



ЦЭНТР ЕЎРАПЕЙСКАЙ ТРАНСФАРМАЦЫИ
CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN TRANSFORMATION

Civil society
program
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Quarterly
analytical
report

Introduction

This paper presents the results of monitoring of processes taking place in the Belarusian civil society in the period from October to December 2012. The program monitoring is conducted by the Center for European Transformation, starting from April 2011^{*}, in order to track the dynamics of development of civil society organizations working in the field of democratic transitions through specific actions, advocacy-campaigns, protecting human rights, system of organizational development. The monitoring framework defines the following set of processes that have been monitored and analyzed:

- Formation and development of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.
- Development of the processes of civil society dialogue with national and local authorities.
- International cooperation and interaction with civil society in Europe, in the Eastern Partnership countries, international donors and European structures.
- Expansion of “composition” of civil society and cooperation with various types of entities.
- Development of the quality and effectiveness of promotion and advocacy work, realization of the rights of target groups.
- Changes in terms of civil society activity.

The presented analysis is based on monitoring of the media, analytical materials and normative documents, monitoring the terms of NGOs’ activity and law enforcement practices, as well as special analysis of civic initiatives. The results obtained allow assessing the situation in the processes in the Belarusian civil society development and setting priorities for further development.

* The methodology of program monitoring and its results for prior and subsequent periods can be found by following this link: <http://cet.eurobelarus.info/en/news/2012/06/01/civil-society-program-monitoring-EN.html>.

State and development of civil society in Belarus

Analytical report based on monitoring materials

October-December 2012

General political conditions and circumstances

Autumn and early winter of 2012 became a kind of low political season: September was characterized by the end of parliamentary campaign, and the time the new political season has not started yet. Political processes have slowed down their course, and especially bright events that would have affected the context of the program did not take place. This time could have been used for reflection and evaluation of effects of the previous actions, for building new plans and strategies. Meanwhile, it was wasted on pleas and delaying of not resolved conflicts. In the political opposition segment, showdown continued as on the boycott campaigns' results and participation in the last elections; heavy, but senseless disputes with sociologists and experts on the data of ISEPS poll that evidenced: the national elections had been held, and the boycott hadn't brought tangible results (though, as the participation campaign, as well). These rhetorical clashes resulted in new dividing lines and new power units' appearance, that were formed on the basis of former supporters of the boycott (UCP, BChD, "Belarusan Movement" and others), and supporters of participation (Movement "For Freedom", campaign "Tell the Truth!"). New separation barrier were the conflicts between Belarusan democrats and democratic Belarusan emigration, as well as between the old and new political emigration. In the segment of public organizations and initiatives the controversy over strategic areas of development survived, that was reflected in the division of opinions of members of the National Platform as for the adoption of the Concept of Development.

In the international context, the events took place as usual. The results of September elections did not bring surprises, as well; neither the response of the international community was a surprise. Official structures and leaders of the EU, U.S., and those of international organizations (the OSCE) have recognized the elections as not-meeting international standards. The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum took place as a matter of routine procedure; it completed the formation of its institutional establishment by creating of the Secretariat. The European dialogue on modernization with the Belarusan society (EDM) continues its development despite some difficulties and obstacles; it still bears significant potential for the development of civil society.

The establishment and development of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

The problematic of the National Platform development in this period was focused on the processes of activity's expansion (youth platform and regional process), setting strategic goals (adoption of the Concept of the National Platform), preparation and participation of the Belarusan delegation in the next Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, determining the format of participation of the National Platform in the European dialogue on modernization.

In late October, a meeting of several youth organizations under the Alternative Youth Platform (AMP) took place, which announced the idea of combining youth organizations "under the wing" of the National Platform and enhancing the activities of the Civil Society Forum. From the point of view of some participants, it will allow

solving broader problems of the growth and development of youth organizations, including work with their target groups and activities at the international level. Other participants in the meeting opposed these proposals, fearing a repetition of already made actions and reproduction of the old, non-effective activities in the new form.

The work has continued as to expand the regional process under the National Platform. The interregional group at a meeting with the Coordinating Committee of the National Platform (late October 2012) has decided to support the undertakings and initiatives by regional organizations as to establish regional platforms, while considering inadequate to force their creation without preparedness and prevailing conditions in the regions.

