Belarus Activist Cuts Throat During Court Trial – Reports

June 01, 2021

Stepan Latypov was arrested last September. **Valery Sharifulin/TASS**

Belarusian activist Stepan Latypov stabbed himself in the throat in a Minsk courtroom Thursday after testifying that police had tortured him in custody, the Current Time news site has reported, citing the Viasna Human Rights Center.

Graphic videos posted on Twitter showed the aftermath of the incident, with the 41-year-old Latypov being carried away from the courtroom on a stretcher, his throat still bleeding.

In court, Latypov testified that he had suffered several weeks of torture during police custody and that his family and friends were threatened with the same treatment. He then climbed onto a bench and cut his throat with a pen, according to reports.

Prison authorities "swore to me that if I didn't admit my guilt, criminal cases would be opened against my relatives and neighbors," Latypov said according to a court recording published by TUT.BY.

Related article: [Roman Protasevich: From Teen Activist to Belarus Bugbear](#)

Latypov added that he had already suffered 51 days of what he called "the press-hut," a term used to describe a special cell in Belarusian jails where prisoners say police beatings and torture often occur.

Guards could not immediately open the courtroom's metal cage that Latypov was held in during the trial because they couldn't find the keys. By the time the cell was opened, he had lost consciousness.

Latypov was detained last September as part of the Square of Changes case, named after the central Minsk courtyard whose residents staged protests against the brutal police crackdown during last summer's wave of nationwide protests.

The Belarusian health ministry said Tuesday evening that Latypov had regained consciousness and his life was not in danger.

"All necessary medical measures have been taken," the ministry said on its Telegram account.

"The patient is in a stable condition, there is no danger of death."

Latypov had told his father he had come under pressure in detention, said Viasna, which along with other groups declared him a political prisoner last year.

Prominent opposition politician Andrei Sannikov said it was an "act of desperation" and another demonstration of the "murderous nature" of President Alexander Lukashenko's regime.

Belarus was plunged into crisis after strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko claimed a landslide election victory in a poll activists say was marred by fraud. In response to the authorities' crackdown, several Western countries recognized opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya as the election winner and called for Lukashenko to step down.

In May, Lukashenko sparked more international uproar after Belarus ordered a Ryanair Athens-to-Vilnius flight to be [diverted](#) to Minsk in order to arrest dissident journalist Roman Protasevich who was on board the plane.

Latypov was facing three charges — organizing mass rallies that violate public order, resisting police officers and large-scale fraud, according to local media. Human rights groups say are the charges are politically motivated.

AFP contributed reporting.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/06/01/belarus-activist-cuts-throat-during-court-trial-a74072