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## **BELARUS**

### **PRATASEVICH AND SAPEGA UNDER HOUSE ARREST**

Belarusian journalist Raman Pratasevich and his partner Sofya Sapega have been moved from pretrial detention to house arrest and no longer appear to be at imminent risk of torture and other ill-treatment. They were arbitrarily detained by the Belarusian authorities on 23 May, after their Ryanair flight was illegally forced to land in Minsk, Belarus' capital. Amnesty International will continue calling for their immediate release.

**NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.**

On 25 June, **Raman Pratasevich** and **Sofya Sapega** were transferred to house arrest in an undisclosed location and remain in custody of the Belarusian authorities. This has been confirmed by their relatives. Sofya Sapega's mother, who lives in Belarus, was allowed to see her daughter in June. Presently, there is no indication that either of them is at an imminent risk of torture or other ill-treatment. This development is widely attributed to the unprecedented international campaign on their behalf.

Raman Pratasevich is a Belarusian journalist, former editor-in-chief of the NEXTA, NEXTA Live and, later, Belamova Telegram channels. These Telegram channels played a crucial role in the peaceful protests against widely disputed presidential election results in August 2020, by facilitating information-sharing, mobilization and coordination of protesters.

Raman Pratasevich, who until his arrest lived outside Belarus out of fear for his safety, was charged on 5 November 2020 in absentia with "organization of mass disorder", "organization of group actions that severely violate public order" and "inciting hatred towards social groups" (these "groups" according to the indictment being police officers and government officials). On 19 November, he became the first Belarusian national on the country's official "List of Terrorists".

On 23 May 2021, Raman Pratasevich was travelling to Vilnius from Athens with his partner Sofya Sapega. When their flight was flying over Belarus, it was diverted by Belarusian air traffic controllers and ordered to land in Minsk Airport, ostensibly due to a false bomb threat. A fighter jet of the Belarusian Air Forces was deployed "to accompany" the civilian aircraft to Minsk. After landing, Raman Pratasevich and Sofya Sapega were detained by the Belarusian security services. Sofya Sapega is facing similar charges for allegedly moderating another Telegram channel. If convicted, the two are facing up to 20 years' imprisonment.

Belarusian authorities have published several videos of Raman Pratasevich and Sofya Sapega seemingly confessing to their "crimes", and paraded Raman Pratasevich in front of reporters at a Foreign Ministry's press briefing. [Amnesty International has noted that such forced televised confessions amounted to ill-](#)

treatment. The Investigative Committee of Belarus claims that Raman Pratasevich and Sofya Sapega are “cooperating” and “making confessions”. However, their access to family members and lawyers has been restricted, and their lawyers are arbitrarily prohibited from sharing any details of the case.

Amnesty International will continue to closely monitor the situation of Raman Pratasevich and Sofya Sapega and insist on their immediate release.

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR49/4191/2021/en/>