist, as he was promptly hit on the head. In the police van, he tried to establish contact with the officers. “I tried to come to an agreement with them, I said, ‘Guys, don’t beat us, we don’t beat you, we want peace.’ I was told ‘If you answer correctly, we won’t beat you.’ At the police station where the detainees were brought, people in civilian clothes started threatening Yelisey that they would rape him and beat him up. He felt sick and started choking. He was taken away in an ambulance, but before that, the people ‘requested’ that he keep the beatings a secret. At the hospital, Yelisey said he had fallen, but the doctors didn’t believe him. Security forces continued threatening him. He remains in the hospital.

“And now you’re talking about the law, you bastard?” a resident of Brest speaks about beatings and humiliations after his arrest

<https://1reg.by/2020/08/15/pro-zakon-padla-zagovoril-brestchanin-rasskazal-o-izbieniyah-i-unizheniyah-posle-zaderzhaniya>

Author: Valeria Nevskaya

Marks from beatings, bullet holes, wounds and ruined lives have become common in recent days, and no longer surprise anyone. But the brutality and impunity still shock. The internet is full of horrifying photos and people’s stories.

The story of a Brest resident is no less shocking, since now this animal rage is not somewhere far away, but within reach.

Brest resident Yevgeny Bilobrovko told a First Region correspondent about his five days in hell.

“On August 9, I learned about the people going out to the peaceful protest. Peaceful is the key word here. I decided to support my fellow townspeople.

“I was carrying a Pagonia flag, heading to a public place. It was 4 p.m., and the protest was to take place at 8 p.m. I was heading along Masherov Avenue to the intersection with Shevchenko Boulevard. But I never reached it: someone ran up from behind, hit me on the legs and dragged me onto a bus. The beatings continued there. When I raised my head, I saw two dozen riot police officers laughing at my torture. When the bus was jammed full, about 6 p.m., we were

taken to the House of Justice. We spent two days there. Without food. We only had water. We slept on the floor.

“After that we were sent to Detention Facility No. 7. We were beaten like cattle on the way to the vehicles. There were 37 people in my cell, though it was designed for 12.

“Many detainees had been brought from the gym of a military unit next to the Leninsky police station. They said they had sat with bags on their heads, lay with their faces down, sat with their heads bowed, and received a blow whenever they looked up.

“There were women and children there. They were constantly beaten, and if anyone stood up, they were beaten too, but five times harder.

“Those who remained silent were also beaten, but not as hard, without leaving traces.

“There were 350 people in the gym and EVERYONE was abused. The newcomers were herded into the Leninsky station equipment storage units, where they spent the night. Those who had returned from there had terrible hematomas.

“They insulted us during the torture as hard as they could, saying “F****t”, “T****t”, “S****bag”, “Face to the floor”, “Lie/sit/kneel, you animal”, “M****r” and other obscenities.

“Most of the reports disappeared, so the people spent there more than they had been sentenced to. They couldn’t be released. This was my case as well. I notified a detention center officer about this, but in response I heard, “Now you’re talking about the law, you bastard? I’ll beat the hell out of you! You want another Maidan, revolutionary t****t?”

“One man was beaten because his father was a police major, and he had disgraced him. One of the detainees had been going to a store to get a toy for a child and had been grabbed at a crosswalk, tortured and thrown into a police van. They had also been taking people from the yards near their houses. A group had been sitting on a bench, got hit on the head with a baton and loaded into a vehicle without any questions.

“We had an on-site trial, although the word “trial” can hardly be used to describe that. They called me into an office, interrogated me for the sake of

appearance and made a decision that was unlawful. In my case, there were witnesses who had seen me shouting and disobeying the riot police.

“The reports that we hadn’t been allowed to read were indisputable proof of our guilt. A policeman came and stated he had participated in my arrest. I told the judge it was the first time I had seen that man, but the judge neither listened nor heard. The ones to be imprisoned and the ones to be fined were determined in advance.