On November 16, the Concept of Development for 2012-2014 was adopted at the Conference of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. The adopted version of the Concept has greatly expanded the agenda of the National Platform and guaranteed its output at the level of solution of national problems. The new Concept expands also the mandate of the National Platform activity out of the Eastern Partnership frame, while not leaving aside the issues of Europeanization and European-Belarusan relations. The Concept was prepared by the conciliation commission from the participants holding various positions (see the development in the previous monitoring reports), namely Ulad Vialichka (head of the International Consortium “EuroBelarus”) and an expert of the Humanitarian Techniques Agency (AGT) Tatiana Vadalazhskaya on the one hand, analyst of the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS, Vilnius) Dzianis Melyantsou and the head of Office for Democratic Belarus (Brussels) Olha Stuzhynskaya on the other hand. The conciliation commission was unable to agree on some key points; that led to the decision on these items on a voting of the Conference (that is similar to voting on amendments to the bill). During the voting, the wordings of paragraphs of the Concept of the version of the International Consortium “EuroBelarus” and the AGT were adopted by a majority of votes. The final text of the Concept was adopted by 2/3 of votes of the membership of the Conference.

Despite the adoption of this Concept this fact did not remove the existing problems inside the National Platform. Part of organizations which did not support the Concept (including the Belarusian Association of Journalists, the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Human Rights Center “Viasna”, Office for Democratic Belarus, the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies, the Assembly of NGOs, etc.) came out again, reiterating their disagreement with the acceptance of the Concept. They stated the “politicization” of the National Platform, contradiction of the adopted Concept and the statutory goals of their organizations and the Memorandum of Understanding (core document fixing goals, objectives and basic activities of the Platform). Thus, the conflict between the different actors of the National Platform has continued to be a significant obstacle to its development.

The fourth Civil Society Forum (29-30 November) did not bring much surprise and took place probably in a format of solutions on working issues. Three Belarusians were included in the EaP CSF Steering Committee, including a new national coordinator — Yaraslau Bekish (“Green Network”). More important for the development of European-Belarusan relations and engagement of civil society were the issues of inclusion of the National Platform in the European dialogue on modernization (EDM). On October 17 at the roundtable on the EDM, with the participation of the EU Commission in Belarus and the National Platform, the National Platform’s position was announced as to participate in the Dialogue as a customer on the products and results of working groups’ activity within the EDM, as well as a possible implementer of the very idea of a dialogue. Following the meeting, the Coordinating Committee of the National Platform appealed to the EU Delegation in Belarus with a letter with the offer of a permanent representation of the NP in the Coordinating Group of the EDM. The representation proposed not to extend the composition of the Coordination group, but to appoint a Special Rapporteur of the Coordination group for the National Platform. The Coordinating Committee of the NP also acted as a customer of the organizational-activity game (OAG) “Program and innovation potential of the initiative European dialogue on

modernization with Belarus: Challenges, Problems and Opportunities”. The OAG was held on 3-8 December 2012 in Vilnius, its participants developed proposals for possible improvements and the development of the European dialogue on modernization.

Development of dialogue with the national and local authorities

In the period under review the state didn't demonstrate any desire to establish an equal dialogue with civil society. As before, if the state was doing something in this direction, it has sought to reproduce the forms of simulation of such a dialogue. In turn, civil society representatives often did not take the initiative in creating situations for the deployment of dialogue, but were forced to act reactively through which they sought to not only demonstrate their interest and willingness to discuss these issues, but also demanded recognition of themselves as a subject of a dialogue with the government.

