

Documentation of Data Collection

Title: Protest actions in Belarus 1997-2020

Creator: Areti Demosthenous

Covered period: From January 1997 to December 2020

Dates of compilation: Data collection and processing began on 15.10.2021 and were completed on 28.02.2022

Belarus is a country located in Eastern Europe that has been a sovereign state since 27th July 1990, while it regained its independence from the Soviet Union on 25th August 1991. Belarus is also known as the 'last dictatorship in Europe' due to the authoritarian rule of Alyaksandr Lukashenka: the President of Belarus since 1994. On 24th November 1996, due to the results of a constitutional referendum, he managed to ensure his presidential term until 2001, and since then, he has gained even more power as president. Many people described this referendum as the starting point of his authoritarian rule. He and his government were accused multiple times of vote rigging (in both elections and referendums) as well as political prosecution. Moreover, in 2020, several mass demonstrations by more than 800,000 people took place across Belarus for multiple months to protest against Lukashenko's re-election. I was very interested in researching what protest actions took place in Belarus from the beginning of 1997 (some weeks after the referendum) through the end of 2020. The aim of this data collection is to present the protest actions in Belarus from 1997 until 2020.

Description:

The data collection includes 3 documents:

- a database with the protest actions (Protest actions in Belarus 1997-2020.xlsx)
- a description of each protest, including sources (Protest actions in Belarus 1997-2020.pdf)
- the documentation (Protest actions in Belarus 1997-2020_documentation.pdf)

Excluded from my database are:

- protest actions where the number of participants is undetermined (even with key words, such as dozens, hundreds, etc.)
- protest actions where the number of participants is less than 10 people.

Variables:

The database includes 13 variables: 'date'; 'duration (in days)'; 'participants (in digits)'; 'participants (estimated number)'; 'place'; 'organized by'; 'who participated?'; 'issue'; 'type of protest'; 'category'; 'arrests'; 'violence'; and 'authorized?'.

Description of variables:

- a) **Date:** The date that the protest action took place. In the case of protest actions that lasted for more than one day, this variable refers to the starting day of the protest action. Form: DD/MM/YYYY.
- b) **Duration (in days):** How long the protest action lasted (in days). The number of days that are referred to in the database are verified by the corresponding sources. The (*) next to some entries of this variable indicates that the protest action might have lasted for more days than what the database refers to.
- c) **Participants (in digits):** The number of participants in terms of digits. For the protest actions where the number of participants is determined only by key words: dozens=2; tens=2; hundreds=3; thousands=4.
- d) **Participants (estimated number):** The number of participants either in numerical form or determined by key words (dozens, hundreds, thousands).
- e) **Place:** Where the protest action took place.
- f) **Organized by:** The person/people/group(s) who organized the protest.
- g) **Who participated?:** The people who participated in the protest.
- h) **Issue:** The reason for the protest action.
- i) **Type of protest:** This variable describes the type of each protest action. During my analysis, I identified the following types: 1) street protests (this category includes all classic ways of protesting, such as demonstration, gathering, protest rallying, marching, procession as well as forming lines), 2) silent protests, 3) chain protests, 4) pickets, 5) strikes 6) hunger strikes, and 7) online protests. If there are any special characteristics regarding the protest action, they will be referred to in the database.
- j) **Category:** This describes the category of each protest. During my analysis, I identified the following categories: 1) political = all protest actions regarding political issues (both internal and external, as well as marking important dates (unless this protest action is combined with further aims. In this case, the category of such protests [marking a special date] will be (also) determined from that aim. Further details can be found in the corresponding description); 2) socio-economical = all protest actions regarding economic as well as social issues; 3) antirussian = all protest actions against Russia and its influence on Belarus; 4) solidarity = all protest actions regarding the expression of solidarity with either a person (as well as a group of people) or an event; 5) educational = all protest actions regarding educational issues; 6) environmental: all protest actions regarding environmental issues; 7) religious = all protest actions regarding religious issues; 8) cultural = all protest actions regarding cultural issues.
- k) **Arrests:** This variable indicates whether there were any arrests or detentions regarding the protest (summons and apprehensions are also included). Type of Variable: Yes/No.
- l) **Violence:** This variable indicates whether there were any violent incidents, caused by either police or demonstrators, during the protest action. I included major incidents (such as beatings, clashes, etc.) as well as minor incidents (such as pushing someone). Type of Variable: Yes/No.
- m) **Authorized?:** This variable indicates whether the protest action was authorized or not. The (*) near some entries indicates a special case regarding the authorization status of the protest action. For example, this protest might have been authorized at first but turned out to be unauthorized. Type of Variable: Yes/No.

Extra comments:

- 'n/a' for an entry indicates that there were no direct (or indirect) references regarding the specific information.

- For some protest actions that took place on the same date, I include them in the same description (particularly those whose issue is the same).

- For protest actions which: a) took place in more than one location and b) I include them in the same entry: the number of participants corresponds to the sum of the participants of protest actions in those locations. Further details regarding the participants of a protest action in each city can be found in the corresponding description.