“They gave me a report, which said that I had taken part in a rally. My anger had no limits. I tried to remind them that they had taken an oath, and perjury was punishable by law. But those words fell on deaf ears. Pointing to the fact that I had been detained at 4:30 p.m., while the rally had begun at 8:00 p.m., was also a waste of time. I was sentenced to a 30-base-value fine.

I was told before I was released not to leave the house for a day, otherwise they would shoot to kill, or imprison me for a long time.”

Yevgeny says his whole body hurts, but there are no traces on it, since the police officers are well aware of how to beat people without leaving evidence. Half of the belongings that belonged to the detainees, which were kept in the gym and the storage area, were never found. Yevgeny didn’t get his flag back either.

“Even the Gestapo were more delicate.” What people are saying outside detention facility number 6 in Baranovichi

<https://www.intex-press.by/2020/08/14/dazhe-gestapovtsy-otnosilis-nezhnee-o-chem-lyudi-govoryat-voze-sizo-6-v-baranovichah/>

Author: Irina Komik

On the morning of August 14, Intex-press correspondents went to the pre-trial detention center. Many people had already gathered here; all of them were waiting for their relatives and friends to be released. Some were beneath the walls of the center for the fourth day in a row.

“A child had his leg broken”

At 9 a.m., a group of men, women, girls and small children sit on the curbs and benches near the entrance to the detention center. All of them share the same grief: they’re waiting for their relatives to be released.

A man in a tracksuit and flip-flops is waiting for his grandson, who was taken away on August 12, for the third day.

“We came here yesterday to be told that our grandson got another day of detention. Well, my wife and I went to the forest to pick mushrooms. When he comes out, he’ll eat some fresh soup. I’m sitting here waiting for him, while my wife is cooking,” he says optimistically.

“And I’ll fry some potatoes for my darling,” “I’ll cook borscht,” add the women sitting next to him.

Residents say more people were released from the jail on August 13. According to them, they included “a woman in a nightgown and an old man, who was all blue” “Remember that underage boy from yesterday?!” one of the women says. “He was the first to be released, he acted like he was catatonic. He kept repeating, ‘I’m fine, I was fed well, I want to go home, they didn’t beat me.’ Sounded like a zombie. But it turned out his leg was broken. He came back here later, to get his documents, on crutches and in a cast.”

People say the prisoners are being released based on the time they were detained. They are forced to sign a document stating that they won’t appear in crowded places, otherwise the next detention will be treated as a criminal case.

“They’re given something that makes them high as a kite”

A girl named Rita has been sitting near the detention center with her boyfriend’s mother since 7 a.m. She says that on the evening of August 10, she and her boyfriend were grabbed by security forces when they tried to help a girl who was having a seizure. “We had barely driven a bit when people in uniform ran up and started breaking the windows in the car.”

“They pulled us out and started beating us,” she recalls. “One soldier pulled me aside and told me to run away. I just ran wherever I could. My boyfriend was beaten and put in a police van. I haven’t seen him since that day.”

The girl holds a can of an energy drink and has a pillow that makes it easier to sit on the stones. She covers her scarred arms with a sweater; she says the scars come from glass fragments. Her boyfriend’s mom fumbles nervously with her bag. Soon they find out that their loved one is being taken to the courthouse, and the girl and her mother leave for Proletarskaya.

Employees of the detention center pass by.

“We should cast the evil eye on them, so after that they wouldn’t raise a hand to hit people,” says one of the women, watching an employee.

To brighten up the anticipation, the people talk about who’s actually torturing the civilians. Some say they are conscripts from Baranovichi, others are sure they’re Russian mercenaries, while a third group insists it’s the Belarusian riot police. However, all of them agree that the security officials are “given

something that makes them high as a kite.” a woman in a white jacket who is waiting for her son says those detained on August 9 are being treated worst of all because they’re “ideological” detainees.

“Only the most severely beaten got a bed made for them”

Around 11, a woman in a white T-shirt and red pants comes to the walls of the jail. The people say she’s been coming here for several days, because nothing is known about her son. Her name is Lyudmila. She says her son was taken away on August 10 in the city center, as he was going to meet his girlfriend after work. Since then she’s been sitting by the walls of the center every day from 5.30 a.m. until the officers send her away.