On September 27, 2012 the National Centre of Legislation and Legal Research (NTZPI) at the Administration of the President, a letter was sent in a number of human rights organizations, in which it was proposed to express their opinion on the introduction of the Commissioner for Human Rights (an ombudsman) into the country. On October 16 at the initiative of the Center for Legal Transformation (Lawtrend) a working meeting of representatives of human rights organizations was held, most of them were not invited to discuss the issue (among them: in addition to the organizers of the meeting, as the HRC “Viasna”, HRC “Legal Assistance to Population”, IEI “Platform”, Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities, Committee “Solidarity”, Belarusian Human Rights House and a human rights defender Raisa Mikhailouskaya). In an open statement issued after the meeting, the participants indicated that they considered it necessary to create the institution of an ombudsman under the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights (UPR), adopted by Belarus in 2010. Also, the preconditions for the dialogue were listed between human rights defenders and government agencies: 1) release of all the political prisoners, including human rights activist Ales Bialiatski; 2) termination of all kinds of pressure on human rights activists — as, for example, the judgment on the Elimination of the IEI “Platform” and the failure of the recommendations of the UN Committee on Human Rights on the restoration of the registered status of the Human Rights Center “Viasna”. This statement was sent to the NTSZPI, the National Assembly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, in a number of international organizations, as well as distributed through the media.

The government continues to ignore the inclusion of other, than GONGOs, public organizations in the structures, platforms for public discourse created under government bodies. In early November 2012 to a representative of the NGO “Legal Initiative” Siarhei Ustsinou was once again denied inclusion in the Minsk Regional Public Oversight Commission to monitor the activities of organs and institutions executing punishment and other criminal sanctions, without any explanation. In the Council for Enterprise Development, updated at the end of November 2012, acting under the President of the Republic of Belarus, there was again no place for community organizations' representatives that protected the interests of small business. The head of the NGO “Perspective” Anatol Shumchanka made a statement of his intent to pursue the inclusion of representatives of his public organization in this Council.

On December 28, 2012 representatives of the Belarusian political parties and public associations (BPF Party, the Belarusian Left Party “Fair World”, Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Assembly), Belarusian Party “The Greens”, the campaign “Tell the Truth!” and the Movement “For Freedom”) issued a joint statement to the CEC and the presidential administration. In a statement, the representatives of opposition structures have criticized the amendments to the Electoral Code, proposed by the CEC and made a proposal to hold a public discussion of these

proposals, including through public hearings with state agencies, political parties and public associations' participation.

Here to specifically mention the initiative actions of civil society, aimed at launching a dialogue with the government agencies. In mid-December 2012 the Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend) sent to the chairmen of the Supreme and Constitutional Courts the annual results of the monitoring of court cases related to freedom of assembly, as well as its recommendations made on the results of monitoring. According to the head of the Legal Transformation Center Alena Tankachova, this action is expected from, as a minimum, to hold of this problem in the format of the public debate, which could force the government to acknowledge the problem and take steps to correct the situation.

Expansion of civil society “composition” and cooperation with various types of entities

Civil society continues is still perceived primarily as a set of social non-governmental organizations (both officially registered and non-registered), and informal civic initiatives. Other types of entities are rarely generally treated as a phenomenon of civil society, but are, in fact, just as such in the situation of Belarus. Particular attention should be paid to independent academic and intellectual communities. Many Belarusian scientists and intellectuals subjected ban on profession and repressed beyond the formal scientific and academic institutions, have to continue to work and develop their activities in the third sector. Sometimes, this activity takes on a very noticeable scale and produces meaningful results for the country. Often, only in such informal intellectual, scientific, academic communities the translation and development of human knowledge continues, the normal forms of communication and interaction between the Belarusian intellectuals is being realized.

In the period under review a number of events attracted the attention in the life of the alternative academic and expert environment of Belarus, which point to the formation and development of the academic and intellectual community.

On September 28-30, the Second International Congress of Belarusian Studies took place. The Congress has gathered the second year on already around 300 scientists from Belarus and from other countries, making research on Belarus in various humanities (from gender studies to political science and economics). The Congress was organized by a number of non-registered academic and expert structures and intellectual communities (Institute of Political Studies “Palitychnaya Sfera” (“Political Sphere”), the International Consortium “EuroBelarus”, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies, community of the Internet magazine “New Europe”, the Humanitarian Techniques Agency / Center for Social Innovation, Expert Community “Our opinion” and others. Belarusian researchers were supported by has Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas, Lithuania), providing a base and organizational support. In fact, the Congress has become the main event of the academic year and the main communication platform for Belarusian intellectuals and scientists.

In late December 2012 the organizing committee of the International Congress of Belarusian Studies established an annual award for the best scientific publication on Belarus in the field of social sciences and humanities.