- For entries with (*), it is necessary to read the description of the protest action for further details.

Sources:

Almost all of the data regarding the protests in my Data Collection were collected from various news articles via Factiva (my main Data Collection source). Factiva is an online database owned by Dow Jones & Company, where numerous articles from thousands of newspapers, journals and magazines—even before 2000—are archived. In order to find the proper articles, I divided the research process into two phases. In the first phase (October-November 2021), I have used the following combination of keywords: 'Belarus' and 'protest'. During the second phase (February 2022), I have used 'Belarus' as the main keyword, combining it with each of the following terms: 'rally', 'demonstration', 'marching'/'marched', 'procession', 'picket' and 'strike'. Via Factiva, I collected articles from the following newspapers, news agencies and sources: Agence France-Presse (AFP), Al Jazeera, Associated Press (AP), BBC, BelaPAN (as well as Analytical bulletin BelaPAN), CE Noticias Financieras, CNN, Daily Mail, Deutsche Welle, Dow Jones Newswires, Euronews, ForeignAffairs.co.nz, IHS markit, Interfax, IPR Strategic Information Database, ITAR-TASS (TACC), NewsKitchen.eu, Postmedia, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, RIA Novosti, Reuters, Sputnik News Service, Thai News Service, The Age, The Canadian Press, The Guardian, The Huddersfield Daily Examiner, The New York Times, The Record, The Times, Voice of America (VOA).

Supplementary sources:

Rex Wockner (2010): Belarus bans gay pride, police beat defiant marchers. In: Pride Source. Access via: <https://pridesource.com/article/41496/> [Access on 05.11.2021]

Viasna (2009): Riot militia against participants of solidarity rally in Minsk: new arrests of oppositionists. In: Viasna. Access via: <https://spring96.org/en/news/28453> [Access on 16.02.2022]

Белсат TV (2021): 250-ы дзён пратэстаў. Галоўнае. In: Белсат TV. Access via: <https://belsat.eu/news/15-04-2021-250-y-dzyon-pratestau-galounae/> [Access on 09.02.2022]

Булгакаў, Валер/Дынько, Андрэй (2011): Хрышчэнне нацыі. Масавыя акцыі 1988-2009. Мінск: Інстытут беларусістыкі, 559-574

Радыё Свабода(2019): Чарнобыльскі шлях Беларусі: 30 шэсьцяў па менскіх вуліцах. Як гэта было. In: Радыё Свабода. Access via: <https://www.svaboda.org/a/29903014.html> [Access on 06.02.2022]

Хартыя'97 (2009): 18th day of political prisoner Autukhovich's hunger strike. 4th day of protest. In: Хартыя'97. Access via: <https://charter97.org/en/news/2009/5/4/17842/> [Access on 09.02.2022]

Хартыя'97 (2009): "Freedom to political prisoners!" rally. Second day (Photo). In: Хартыя'97. Access via: <https://charter97.org/en/news/2009/5/4/17827/> [Access on 09.02.2022]

Хартыя'97 (2009): Indefinite hunger strike in solidarity with political prisoners started in Minsk. In: Хартыя'97. Access via: <https://charter97.org/en/news/2009/5/4/17832/> [Access on 09.02.2022]

Хартыя'97 (2009): Solidarity rally. Third Day (Photo). In: Хартыя'97. Access via: <https://charter97.org/en/news/2009/5/4/17824/> [Access on 09.02.2022]

Хартыя'97 (2009): Street sprinklers against participants of the solidarity rally. In: Хартыя'97. Access via: <https://charter97.org/en/news/2009/5/5/17892/> [Access on 09.02.2022]

Хартыя'97 (2009): 20th day of political prisoner Autukhovich's hunger strike. 6th day of protest. In: Хартыя'97. Access via: <https://charter97.org/en/news/2009/5/6/17931/> [Access on 09.02.2022]

Хартыя'97 (2016): Public Money Has Been Spent On NPP – No Money For Wages Left. In: Хартыя'97. Access via: <https://charter97.org/en/news/2016/4/26/201483/> [Access on 06.02.2022]

Хартыя'97 (2017): Over 100 People Take On To Square In Vitsebsk. In: Хартыя'97. Access via: <https://charter97.org/en/news/2017/3/26/244974/> [Access on 12.02.2022]

Empirical challenges:

The data collection is based on reports from verified and reliable sources, such as news agencies and newspapers. However, I had to exclude a very large number of protests from my database due to a lack of information regarding the number of participants. Furthermore, I noticed through my research via Factiva that by using the combination 'Belarus' **and** 'protest', many articles regarding protest actions have been excluded from the results, as they did not contain the word 'protest'. Consequently, I had to extend my research by combining my main keyword ('Belarus') with other keywords, relevant to the concept of protest. For example: 'Belarus' **and** 'rally', 'Belarus' **and** 'demonstration' etc.

Copyright declaration

Due to copyright restrictions concerning the full quotations of media reports about the protests, this document is not available online. It can be obtained from the author of the data collection upon request.