Lyudmila is trembling and crying. She says her son had come to Baranovichi to vote and stay at home for the weekend. The next day, August 10, he went to meet his girlfriend after work, because “it was unsafe downtown.” They were coming home together when officers stopped them and pulled them into a police van. Later, Lyudmila was told that her son asked the officers to release the girl. They agreed, but since then nobody has seen Borya.¹

“I wasn’t told anything about his health for two days,” Lyudmila says through tears. “On the second day, a paramedic said Boris had a concussion, multiple bruises on his back, head, arms, and shoulders. I asked how bad the concussion was, and they answered me, ‘Mild,’ and added, ‘Don’t worry, he has a bed made for him.’ I was later told that only the most severely beaten get a bed made for them.

“The trial happened yesterday, on August 12, and he was sentenced to another day because he was unable to come out without assistance, and they thought he would get better in that extra day. When the prosecutor came out yesterday, I asked him if my son could stand. The prosecutor looked away, turned his face away and said, “You’ll get him tomorrow.” I’ve been sitting here since morning and waiting for him to be released. While I’m on duty here, our neighbors are walking around the house and looking for him in the bushes, because he could have been thrown out near the house. I was told that I would be allowed to get him after 11 p.m. What does it mean? Will he come out by himself or should I go get him?”

1 Diminutive of Boris.

“They threatened to cornhole them”

Detainees begin emerging at noon. They all refuse to say anything, and just want to go home as soon as possible. The women waiting around offer them bus tickets, and some offer a ride home in their cars. Everyone who's released seems to be zombified; they don't want to talk. They only respond when they're shown photographs, to say whether they've seen other detainees.

A woman who came with her daughter to pick up her son says that he was caught when he met a friend in a café to go out after work.

“I voted for Lukashenko, and now I'm standing here waiting for my son to come out of jail – let everybody see me,” she says

Another woman, who came to find out when her husband will be released, says the detainees are being beaten almost every evening, “both men and women are being beaten.” She says officers threatened to “cornhole” those who asked for something, while “an old man who was released on August 13 told me that even the Gestapo had been more delicate.”

A woman comes back from a store located in the building and asks if anyone has already been released. “The grocery saleswoman's going to quit because she can't take the groans of the prisoners anymore,” she says.

“She said she couldn't stand hearing them screaming,” the woman says, sobbing. “How can they be so cruel? How much are they paid for this? Don't they have families? I hope these animals feel all the pain they inflict on peaceful people first-hand!”

Having listened to the stories of other people, a woman named Lilia goes to her car with tears in her eyes. She says she's waiting for her husband, who, like most of the rest, fell victim to the security forces. She worries about his condition.

“We had been preparing for an operation,” Lilia says. “He has problems with his back. If they actually beat him the way people are saying, he'll come out disabled. Yesterday when the people were coming out, I was lucky enough to find a man who had been in the same cell with my husband. The guy said my husband's sweater was soaked in blood, his face and knees were beaten, but he was cheerful and even joking. I couldn't even imagine that such animals, who torture people so hard, live among us.”

A woman who suffered gunshot wounds in Brest: “I was on my balcony. He was shooting at me. A bullet tore a piece of meat out of me”

<https://www.b-g.by/society/postradavshaya-ot-vyistrela-v-breste-ya-byila-na-balkone-on-bil-pryamo-v-menya-pulya-vyihvatila-iz-menya-kusok-myasa>

Author: Svetlana Potapova

A woman who was shot by police on the balcony of her apartment in a building on the embankment tells BG about the incident.

On the evening of August 10, Olga Rybakova was at home with her son. She had not participated in any protests, hadn't left her apartment in the evening, and yet she got a bullet in her abdomen from the “men in black.”

“They keep telling the victims that they're the ones who are to blame, that things happen to them because they went somewhere,” says the victim's sister. “Here is an ideal situation for you: a mother at home, grandparents at home, their child is under adult supervision. And still, this happens.”