The International PhD-program has continued (in the middle of October 2012 the second set of applications was finished). This provides the possibility of a thesis preparation on social sciences and humanities and their defense abroad for those Belarusian scientists, who cannot do it in Belarus for ideological reasons. The program has been initiated a number of Belarusian expert and academic communities (Institute of Political Studies “Palitychnaya

Sfera”, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies, the Humanitarian Techniques Agency / Center for Social Innovation and others).

A certain phenomenon of intellectual life was the activity of the “Flying University”, in particular, its training courses, public lectures in Minsk and Mahilioŭ, round tables and conferences. In particular, in the last quarter of 2012 public lectures were held of prominent Belarusian intellectuals (Siarhei Dubavets, Valiantsin Akudovich, Michal Anempadystau, Ihar Herasimienka, Sviatlana Matskevich); were held a mini-conference “Dazhynki” and the transformation of cities” (October 26), a public discussion on the modern thinking (November 14), the conference “Intellectual situation in Belarus” (December 14-15), and other events. Open events of the “Flying University” regularly gather 70 people and more.

An indicator of the reason for the outlay of intellectual life out official academies in the civil society environment can be the case of the historian Andrei Chernikievich, associate professor of the University of Hrodna. In September 2012, Chernikievich was dismissed from the university because of his participation in the writing of the book “Studies on Hrodna” which contained an incorrect statement of historical events, from the point of view of the official version of history. Solidarity with Chernikievich expressed many Belarusian historians, the EHU, the BPF Party, members of the International Congress of Belarusian Studies, etc.

International cooperation and interaction

Incapability to protect civil rights in the Belarusian courts often results in social and political activists appeals in search of justice to the thematic committees of the Organization of United Nations, in this work they are helped by professional human rights centers of Belarus. In the period under review the UN Committee on Human Rights received several new complaints. Personal right to defend their freedom of assembly asked: Brest human rights defender Uladzimir Vialichkin, denied the possibility of holding a picket in support of Ales Bialiatski by city officials (October, 2012); member of Belarusian Leftist Party “Fair World” Aliaksandr Dzenisienka from Brest, as city authorities denied him to conduct rally to raise public awareness of the impossibility of housing at affordable prices (October 2012); Chairman of the Homel’ regional organization of Belarusian Leftist Party “Fair World” Uladzimir Siakierka — for refusing of the City Council to provide him the opportunity for meeting on May 1, 2012 (November, 2012); members of the Hrodna branch of the United Civil Party — for the denial of holding their pickets (December, 2012).

During the same period, the UN Committee on Human Rights accepted for review complaints filed by Belarusian citizens previously: complaint of a violation of the principles of a fair trial by 22 former Brest customs inspectors “Western Bug” and 7 former mechanics of the terminal of the company “Westauto” (October, 2012) and the complaint of former presidential candidate Andrei Sannikau, for violation of his rights during the arrest, jail detention, investigation, trial, and torture and the violation of his rights as a citizen and as a presidential candidate (December, 2012).

Despite the fact that the complaint procedure in instances UN takes quite a long time, sometimes several years, definitions taken out on plaintiffs’ cases often contain references to non-conformity of the Belarusian legislation to the international obligations taken over by the Republic of Belarus. This fact significantly aggravates the international reputation of the country. In October-December 2012, the UN Committee on Human Rights recognized that the Belarusian state had violated the rights of: Homel’ activist Uladzimir Shumilin — for distribution of information during meetings by subjecting him to a fine for distributing leaflets in 2008 (November, 2012); politician Viktor Karniyenka — for freedom of associations and unions by liquidating of the

Homel' NGO "Civil Initiative" headed by him, after the presidential election of 2001 (November, 2012); Homel' politician Uladzimir Katsora — for organization of peaceful assemblies and distribution of printed information, which for Katsora was subjected to administrative arrest in 2006 and 2008 (December 2012); Baranavičy activists Victar Syritsa, Victar Miaziaak and Sierhei Housha — for holding a rally in 2006 (December, 2012). But the most clamorous were the decision of the UN Committee on Human Rights on the case accused of Uladzislau Kavaliou for an allegedly terrorist attack in the Minsk subway and executed by shooting in the spring of 2012 (November, 2012) and the decision of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions on the case of imprisoned human rights activist Ales Bialiatski (December, 2012). In the case of Uladzislau Kavaliou it was pointed out that Belarusian state, among other things, has violated his right to life; in the case of Ales Bialiatski it was recognized that his detention has been arbitrary and contrary to Art. 20, § 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Art. 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

In October-December 2012 Belarusian organizations and civil society representatives informed the international political and civil institutions on the situation in Belarus with the observance of human rights, violations of the labor legislation and of protection of historical and cultural heritage: human rights organization "Platform" eliminated by the government has sent an appeal to the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights activists, in which it pointed to the facts of pressure and harassment of human rights defenders in Belarus, in particular, the IEI "Platform" and its leaders Andrei Bandarenka and Alyona Krasouskaya-Kaspiarovich (October, 2012); the Belarusian Helsinki Committee informed the UN Special Rapporteur on torture to conditions in the Penal Colony-12 in Orsha of a convicted Yury Chuhley (October, 2012); wife of political prisoner Mikalai Statkevich Maryna Adamovich and former political prisoner Aliaksandr Atroshchankau informed the PACE Rapporteur on Belarus of the new trial on political prisoner Dzmitry Dashkevich (November, 2012); leader of Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions Aliaksandr Yarashuk informed the Director General of the International Labour Organization of the Decree № 9, which introduced restrictions on firing workers of the woodworking industry (December, 2012); Homel' Youth Local History Studies' NGO "Talaka" and Homel' city organization of the Public Association "Belarusian Language Society named after Francysk Skaryna" sent a letter to the UNESCO where they reported on abuse of Homel' citizens' rights for participation in cultural life of the city and their right to information (December, 2012); Belarusian human rights organizations prepared an independent review sent to the UN Committee against Torture (December, 2012).

Representatives of Belarusian civil society also addressed the international institutions and political leadership of other countries with appeals and declarations: after the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti's visit of a number of Belarusian political prisoners in September 2012, their relatives appealed to the Pope with an open letter in which they thanked the Holy Father for interest in the fate of their relatives, and also expressed the hope that Pope Benedict XVI will manage to contribute to the liberation of all Belarusian political prisoners (October, 2012); Belarusian activists of LGBT movement sent a letter to the Ambassador of Ukraine in Minsk, urging the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to give up adoption of the bill banning the production and distribution of products that promote homosexuality (October, 2012); 12 Belarusian opposition groups' and parties' representatives signed a joint statement during their visit to Brussels, calling on the EU to exert maximum efforts for the democratization of Belarus (October, 2012); leaders of the movement "Scientists for a nuclear-free Belarus" sent an open letter to the presidents of Russia, Belarus and Lithuania with appeal to reject the nuclear power plants' construction (October, 2012); bride of Dzmitry Dashkevich Nasta Palazhanka and wife of Mikalai Statkevich Mayna Adamovich urged the EU leaders to sign a petition for the release of Belarusian political prisoners, on the anniversary of the events of December 19 in Minsk.

In addition to the actions addressed to the outside, the representatives of the Belarusian civil society took part in international advocacy campaigns within Belarus: journalists from Minsk, Brest, Viciebsk, Salihorsk, Mahilioŭ, Babrujsk, Hrodna, and other cities took part in the action “Let us stand for journalists!” The action was initiated by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) (November, 2012); representatives of Belarusian human rights organizations joined the campaign “Cities for Life, Cities against the Death Penalty”, initiated by the Catholic community of St. Giles in 90 countries (November, 2012).

In the period under review the Belarusian civil society has been repeatedly expressed support from Western countries and international organizations, being expressed not only in the form of official statements and actions of a symbolic nature, but also in the form of specific actions. Such, for instance, became the official inauguration on November 1, 2012 of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, Miklós Haraszti. Announcement by the EU of the establishment of the European Endowment for Democracy on 12 November 2012 also launches potential mechanisms to support democratic actors in Belarus and other EU neighbor countries.

The first official statement made by Miklós Haraszti, was addressed to the Belarusian civil society and the government of Belarus. The rapporteur called on both sides to open dialogue in order to promote and protect human rights in the country, and also indicated that he would work towards establishing such a dialogue. On November 13, Miklós Haraszti met in Vilnius with the Belarusian human rights organizations and held consultations with them.