On the evening of August 10, **Olga Rybakova** was at home with her son. She came from the gym, changed into her house clothes. Their ordinary family evening was marred only by a conversation about what was happening on the streets of their native city and country. But Olga was glad that her family members were at home: her parents lived next door, her son was by her side.

“When we heard the screams under our windows, we opened the balcony door to see what was going on,” Olga recounts the incident. “We live on the waterfront. It was about 11:30 p.m. Under our windows there were cars, and guys with shields wearing helmets and black clothes were beating a guy, stuffing him into the car. A little farther on I saw two girls. One of them got hit. I couldn’t stand it and started screaming: “What are you doing! Stop!” We heard our neighbors’ voices, too. The man in black shouted some foul words, saying that everyone had to shut up! And then there was a gunshot. It was aimed right at me. I saw that he was aiming through the sight.”

In a state of shock, Olga didn’t hear a second shot – but she says there’s evidence they fired twice.

“When I saw that a gun had been pointed at me, I turned instinctively, and perhaps that’s why the result isn’t as terrible as it could have been,” she says. “The bullet hit me at an angle, tearing a piece of meat out of me. I took a couple of steps back into the room and knelt down, because the pain was terrible. At first I thought: ‘Wow, what a bruise! How painful!’ I had thought rubber bullets only left bruises. But then I saw that blood was running between my fingers. I pulled my underwear aside, and there was a gash with blood gurgling inside. I started to lose consciousness, but I realized that I had to hold on as hard as possible, because if I bled, my son wouldn’t be able to save me, and the ambulance could take too long to arrive. My son was yelling at the top of his voice: he thought I’d been shot. He called an ambulance and ran to his grandmother for ammonia.”

Olga’s father was also standing on the balcony of his apartment. He’s in poor health. Olga says when she was shot, she was happy that neither of her parents were.

The ambulance arrived about an hour later, but that wasn’t the crew’s fault: the streets had been blocked, and apparently there were many calls. The crew immediately checked whether her internal organs were hurt, bandaged the wound, put in an IV and took her to the hospital. But even there Olga had to wait for surgery: she wasn’t the only one who had been hit by bullets.

The surgeon on duty said that that night four people with gunshot wounds were admitted for surgery at Brest City Hospital No. 1: “One of them, indeed, was in the crowd of protesters, while the other three patients were just random

passers-by. A guy and a girl came to us: they said they were walking down the street, a car pulled over, its doors opened and they were shot at. The boyfriend was operated on and transferred to another hospital. The girl is still in our hospital – a bullet hit her hip. As for Olga, if she had had a penetrating wound, rather than a glancing strike, the bullet could have damaged her intestines or bladder, or hit the large arteries. The outcome could well have been fatal.”

Olga now faces up to six months of treatment and rehabilitation.

“The doctors say the war is a long time ago, and they know how to treat such wounds only theoretically, even from a regular bullet. But I have a laceration, which can’t be sewn up just like that. It’s open, it keeps bleeding, there’s a risk of infection. They say when the skin grows back a bit, in about two months, they can do plastic surgery to close it.’

Olga’s scared and in pain. But she believes we shouldn’t keep silent. That is why she found a lawyer and filed a claim with the Investigative Committee.

“Members of the regional council came to me with a cake and some fruit. They said: ‘The people elected us, and we want to be with them. We went to the pre-trial detention center – we weren’t allowed inside, we came to those who suffered.’ I asked them to have the will power and spirit to be with people as soon as they could, and to prevent bloodshed and violence. I’ve written a claim to the Investigative Committee and I advise all those who suffered from these atrocities to do the same. Such violence against people cannot happen in any country of the world in 2020. I am far from being a revolutionary, I am a very peaceful person; it is quite difficult for me to go through this experience. Of course, I’m scared. But all these victims shouldn’t suffer in vain, but serve a good and kind cause. Everybody is afraid. In any case, I feel much better than those who were in jail for 24 hours. I just have no right to be silent and afraid. The violence has to be stopped! You should not be treated like this. We are human beings! I just cry for half a day in pain, and half a day from pride that we have such brave people and that I am a Belarusian.”

**They kicked us and beat us
with their fists, truncheons;
drove a hairpin under a nail.
They demanded I confess that
on the night of August 9
I was among protesters.**

<https://media-polesye.by/news/bili-nogami-rukami-dubinkami-zagonyali-shpilku-pod-nogot-trebovali-priznatsya-hto-v-noch-s-9-na-10-avgustanahodilsya-v-ryadah-protestuyushhih/>

Andrey Shklyoda, a master luthier, was brutalized by police.

“I don’t take part in elections; I know that my vote will be stolen anyway. I’m not interested in politics. I live in my own world. My world is more beautiful: it is music. I’ve never participated in pickets or rallies, in any confrontations, let alone with the police. But I was captured in the street, beaten, taken to Pinsk city police station and tortured for eight hours.”

Andrey Shklyoda is famous for the musical instruments he makes. There are few in the country of such high quality. Belarusian and foreign stars play guitars, lutes and violins made by the Belarusian master.

Andrey’s hands have become numb; his fingers have lost their sensitivity after eight hours in steel handcuffs.

How did it happen that he, a law-abiding and respected person, was apprehended by law enforcers?

“On August 10 I was in Pinsk; I had bought groceries in the city and was coming home to the village. My brother and his wife were with me. On Kirov Street

we were unexpectedly blocked by a passenger car. People in civilian clothes jumped out of it, threw me and my brother on the ground, beat me, handcuffed me and took me to the police station. I was taken there in a civilian car, my brother was delivered in the traffic police car that was called to where we were stopped. On the way, I was also beaten, strangled and not even given any reason why. But the most terrible thing happened after that, in a room on the ground floor of the police building. I don't know what sort of office it was; I had never been to 53 Kirov Street. The office has a sofa. I was beaten there for probably 20 minutes. I was kicked, beaten with fists, truncheons; on the head, legs, in the groin, and on the handcuffs, so they cut into my skin, terribly painfully. They drove a hairpin under my fingernail and demanded that I confess that on the night of August 9 I was with the protesters at the building of the city executive committee. Among my belongings they saw miniature tweezers in my backpack, and decided that I used them to unscrew bolts on benches at night, so as to beat policemen with planks. My broken nose was bleeding, and the policemen were worried that their sofa might get stained.

“I screamed from the constant beatings and terrible pain: ‘God help me!’ And indeed, there is a God. It became easier for me. The beatings seemed not to hurt so much anymore. But when they heard that I was praying to God, those who were beating me only laughed and mocked me, like devils. Then I was thrown into the hallway so that I didn't get blood on their sofa. I lay there in handcuffs, face down. At some point I raised my head to change my position. But someone stepped on my neck and pressed me to the floor, and stood on me for 20 minutes. I was lying face down in a pool of my own blood, and they stood and made small talk.

“Then they pulled me, half alive, to the basement, where the shooting gallery is. On the way they kept beating me. I was thrown to the floor and ordered to lie face down. My hands were handcuffed behind my back. At that time, there were already some 30 men in the shooting gallery, all beaten. More and more people were brought there. In total, 100 people were thrown there, maybe 200. It was difficult to count them. Any careless movement could end up in a beating.

“Those were different people: young, middle-aged, even an old man. The police were grabbing everyone indiscriminately. Someone had gone out to walk their dog and was detained; someone was taking out the garbage, had gone to a store to get groceries, or was coming home from work. Their belongings were next to us: working tools, bread, containers of milk, sausage. If someone tried to

say they were innocent, they were immediately punched, kicked and hit with batons. On the legs, hands, handcuffs. Everybody was verbally abused. They said that they were the authority in there, and would do to us whatever they wanted. They said they could shoot us. And there would be no consequences. They fingered the bolts of their rifles with telescopic scopes demonstratively, aiming at us. They put us against the wall. It seemed like they would shoot us all right there. It was very scary. Many of the detainees were unable to stand, their legs couldn't hold them, they fell down and were beaten.