The European Endowment for Democracy, which came into effect on January 1, 2013, will become a new tool for the EU to support the democratization process in the EU neighboring countries, including Belarus. This support will be implemented through aid to democratic movements and leaders of NGOs, independent media, through special education programs.

Changes in terms of activity and structures of civil society

In the period under review the general conditions of the civil society in Belarus continued to deteriorate.

On October 9, 2012 the Minsk Economic Court ruled to liquidate the Information and Educational Institution “Platform” and later dismissed the appeal against this decision. The reason for the elimination of the human rights organization, which focused on issues of compliance with the law in prison, was the claim of inspection of the Ministry of Taxes and Duties of the Soviet district of Minsk. However, the head of the IEI “Platform” Andrei Bandarenka managed to register a new organization under the name of Cultural and Educational Institution “Platform Innovation” the next month, in which he and his colleagues intend to continue their human rights work.

On November 14, 2012 the Supreme Court of Belarus started the proceedings to suspend the activities of the International NGO “Dobraya Volia” (“Goodwill”) which focuses on protecting the rights of children, particularly orphans. In 2011-2012, a group of large families and foster parents, members of the NGO “Dobraya Volia” identified numerous violations and abuses in the apparatus of the Ministry of Education, as they subsequently the leadership of the Ministry. However, the response of the Ministry of Education was a complaint to the Ministry of Justice, which was the basis of the case of the suspension of the activity of the NGO “Dobraya Volia”.

On November 26, 2012, a forfeiture proceeding of premises in favor of the state took place. The premises had been used for 12 years as the office for the Human Rights Center “Viasna”. It was the personal property of the

head of “Viasna” Ales Bialiatski, convicted on charges of tax evasion by 4.5 years of imprisonment with confiscation of property.

In October-December 2012 through the Ministry of Taxes and Levies a pressure was exerted upon other human rights defenders: on October 29, Frunze district tax inspection of Minsk required the head of NGO “Legal Assistance to the Population” Aleh Volchek to provide a declaration of income and assets for ten years; on November 21 Leonid human rights defender Leanid Sudalenka was fined by the Tax Inspectorate of Soviet district of Homel for failure to submit an income statement for five years of his wife, and even his son, who has served in the army (in 2008, Leanid Sudalenka already disclosed the income statement, the details of which then appeared in the pages of state newspapers “Homelskaya Pravda” (“Homel Truth”), in violation of the law; on November 28, tax inspection of the Pervomaisky district of Minsk started an inspection of human rights activist Tatsiana Raviaka for her receipt of funds from Ales Bialiatski.

Religious community of the Full Gospel “Church ‘New Life’” has managed to defend the church building again. On November 27, 2012 the Economic Court of Minsk notified the church that it was scheduled the eviction of the religious community of the building it was occupying for December 5. On November 28 council members of the church decided to start clock prayers for saving the building. In addition, daily at 19.00 special prayer services were held for the protection and support of the church. To these prayer services parishioners of the “New Life” invited all the concerned people. On November 30 a lawyer of the church “New Life” Siarhei Lukanin met with the Deputy Chairman of the Department for Public Inquiries of Minsk city executive committee Ina Kavaleuskaya, during which he requested to record a pastor of the church Viachaslau Hancharenka to the appointment with the chairman of Minsk city executive committee. On December 4 the parishioners gathered at “the last prayer”, but before this they received a message stating that the Administration of Housing repair and maintenance organization of Moscow district of Minsk abandoned the building, despite the fact that it was in its property, and that the Economic Court of Minsk closed the case for the church and handed it to the archive.

At the same time, the Minsk creative club “Art Siadziba” lost the premises for the third time this year. On December 6, the day of opening in a new venue, the management of the “Art Siadziba” received a notice from the lessor to terminate the contract.

The period under review was also marked by the deterioration of civil society organizations’ activity at the legal level. On November 12, 2012 changes and amendments to the law “On terrorism” and “Combating extremism” entered into force, as well as some articles of the Criminal Code. According to human rights defenders, the new definition of terrorism, which appeared as a result of these changes, significantly enhanced the recognition of organizations and individuals as extremist or even terrorist.