“People required medical help, but no one could offer it during the first hours. Only in the morning were medics arriving in ambulances allowed into the shooting hall. They insisted that some of the detainees should be taken out on a stretcher, including a very young girl. Her blood pressure had dropped, and the doctors were afraid she might die.

“When the shooting gallery was full of detainees, there wasn't enough room for everyone to lie down; we were ordered to sit up. If someone tried to remind the police about their rights, they were beaten. “One man said that he was recovering from surgery and asked a guard if he could lie on his side. He allowed it. Another policeman saw this and started kicking the detainee, while the first policeman watched in silence.

“At first all our belongings were with us. Then they were taken and stored separately. Attached to them were sheets of paper, on which the names of the owners were written, and in brackets there were nicknames. They gave each detainee an offensive nickname such as “redhead,” “cockeyed,” “priest,” “shaman,” “idiot,” etc. Phones were confiscated; their contents were viewed. At the sight of photographs of family members, they made insults, and threatened to come to their homes and kill them. We were very scared for our loved ones.

“We were beaten by everyone who happened to be near us: special forces, OMON riot police, prison guards and regular police. Not privates, but officers.

“In the morning, an officer came down to the shooting gallery; they say it was the chief of police. He said 90% of the people who had ended up there were innocent. But the order to conduct preventive work with the populace had come from above, and it was carried out.

“In the morning, the interrogations began. They apologized to me and admitted that I had been captured and held illegally. They offered me a choice.

If I complained, they would sentence me to arrest, and I wouldn't be able to prove anything. If I didn't complain, they would let me go home. I chose the second option. I wanted to get out of that hell as soon as possible.

“Still, a report was drawn up on me. They explained that they couldn't just let me go. I had to pay a fine. They said they needed money to support the police, to buy gear and so on. And there was never enough money.

“I was released at 4 a.m. My brother had been released 2 hours earlier. They drew up a report about his participation in an unauthorized rally, although this is not true. His case will go to court.

“The bruises are slowly getting better. My leg hurts; my head hurts, too. My fingers haven't recovered their sensitivity after the handcuffs, even though I exercise them regularly.

“I don't know whether I'll be able to resume my work anytime soon. My hands and my ear for music used to be my greatest treasure.

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REGIONALNAYA GAZETA • AUGUST 17

A Molodechno man with a brain injury was not offered medical help for three days

<https://rh.by/ru/2020/08/17/omon-2/>

Author: Zoya Khrutskaya

Pavel Titovets, a Molodechno resident, and his wife recall how he was detained by OMON riot police on the evening of August 9.

Pavel Titovets, 45, has been taken to a children's hospital with a brain injury. His wife Elena shares their story.

Pavel was detained on August 9. Titovets works for a private company that sells double-glazed windows. He lives near the Molodechno Children's Hospital and drives around the city every evening. That evening, he drove to Gymnasium No. 6, where a riot policeman hit him with a baton. Pavel lost consciousness. He was dragged to a police van and taken to the Molodechno district police station.

He remained unconscious all night. When Pavel came to, it was about 5 a.m.; he was lying on the ground in the police yard.

Today Pavel Titovets can speak to a journalist of *Regionalnaya Gazeta* about his detention:

"I was in the square. I was driving at the intersection of Khmel'nitsky and the avenue. They jumped out. I must have missed them. They cut me off at the intersection as I was driving down the hill. I don't even understand how it happened. I was probably hit with a truncheon and lost consciousness. When I regained consciousness, it was already dawn. Everybody was sitting there in the yard. I had handcuffs behind my back; I couldn't get up or sit up. I don't remember how they loaded me in the police van. I don't understand why no one called an ambulance. My right eye was swollen shut. The next day the swelling went down. I don't know why the policemen in Cherven didn't call an ambulance. The main thing for them was to draw up reports."

"He has a brain injury," says Elena. "He was unconscious for a long time. And no medical assistance was provided all that time."

His wife had no information about her husband from Sunday evening until 3 p.m. on Wednesday. She picked him up from the Cherven police station.

Around 3 p.m. on August 12, she called the 102 line, where they said Titovets was at the Cherven police station. The Cherven District Court said her husband had been convicted and sentenced to eight days of arrest.

"I counted when those eight days were over," she recalls. "I had to pick him up. Around 7 p.m. that day, Pavel called from someone else's phone; he had asked a passer-by to make a call. At 22:00 I arrived in Cherven. I saw my beaten husband at midnight; all that time he was denied medical care. Perhaps it was

my mistake he wasn't taken to the hospital immediately. But I decided that he just needed a good night's rest. He moaned at night and I called a doctor in the morning. They told me to see a doctor urgently.”

Elena says her husband is conscious during the first minutes of a conversation, then starts to get confused, saying things that aren't relevant. She doesn't see any improvement in his condition.

According to a CAT scan, a fracture along the right coronal suture in the temporal region can't be ruled out. The focus of his grade 2 contusion is in the left temporal lobe.

According to his administrative offense report, Titovets was detained at 10:40 p.m. in the Central Square, while committing an offense under Part 1 of Article 23.34 – violation of the procedure for the organization or conduct of mass events. The report says he refused to comply with repeated, legal and explicit requests of Molodechno police station officer **Viktor Vergeichik** to cease his illegal activities; he refused to leave the square, waved off the policeman, was kicking and screaming. He intentionally disobeyed the legal demand of an official maintaining public order.

Titovets's wife intends to file a complaint with the Investigative Committee.

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Detainee in Svetlogorsk: When new people were brought in, they were forced to crawl on their stomachs; they called this a “derby” or “Tetris”

<https://gomel.today/svetlogorsk-1119/>

Anton Kazmerchuk was detained in Svetlogorsk on the evening of August 10 during a protest. Two police reports were drawn up about him: under Article 23.34 of the Code of Administrative Offences (participation in an unsanctioned mass event) and Article 23.4 (failure to obey police officers), and the following day he was sentenced to 11 days of arrest, according to Viasna.

Anton was sent to the LTP correctional facility in Svetlogorsk, but four days later he was released, as were other detainees. He described how OMON and regular police treated him and other detainees.

According to Anton, the officers considered it “disobedience” that on his way to the police station he tripped because of uncomfortable shoes and could not walk as fast as the riot police.

“During my detention they twisted me into the “swallow” position.¹ One of the police stepped on my neck with his foot so that it still hurts. They shouted at me at the police station to lie “face to the wall”. I was left lying on the floor in handcuffs. At first my phone was searched and taken away. When one of the policemen shouted “Whose phone?” I thought it was mine, I said it was, and then someone stepped on my elbow and ordered me to continue lying “face to the floor.”

1 Bending forward, hands behind the back.

According to Anton, the moment he remembers most was what the police called “Tetris” or a “derby.” When new detainees were brought in, those who were already lying on the floor in the police station hallway were forced to crawl forward on their stomachs.

“I couldn’t crawl, because originally I was in the swallow position and could barely breathe, and then I was lying on my stomach with my hands handcuffed behind my back; I realized it was physically impossible. Then policemen picked me up during this “Tetris”, called me a pansy and pulled me forward, slightly lifting me up. My ribs hurt for all four days because of the derby.”

When an administrative offense report was drawn up for Anton, the bullying continued. The riot policemen were constantly pushing him, and so Anton managed to write only one word, “disagree,” on the report. And their superior continued to insult him: “You are such a pansy, and if I get at you with this truncheon...”

Anton told the court that he had problems with his kidneys and needed medicine. But they were never given to him: his mother delivered them, but he received them only just before his release.

Anton also reported that a policeman from the LTP tried to prevent him from receiving medical assistance.

“When medics came to the LTP on the third day to ask me how I was doing (my arm had been injured before the arrest), I asked them to treat it with peroxide, and the policeman said: ‘Stop whining, you don’t need anything!’ But the medics didn’t listen to him, and they treated my arm.”

Anton Kazmerchuk has appealed the court decision and filed a claim of police brutality.